Mapping Femininity: Space, Media and the Boundaries of Gender

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to Troy Schneider, Mateo Schneider and Maria Schneider.

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ABSTRACT

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Images of girl power have saturated visual and other forms of culture for the better part of two decades and suggested a reclaiming of the term "girl" to describe a wide range of ages and embodiments. Intertwined with this new form of girlhood is a rethinking of public and private, distinctions which are instrumental in determining gender norms and which illustrate that space and identity are mutually determined. This blurring of boundaries between public and private in terms of physical space as well as for images and information is central to a popular narrative depicting a schism between feminist generations. A main argument between what are termed second-wave and third-wave feminisms seemed to be about visibility: when, how and in what context a girl is visible and the consequent value of notice and recognition. In this dissertation I explore how media worlds intersect with lived worlds to function as a blueprint for social tensions about feminisms and femininity. Through the lens of media, my analysis uncovers masked relationships of social structure, power and identity which underpin feminist and Cultural Studies scholarship. Using qualitative methods of semiotic textual analysis of the television series *Alias* alongside ethnographies of girls interacting in

private as they discuss media images and in public as they carry out social relations, my

research draws from television theory, feminist theory and cultural sociology and

geography.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

GIRLS AND GOOD MANNERS

One grey winter afternoon in 2001 as I sat reading in my neighborhood Starbucks coffee house I watched as a lone teenage girl who appeared to be fifteen sat at a table, hunched over a textbook and writing in a spiral notebook. She rested her feet on a chair, which allowed her to cradle the book in her lap and still reach her notebook and her drink, which were on the table. She was dressed casually and her clothes were at once youthful, clean and neat. If she wore makeup, it was not obvious, and her overall appearance resembled that of many other local teenage girls on a school day: she was pretty, but in no way flashy such that she would obviously invite attention. Sitting together nearby, about ten feet away, were a man and woman perhaps in their fifties. They also were unremarkable given local norms of appearance: dressed casually according to local adult standards in loose-fitting slacks (probably khakis) and neat but comfortable sweaters. They appeared to be a couple out for coffee, with nothing to indicate it was a business meeting. They sat sometimes quietly and occasionally commenting to one another, not saying anything that grabbed my attention.

I noticed when the couple began murmuring to one another in urgent tones, quite a difference from their earlier quiet patter, and glancing pointedly at the girl. The woman's voice rose to a loud whisper and she seemed upset. My first thought was that

they were concerned that it was a bit early in the afternoon for someone of the girl's age to be off school grounds. The shop was quite empty and for the moment there was no barista at the counter. The woman got up and walked behind the coffee counter into the employee area and to the doorway leading to the kitchen and firmly asked for the manager. A Starbucks employee in a green company apron who looked to be in his early twenties came to the door and said the manager was out for the moment, but that he could help her. The woman began speaking to the barista, and I heard her use the words "disgusting" and "filthy"; I could not see her face but I could see his, and as he appeared to be concerned I hoped her complaint did not involve cockroaches. The barista nodded respectfully as the woman talked for a minute, after which she returned to her table, never looking at the girl. The girl stared intently at her book as though unaware of this exchange, although that seemed impossible given the proximity of the parties and how quiet the shop was at that point. When the woman was again seated at her table, the employee approached the teenage girl and, standing about two feet away from her, loudly but politely asked her to please remove her feet from the furniture, as it was disturbing some of the other customers. The girl responded with a look I can only describe as, "What the hell?" and the barista slightly shrugged his shoulders as if to indicate he had no choice. The girl took her feet off the chair and awkwardly rearranged her position, including shuffling her books and papers, while the woman and her companion looked down at their coffee cups. The barista then walked over to the woman and, also loudly but politely, asked: "There, ma'am. Is that okay now?" The woman thanked him as the girl glared at the couple; the woman did not return the girl's gaze and both she and her

companion continued to look down into their drinks.

I watched the girl as she began reading again. She leaned back to position her notebook so that she could write with it on her lap, placed her feet on the chair, then caught and corrected herself and quickly removed them. Soon, she closed her book and her notebook and stared out the front window into the parking lot. Within minutes several teenagers carrying backpacks walked into the Starbucks. It was about five minutes after the end of the school day at a nearby public high school. A group of five or six students, clearly friends of the girl, sat down at her small table and spilled over to an adjacent table as well, gathering chairs from nearby tables. Other teenagers filtered into the shop in groups of two or more, staking out space by moving tables and chairs to accommodate their groups. The noise level rose and the music of Miles Davis playing in the background was drowned out by lively greetings and teenager chatter and, as business picked up, the hissing of the drink machines and the baristas – two more had materialized – shouting orders. I could not hear much of the conversation among the girl and her friends, but I did see her point to the older couple and hear the one of the boys sitting with her declare, "bitch" in an accusatory tone, loud enough for the couple to hear; neither the man or woman in the couple looked up in response and pointedly seemed to keep their eyes fixed downward and away from the girl and her friends. The kids in the group were laughing and one boy exaggeratedly placed his foot on the table, stared purposefully at the older couple, and quickly brought his foot back down to the floor with a thud. A boy in the group commented on the placing of "asses" on furniture, and how that was more disgusting than feet. The original girl and the two other girls in the group

were laughing along with the boys, but did not overtly or audibly protest the actions of the couple. The woman and her companion got up to leave; while they had finished their drinks, I am certain that they wanted to quit before their earlier victory was completely eclipsed.

The girl's initial appearance of autonomy while sitting quietly and by all appearances reading or engaging in creative writing – her independence and right to the space – was revealed as an illusion with the couple's demonstration of authority over what counted as acceptable behavior. However, the couple's control of the situation was short-lived and tenuous, broken by sheer numbers and noise, and without any explicit declarations to them that they no longer controlled what happened within the shop. And the barista had seemed to align with the young girl while recognizing the adults' authority.

The girl, who at first was neither disrupting the quiet of the place nor taking up space wanted by someone else, had even in her solitude presented an affront to the couple, and especially to the woman, by comporting herself too casually in public. The woman had then used concern over health risks by the girl – the possibility of tracking floor grime onto a chair seat – to register disapproval. As Mary Douglas has argued (1996 [1966]), concern with dirt and cleanliness – issues of purity – is essentially a concern about what belongs and what is out of place. The conflict in Starbucks was not really about dirt, but rather over who sets the rules defining space and place, and in this case what these rules say about good behavior.

By "space" here I mean the boundaries (physical, social, regulatory, and

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otherwise) of any social interaction, and on any scale. The girl's body language and acquiescence to the woman and the employee suggested she was both compromising her rights as a consumer and allowing imposition on her private world. The way the girl's body was positioned before she came to the attention of the couple was at once relaxed and intent, as it might be in a more private place. When in what seemed to be second-nature she inadvertently replaced her feet on the chair after being chastised, she seemed momentarily, again, not aware of her own public presence; her rapid replacement of her feet back to the floor illustrated her sudden remembering that she was in public and, as she was likely being watched and evaluated, not in a public over which she had control.

That the woman had required the girl to decide between her own comfort and convenience and dominant expectations of appropriate behavior suggests ambiguity in notions of femininity and feminist aims and claims. Given appearances and where and when these interactions occurred, the parties involved would be aware of at least some form of gender equity in terms of rights and needs. The man and the woman in the couple and the girl all appeared to be white (the barista appeared to be Latino)[1] and neighborhood demographics placed them in the middle or upper-middle class in terms of assets and education.

In the end, that afternoon, the girl was literally saved by the bell dismissing high school, which brought reinforcements to this battle of propriety. The resulting change of context and social relations in the Starbucks shifted the space to one that was public on the teenagers' terms and in which the woman and her companion were outliers. The actions, words and indignant tone the kids used to claim the space indicated their sense of

entitlement to it. This conflict in Starbucks was as much about competing claims to space, regulation and social relations as about cleanliness. I wonder whether the woman would have taken the same measures at first if the offending customer were someone other than a solitary, quiet girl studying, presumably not a threat to anyone.

However, to describe the teenage girl as being "saved" implies that she needed assistance to counter a hostile force. While it seemed at first that on her own she held autonomy, or independence of action and decision, her complacency when confronting authority (the couple and then the employee) reveals that she lacked autonomy apparent in the regulation of her body and situation by others. On closer consideration this series of interactions that afternoon encapsulates complications about femininity and feminisms in terms of space and power, and suggest also the changing role of media from being a conduit of information to being a model for social interaction, as I will explain in what follows.

The girl, if age fifteen in 2001 and a local resident, would likely have grown up hearing that girls could do anything boys could do and would know the popular term "girl power" or even "*grrrl*," indicating drive to excel because of her gender rather than in spite of it. She would be familiar with kick-ass girl heroes, even if not a fan of them, featured in countless television shows and films circulating at the time, including *The Powerpuff Girls* (McCracken 1998), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon 1997), and the new series *Alias* (Abrams 2001), all of which celebrated clever, physically active and empowered femininity. *Alias*, in fact, had opened to reviews which were mixed on the show overall but almost universally praised the main character Sydney Bristow, a strong,

smart young woman who, clad in leather and spandex, saved the world almost all by herself each week (for example see: Millman 2001; Salamon 2001; Tucker 2001a, 2001b; Rosenberg 2001). The international espionage plot of the show seemed secondary and a backdrop on which to feature the main character in different costumes and locations.

The older woman in Starbucks would likely have attended college or at least her husband and children would have.[2] She may or may not have worked outside the home for some or all of her adult life, and she might have raised children who would be about the same age as the girl. She would know the term feminism from the 1970s and 1980s and perhaps taken part in discussions about women's demands for equal rights and compensation. If she labeled herself as a feminist, she might see that her struggles in earlier decades had paid off, perhaps even to the point of being overlooked by the present generation of young women. The girl, as presumably a beneficiary of second-wave feminist struggles by virtue of her situation as white and middle class, might believe that her individual choices – in what sports she played, her career, her decisions about family, partnership and raising children – were not only possible but also a statement to the fortitude of her generation of girls, a generation that valued individual choice from among a wide array of options as a form of social agency.

At first the space of the Starbucks appeared egalitarian and the people in it neutral in terms of power. This neutrality was disturbed by a generational claim of authority and the right to determine conditions within the space. The disturbance was mediated by an ambiguous figure in the barista/employee. He was younger than the man and woman but older than the girl. As an employee in the service sector – and also not a manager – he

would be by definition in the service of the customers. At the same time, as a representative of the owner of the space he could enforce rules or, as in the case with the girl, determine standards of acceptable behavior. His response was to concede to the woman's request and at the same time signal to the girl that he did not find her behavior objectionable – he was just following orders and that given the distribution of power, her best bet was acquiescence. The assumption here is that since she was a good girl, based on her demeanor and local norms, she would go along with him so as not to cause trouble and actually disrupt the space. However, the arrival of the girl's peers, and in particular the boys, did in fact disrupt the scene by shifting power to the teenagers using loudness and incursion on space in an overt colonization of the tables and chairs, as well as the overall tone within the shop. This form of disruption is distinctly masculine in a conventional sense. It was not, however, a matter of the boys seeming to dominate the girl (or the other girls who had arrived with them), or even an issue of chivalrous protection. Instead, it appeared to be natural compliance with gender norms in which loud and disruptive boys, while potentially annoying to others, are not unexpected or inappropriate. This is not so for the girl here, assumed unlikely to be overtly disruptive and at the same time open to criticism even while still and quiet.

Circumstances depend on identities in play in relation to the situation (both physical and social); in this case, the implications of being a teenage girl alone depend on her physical location. In Starbucks, this girl sitting quietly and reading in a public place where this activity is common did not appear to present an obvious threat by her presence nor endangerment to herself. She seemed to me to be adhering to local standards of

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decency in dress and language; considering the ages and appearance of the girl and the couple, they could have been her parents and, perhaps, happy to see that she was being both quiet and productive. Instead, though, the girl was labeled a nuisance because her body language appeared disrespectful to the adults. When the presence of other teenagers resituated the girl into a dominant group, still she did not define the space on her terms.

Underlying this series of events is the idea that if the girl on her own (alone, unaccompanied by her peers) truly wanted equal status with the adults in the store, she must comply with their standards. Her rights as an individual consumer were effectively not equal to that of the older man and woman. When the tables turned and the girl was among the young people dominating the space, instead of a live-and-let-live approach she and her friends loudly criticized the adults, although focusing on the woman as the presumed instigator, so that they become uncomfortable and self-conscious, and the space no longer worked as a haven for anyone other than the kids. When the couple defined the terms of the space and when the girl and her friends did, dominance was established through indirect communication mediated by outside forces rather than a friendly request made by one customer to another. The couple had asked the employee to intervene and so avoided directly confronting the girl and allowing them an illusion, quite transparent, of their neutrality. The girl complied with the couple, but the addition of her friends who functioned as a moralizing Greek chorus (particularly the loudly critical boys) allowed the teenagers to claim the space without directly confronting the couple. The adults had gone to a third party, the barista, as an authority over the girl and a mediator of the woman's message, who then clearly stated the situation and the desired

outcome to both the girl and the couple; at the same time, he indicated to the girl that he sided with her (as did I) but could not openly admit to this. The teenagers had relied on public but indirect shaming of the adults and on their sheer numbers and volume, allowing any single one of them deniability should their criticisms be called into question.

In neither situation did the girl, so far as I could tell, declare her own wants and needs or demand the right to determine the circumstances of the space. Despite years of second-wave feminist ideals being absorbed into assumptions about what is possible for girls and a contemporary climate assuring girls that they were perhaps better, in some ways, than boys the underlying assumptions about gender norms and what counts as normal suggested claiming a post-gender society – one where gender does not matter as much as individual ability and habits -- was premature. The girl would have been socialized into and out of feminisms in various ways, and her own shifting situation in that brief time demonstrates difficulty of drawing stable lines to distinguish different identity factors: gender, generation, and social standing.

BOUNDARIES, RULES AND NORMS

The boundaries of social regulation due to age, gender, location and status, and the assumption of varying levels of responsibility that accompany them, point to the necessity of considering symbolic boundaries alongside material ones. Boundaries determine the inclusion and exclusion of populations and indicate the perimeters of appropriate behavior. They serve as a sign to let us know when we have gone far enough

and that there are consequences for not circling back to some earlier position or known world: when we are feminine enough and when we are too girly; when we are deemed good or bad women.

In this dissertation I investigate the ways in which changing social norms for the consumption and regulation of space intersect with media representations of these norms, and considering that space and identity are essentially connected, each informing and constructing the other. Exploring the relationships among gender, space, media and identity, I interrogate how conceptions of space and self fostered by mediated communication inform both everyday life and underlying discourse. I argue that media narratives in all aspects (production, representation and reception) function as maps of social relations and the identities upon which those relations rest. Narratives and maps both are carefully structured ways of indicating a worldview: what we consider central and what is peripheral and where we locate ourselves. Narratives impose an order on what otherwise might seem chaotic and random and, as Hayden White has suggested, seek to solve "the problem of how to translate knowing into telling, the problem of fashioning human experience into a form assimilable to structures of meaning that are generally human rather than culture-specific" despite our knowledge that no narrative – or map – is absolute or objective (1987:1). During times when fundamental identity structures such as gender relations are in flux, the media map plays an especially prominent role in social actors' attempts to earn recognition and authority.

To address the regulation of boundaries in spatial terms and as defining gender norms I use three approaches which together point to the triad of social space according

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to Henri Lefebvre (1991): spatial practice, which is the framework for our spatial and thus social relations; representations of space, or the manner in which we mark boundaries using verbal and other social codes; and representational space, which is space in actual use and through non-verbal signs as it reflects and shapes our worldview. Drawing these together is that each is in some form a close reading, whether of a text, of stated perceptions, or of social situation.

In attempting to uncover relationships of social structure, power and identity, this is fundamentally a project of Cultural Studies. I hope to provide a rich illustration of the entanglement of what appear to be different forms of space and social situations but which, when brought together, shed light on a crucial problem of gender and power. Locating feminisms as at an intersection of lived, real space and televisual space makes apparent that claims of empowerment for girls and women are less absolute than suggested in the term "girl power" or in contentions that feminism is unnecessary given current social conditions for women. This project is more than a triangulation of different disciplinary methods. Instead, what is revealed by considering together these different spatial contexts is that the boundaries (physical, moral and symbolic) of gender and social structure are amply fortified even in light of ostensibly borderless media worlds and extensive opportunities for girls. In considering space, gender and power, the central role of media and visual imagery in defining social standards based on gender (whether one is a good girl or a bad one, for example) and at the same time space and boundaries (such as distinctions of public and private) requires cultural studies' critical approach and valuing of meanings ascribed to what we may think of as unremarkable – the normal and

mundane. Examining these different layers of culture and space together indicates a perseverance of assumptions about gender and how deeply questions around femininity define social relations. I am indebted to the strong tradition fusing feminism and cultural studies, including the foundational work of Angela McRobbie (1991, 1999, 2009), Tania Modleski (1982, 1991) and others who holistically examined gender and power by considering at once popular culture, what girls and women declare is their relationship to this culture, and how these relationships play out in everyday life (Brunsdon 1997, 2000; deLauretis 1984, 1987; McRobbie 1988, 1991; Modleski 1982; Press 1991; Radway 1984. See also: Women's Study Group 1978; Schiach 1999; Franklin, Lury, and Stacey 1991).

Each approach I use here, whether analysis of a text, a perception or a situation, reveals a key component in the puzzle framed by social space and claims about feminism and femininity in terms of autonomy and a related concern with authenticity and performance. I illustrate how media worlds, including aspects of production, representation and reception, function as a blueprint for social trends and tensions among femininities and feminisms. The analysis of the television series *Alias* provides a narrative map of space and femininity in terms of feminisms. The series ran from 2001 until 2006 and remained in steady syndication on cable and satellite television for several years after. Secondly, the insights gained from listening to conversations among groups of girls about their relationships to media reveals expectations about femininity and gender roles and, importantly, incongruities in these expectations. The girls who provided this research opportunity ranged in age from thirteen to twenty-three in 2007; those at the

older end of this range were adolescents during the height of media attention to girl power; the younger ones might not remember a time before "girls rule," a popular declaration featured on t-shirts, backpacks and other accoutrements of girlhood. Finally, the ethnographic observation of teenagers in and around a coffee shop systematically from 2001 until 2008 and analysis of changes in that space and situation over time illustrate gender norms in the lived world and point to a need to reformulate key questions about feminism and femininity, gender and power. These individual approaches and the parts of the puzzle that come together to create a unified picture through each of these situations are addressed in chapters three, four and five.

In order to establish a framework in which to discuss these approaches, chapter two presents a common language for this project and positions this research in historical and theoretical contexts. In this chapter I begin to suggest the way terms of space, gender and media are intertwined so that when these are taken up in more detail in later chapters, the connections make sense. I begin by discussing second and third wave feminisms and why they are situated, often, as oppositional. I relate what I believe are misperceptions about feminisms to questions of space and place. I address the importance of space and situation to gender and performativity. Finally, I explain how media is both spatial and performative and that rather than just being evidence of gender norms, it is crucial to how such norms are formed and reformed both in lived and imagined worlds.

In chapter three, I use a close reading of the television series *Alias* to consider the patterns and habits on which we base social expectations and make sense of our daily lives. In Lefebvre's term, this is "spatial practice" (1991:33). David Harvey has described

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spatial practice as the movement of bodies and objects to "ensure production and social

reproduction" (1989:18) of dominant ideologies. Using a semiotic analysis of scenes

which suggest turning points for the protagonist, I argue that *Alias*, in its plot trajectory

and character development, demonstrated conflicts which have been situated as between

different forms of feminism through the show's girl power ethos and, ultimately, an

undermining of fundamental principles of girl power. Space as perceived, demonstrated

through this analysis, illustrates the potential of the imaginary in visual media to illustrate

a shift in our understanding of space as divided by gender along a public/private split.

Alias is an example of how media functions as a perceptual map of social norms. This

relationship of norms to representation is a fundamental part of media, film and television

theory, as scholars and practitioners make claims about which came first, the medium or

the message. Ambiguity about the status of producers and consumers in media means

there is almost always, now, something more complicated than an endless loop in which

an image is produced, consumed, assumed to matter, and then reproduced in order to give

the people what they want or, depending on your view, what the producer wants people

to want.

In chapter four I use a series of informal discussions among groups of girls to gain

insight into perceptions about media alongside spatial concerns which are consequential

to feminism and femininity. The discussions revealed discrepancies between stated

assumptions about gender and femininity and expectations and standards revealed when

discussing television, celebrities and other common cultural objects. Given the girls' ages

and social situations, they would have grown up assuming some measure of gender

equality. In the comments the girls made and the nature of their discussions I consider also the spatial dynamics in which these occurred. In this way, chapter four addresses representations of space, in Lefebvre's terms, which includes the articulations and verbal signs through which space is *conceived*. Representation of space connects our experiences with a larger order and defines the boundaries of accepted norms by structuring the options and standards for everyday life which we gather through spatial practice. Representations of space are schemes by which we create a sense of the ideal and judge our world in relation to this ideal. My analysis illustrates how a media-saturated culture in which harsh criticism often masquerades as guidance toward self-improvement effectively renders undesirable and deviant bodies incoherent, meaning taken apart to a point that agency and autonomy is diminished rather than dispersed.

In chapter five I move from the specific and intimate interactions among the girls to a larger scope of ethnographic observation in a public place. I frame this part of the research under Lefebvre's concept of representational space, or lived space within a system of symbols. Here, a semiotics of social interaction is read through a thick description based on my understanding of gender, girlhood and local norms. This small part of the world is not intended as a representative sample of a larger trend in all suburban areas, all coffee shops or all American teenagers. Instead it is a Petri dish model in which a particular set of relations, based primarily on gender and age but rooted also in class and race, grew to demonstrate something puzzling about feminism, space, and communication: given that girls in 2001 and these girls in particular were the beneficiaries of second-wave feminist struggles and familiar through multiple media

outlets with girl power even if not overtly embracing its tenets, why did the social interactions seem to reproduce old tropes of gender and space? This was chronologically my starting point for this project, through which I came to see the dynamics working in other spaces and forms. In Lefebvre's term, this is representational space, which is space as directly lived and experienced through cultural signs. Here I analyze the social interactions of sex and gender in and around a Starbucks coffee shop that is contested space among different local populations, including many teenagers. I consider how the strategy of relocation – a placing out of context – is used to render subjectivity incoherent. I address the implications of these struggles in terms of space, sex and gender and in relation to authenticity and autonomy.

The final chapter suggests a reformulation of the triad of space, gender and media which goes beyond current definitions of each of these terms. Rather than finding causality in feminisms in order to have a place to lay blame for social conflicts, I question how assumptions about space founded in gender and generation, and in a world where social relations are increasingly mediated, have the potential to change gender norms and the degree to which this potential is realized. The three forms of culture I examine in depth here – the television series *Alias*, girls' discussions about media, and demonstrations of girlhood in the contested space of a coffee shop – together reveal the complexity of defining public and private alongside conventions of gender and authority and with changing perceptions of media and communication.

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CHAPTER 2: SPACES OF FEMINISMS

WHO OWNS FEMINISM?

Tensions among feminisms, resulting in part from attempts to neatly categorize feminist aims and methods as in line with generations according to age and birth year suggest that it might be impossible to reconcile what we label the second and third waves of feminism. I see this in a range of situations, ranging from television narratives to business meetings to family gatherings. I believe, though, that it is possible to maintain generational distinctions while holding together in flexible suspense tensions among different feminisms which seem to be at odds over distinctions between holding a flexible conception of identity and identity that is fragmented in the sense of being fractured. There is value in maintaining competing dialogs of feminisms: if the next generations are to mediate and evaluate the competitions we live with today, it is worth cataloging controversies over the challenges, attitudes, cultural perceptions and socialization experiences of young women who will make these later judgments. These responses to social conditions and assumptions become more tangible, and the implications for girls and women made clear through the lens of space as proposed by Henri Lefebvre (1991), specifically his discussion of social space. Social space in Lefebvre's conception is subjective and relational and is at once the producer of social relations, the process by which relations occur, and the product of social relations. Like media, social space in this

understanding both creates and is informed by social expectations; it both reflects and reproduces social structures. Social space is not empty or neutral, as space is often imagined, and is not waiting vacant for something of substance to fill it up and make things happen.

This articulation of social space matters for feminism in light of narratives suggesting that diverse feminist perspectives are instead indecisive battles over what it means to be a woman. Framing differences between people claiming affiliation with the second wave of feminism and those identifying with the third wave as always automatically exclusive points to a no-win situation, unless winning means placing women's rights and needs on the sidelines of social policy. This formulation is most problematic because it references feminism in any form by what it lacks: what it is not, who and what are left out, and which parties are most inconvenienced by these exclusions, intended or not. To assume any feminism as based in lack seems self-defeating. Adding complication is the diversity and disagreement even within accepted feminist categories. The label of second wave has included among its factions: a predominantly white, middle class and heterosexual constituency seeking a more egalitarian distribution of housework and other labor; women of color suggesting the former group might not have considered their situations and needs when making demands; and divisions based on sexualities and desires. Different characteristics of the third wave align some feminists who claim this label as by turn: closer to postfeminism; determined through consumption and materialism; or playing with conventional femininity and gender roles as a politics of visibility and disruption. This is not to say

anything or anyone claiming the term to be "feminist" should automatically have a seat at the table; postfeminism comes to mind here. But structuring diverse feminist interests as contrary to one another seems also to say that since one form of feminism does not satisfy all needs, it lacks value anymore and should be scrapped and replaced with something better.

One assumption about second-wave feminism is that it recognizes only a narrative of forward progression from less to more rights for women; in this way, the past matters insofar as it set the stage for a presumably better present. The second wave, generally defined as the social movement of the 1960s and 1970s, depended on collective action to seek systemic equal rights for women in the form of legislation and other institutional practices. The notion of persistent improvement for women, a narrative of continual progress, has faded even among people identifying as feminists. Instead, as Jennifer Purvis (2004) has argued, the distinction between the second and third waves is "roughly historical but by no means chronological," and there is no clear date or date of birth by which to determine feminist wave affiliation. The 1980s backlash against feminism which followed the second wave pointed out that with rights come responsibilities and consequences, although this critique focused on a narrow version of the second wave. One complaint was that the second wave assertion that a woman could do anything given opportunity and resources denied some forms of authentic femininity, implying that feminism constricted rather than expanded ways of being a woman. Another concern was that declarations that a woman could do anything ended up in women attempting to do everything (paid employment, housework, child rearing), making life for girls and

women less fun and more work and giving rise to a definition of "fun" as a combination of leisure and consumption – shopping and manicures, for example – popularized in the "chick lit" literary genre which swept bookstores in the mid-1990s along with girl power. A consequent critique was that this form of "equality" undermined a woman's empowerment in the public sphere when she was shown to not be able to handle both home life and a work life. A related concern was that women working outside the home undermined the family structure and resulted in imperfect children and frustrated spouses, arising as a prevalent social critique concurrent with chick lit and girl power. From these critiques came a stereotype of feminists as humorless and unattractive women who sought to undermine social structure out of misplaced anger and questionable values.

Taken further, these notions positioned the second wave as severely limited in scope and as excluding all things conventionally girly, and then by extension rendered it probably inapplicable to enlightened young women's sense of freedom and opportunity. A good strategy of devaluation, particularly in the United States where "freedom of choice" is practically a national motto, is to declare that something binds and constricts our rights or abilities. At the same time mainstream discourse around women's bodies has continued to be about control, regulation and constraint. Under these conditions, it makes sense to argue that opting to wear a corset, for example, provides women with a feeling of power through actively displaying a sign of sexual desirability which is also a sign of personal control over the body's excess, positioning this choice as one of liberation and expansion. Similarly, women (and sometimes men) who do not work in the

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paid labor market and instead care for children and home without financial compensation can also be defined as being in empowering situations simply because their situation is viewed as optional rather than mandatory. The result of this reasoning has been vilification of the very term "feminism" in viewing it as in opposition to personal power through a narrowing of acceptable choices rather than a means for demanding agency and authority.

A damaging misperception here is that assuming an affinity of third-wave feminism and postfeminism discounts the value of the third wave in claiming social space for women, and in seeking to present femininities alongside feminisms as choices rather than an either/or mandate. But I believe that along the way the definition of feminism has been mangled and then reconstructed as an irresolvable conflict among women rather than a collective call for rights and recognition – and often this happens, albeit unfairly, in the name of the third wave. Media images have assisted in this collapse. And while the distinction between mediated relationships and those that occur in physical proximity becomes further confused, not least due to the dissolving perception of physical interactions as more authentic than mediated ones, the day-to-day habits of embodiment and persisting anxieties about femininity reveal the deep roots of social norms despite claims that virtual, representational space is rendering these norms inadequate.

The third wave, defined as emerging in the early 1990s almost organically in response to the needs and desires of young women, offered a response to this critique of the second wave and its related stereotype and at least on the surface focused attention on individual identities and sexualities. At its inception the third wave sought to reclaim

girliness – both the term and the associated trappings of conventional femininity – as an empowering option for girls in celebrating gender difference no matter how these differences came to be normalized. This loosely defined wave offered another form of agency in *grrrl* power, a louder and angrier version of girliness and most visible in the independent (at least at first) music movement. Popular notions of the third wave suggested these girls and women rejected broad collective action in favor of individual expression, although as Purvis points out this also is not entirely fair, and third wave feminists have been quite involved in social organizing for gender and other human rights. Formative third wave texts, rather than pointing out theoretical and political foundations that seemed a hallmark of the second wave, prominently displayed the views of young women in their own words (Walker 1995; Findlen 1995; Edut 1998). This move from voices of institutional authority to what were deemed "real" girls, and by implication more authentic popular voices, was situated as a political decision to give girls authority on their own rather than having them rely on what were deemed outmoded theorists and activists. As a strategy for recognition through authenticity, this move fueled the perception that second-wave theory and action did not address real-world experiences, in this case of younger women and girls but in the past for women of color and those outside the more privileged classes, for whom navigating the social world of relationships, desires and commodities seemed more complicated than the denial of femininity that a cursory glance at the second wave suggested.

Voices of the third wave have encouraged the second wave essentially to lighten up. Iconic third-wavers Jennifer Baumgartner and Amy Richards (2004, p.67) have

written, "Because we learn so much more from what people do that what they say, we need to take a step back from rhetoric and focus on acts. When we look around at what young women are doing rather than what they are wearing, it's clear that there is a feminist continuum," indicating that second-wave goals had by this point largely been realized and even surpassed by younger generations. The importance of visual signs and physical appearance to self-definition is part of a third wave sensibility that choices about clothing and makeup are demonstrations of empowerment signified by social affiliation, and achievable through consumption. This has been taken up in media narratives and social critiques that this is a form of consumer citizenship that fosters a culture obsessed with bodies, body care and attainment of beauty situated as self-respect and personal responsibility; it is founded in performing a rather narrow version of femininity (Radner 1995), while promising an alternative to the presumed dowdiness and uniformity of the second wave.

Accounts and other evidence have shown the existence of respect, recognition, cooperation and productive back and forth discourse among feminists of all ages and stripes. But popular notions situate second wavers as stuck in the mud while third wavers embody the energy of youth, regardless of their actual ages. In media and economic terms, this has placed the third wave in the eye of marketers and media outlets which place a high value on (and have commercial and financial interests in) the visibility of youth culture. Having the public eye regardless of how one gets it means more media visibility, which in turn promises a greater likelihood that your voice will be heard. While this is an effective tactic for earning recognition as a road to authority, it also implies,

inaccurately, that the third wave's strategy of distancing itself from the second wave is a concerted denial of the history of second-wave struggles in order to grab more attention (Siegel 1997). Girls after the second wave might be able to use their own voices to tell their stories and call attention to important social issues through a variety of media (zines and blogs, for example). However, a multitude of girls each with her own interpretation of femininity and consequent history is not, in fact, a writing of coherent history as White (1987) has described, but rather a series of individual stories which may or may not be recognized as a movement or a larger call for justice and rights. This fragmentation precludes a restructuring of the social narrative to more fully include women and girls.

If feminisms are positioned as oppositional, a major way that the second wave is assumed to find the third wave inadequate is that the latter rejects collective action in favor of individual presence and uses style and visibility over social action and legislation to address needs and desires (Purvis 1997). Whether this is an accurate representation of third wave or not, it highlights important issues. First, this view assumes that style is by definition not social or political and as part of mass pop culture is within a system that degrades women (Kilbourne and Jhally 2000). A second misinterpretation collapses third wave feminism with postfeminism, an error that has been damaging to feminist gains that have effectively empowered women and girls. While both the third wave and postfeminism were reactions to second wave feminism as much as they were responses to social conditions generally, there are significant differences. Third-wave feminism holds with earlier feminist tenets but has demanded some changes, while postfeminism declares feminism in any form irrelevant and anachronously ugly. Postfeminism contends that

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feminism has outlived any usefulness and, having achieved its original aims (aims which were not always beneficial to women or to society), is really a warehouse for women who are mired in gender issues in a post-gender world (Modleski 1991). A common postfeminist perspective encouraged the replacement of old stereotypes, such as the idealized housewife, the cold-hearted career woman or the bra-burning activist, with equally problematic new ones, notably a "new woman" who could have it all as long as she could buy it (Dyer 1987). This woman earned the right to occupy space on both the screen and in her imagined public with the right kind of style. Sexuality was her power, acquired through commercial consumption of clothing, jewelry, in an equating of liberation with purchasing power. This representation of girlhood and womanhood was very media-friendly, as John Fiske (1989) has described Madonna's ability to both make fun of and embrace herself as a "material girl," a negotiation spectacularly manifest in the iconic television series *Sex and the City* (Star 1998).

The idea of a materialist third wave is quite different from the focus on material concerns attributed to the second wave. While material feminism indicates a concern for women in the lived world such as laws and rights, materialism implies an attachment to things (objects) we can buy, as participants in consumer culture. While these things we buy might – and do – improve conditions for women and for men, materialism is not a label of honor, Madonna aside. When interpreted as a concern with objects over a concern with conditions, this conflict is the source of a large rift between second-wave feminists and the "and also" feminists, including the third wave, *grrrl* power and post-feminists: To value a thing/object over another human goes against morality and implies

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immaturity in an inability to appropriately prioritize and make good choices.[1] To a second-wave feminist, this suggests third wavers are girlish not in the sense of playful and irreverent, but in the sense of unformed and with misplaced values, and willing to sacrifice rights and voice for the shine of new shoes (Harris 2004). For many girls, though, these objects are part of a strategy of flexible identity as a politics of play and masquerade, and this includes signs of conventional sexual availability such as red lipstick and stiletto-heeled shoes.

The flexibility that a decentered self might promise seems a reasonable justification for expanding feminisms to encompass tenets of conventional femininity; different situations require a range of embodiments and behaviors. As a reason to declare second-wave feminism irrelevant or feminism more broadly over and done, it falls short. The assertion that feminist theories and goals before 1990 are anachronistic assumes women and adolescents are defined against other standards, primarily, those of adult males. Instead of affirming girliness this revalues the masculine – the very situation third wavers have tried to avoid – and assumes lack of both imagination and ability to conceive of tactics for negotiating this world for anyone not an adult male. These presumptions persist in spite of numerous illustrations across disciplines of the ways disenfranchised populations carve out space with the goal of agency.

Agency, or the ability to act by claiming a place in the social world through rights and recognition in both public and private spheres, is not synonymous with autonomy, or independence and the ability to choose in order to determine our own actions and situations. Conflating autonomy with agency, which seems to happen in conditions of

consumer citizenship, suggests that individual choice is the same as social power. This equation is problematic for women, seen in cultural perceptions surrounding the word "choice" and its relation to both maternity and female consumption, as Rickie Solinger has argued. Solinger points out that considering second wave claims to social gains for women based on the Roe v. Wade decision on the legality of abortion,

> Many middle-class women did not notice that what they'd gained – choice – was a profoundly individualistic asset. This form of reproductive choice presumed that a woman could exercise her new options unconstrained by socioeconomic structures such as sexism or racism or poverty (1998:386).

At the same time "choice," which Solinger describes as "the ultimate consumerist concept in America" (387), came to stand in for both consumer citizenship and women's rights, but rights understood to be founded on determinations of maternity rather than humanity. This conception of rights and citizenship assumes more options available means more opportunity to make a good choice rather than a bad one and ultimately to *choose* one's way to a better, happier life (Schwartz 2004, pp. 99-116). On one hand, the nature of femininity is fluid enough that labeling specific ideals and any representations of them as good or bad always invites disagreement, as do attempts to evaluate and prioritize the measures of success. Among the most prevalent of these are physical fitness, beauty, marriage and career status, and maternity. The other hand points out that the choices by which we define these ideals are used socially to compare and measure morality. The equation of choice with morality positions women who make choices deemed wrong or inappropriate as immoral, regardless of what options actually were

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available considering their situation and social standing. Underpinning this equation is the matter of context and embodying the right kind of femininity in the proper locations, a problem of identity and space.

DEFINING SPACE

Susan Gal (2002) has argued that spatial and other broad social distinctions are fractal in that they are both nested and infinitely reproducible in the same pattern regardless of scale and scope, indicating the ubiquity of the public/private distinction:

> Whatever the local, historically specific content of the dichotomy, the distinction between public and private can be reproduced repeatedly by projecting it onto narrower contexts or broader ones. Or, it can be projected onto different social 'objects'-activities, identities, institutions, spaces and interactions-that can be further categorized into public and private parts. Then, through recursivity (and recalibration) each of these parts can be recategorized again, by the same public/private distinction (81).

The means of reproduction points to both space and time: on one hand a narrative of forward progress through history (time), leaving behind old ideas for new and better ones; and on the other hand the persistence of space in the fractal dualities that reinscribe existing norms so that sameness masquerades as change. For example, children, including adolescents, in the formal education system are usually sequestered for their school time with the presumption that this decreases distractions at school: better learning while ensuring children's safety from contaminants and dangers of the adult world outside. It is

also true that school suggests a form of quarantine in order to keep young people, in general assumed to have bad judgment based on inexperience (among other things), from endangering society. Each generation seems convinced of doing more and better than the generation before in meeting children's needs and forming them into responsible citizens. At the same time there seems to be no decrease in anxiety from year to year about young people's whereabouts when not in school, and what they are doing with this time. These anxieties reinstate the very tropes we claim we are escaping by raising children into better adult citizens who will know how to make good moral choices. Further, the boundary between youth and adulthood is uncertain as attaining the status of responsible citizen varies according to activity (legally driving, voting or having sex, for example) and expectations of adult rights and obligations differ among communities and depend also on individual identity and social status (Smith et al. 2005). This uncertainty is compounded by the extension of adolescent terms and expectations into adulthood in the legal and chronological sense. For example, think of what we mean by boys' and girls' night out as it suggests adults seeking fun and freedom in opposition to the presumed constraints of responsibility in home and family life.

As an analytical tool to consider borders and boundaries in everyday life, it is worth exploring meanings and terms for issues of space. A fundamental assumption about space, in this instance the concept of space and not some specific form or region, is that it is equivalent to "potential" and in the first instance open to all bodies and any social interaction (McKeon 1994). This perception implies that space awaits bodies in action to provide structure and definition which, when realized, sets in motion progress

through human agency. However, all spaces, even virtual ones, are in some way limited as soon as they are determined and colonized (Meyrowitz 1985). The conditions for progress are also the conditions of restraint, presenting a problem in maintaining an illusion of openness despite the boundaries or exclusions required by bodies and objects in space: social structure is largely determined by the rules governing who is permitted to enter and exit spaces and places and who polices these regulations. My purpose here is to consider the consequences of this illusion and question the intersections of boundaries, both material and symbolic, as they relate to girlhood and identity. Gender boundaries are essentially moral boundaries (Benhabib 1992) as they determine acceptable behavior not just in public comportment, but also in matters of sex, work and family. Choices made in everyday life are judged according to criteria of gender, for example who stays home from work to care for a sick child, or who makes the first sexual advance (and even what counts as an advance), where, and under what terms.

We refer to social order in spatial terms presented as oppositional: divisions between public and private; sacred and profane; home and work. Classifications of space are crucial to a functioning society. We need not just common agreement on what is appropriate in different spaces but also knowledge about who is making the rules, which often is obscured. We address disagreements on these things in part through interaction with media, which promise both methods and locations for integrating these seemingly oppositional places (Hebdige [1979] 1991) and smoothing out contentious social relations. As Goffman (1971) has argued, social relationships depend on space, just as the spatial situation of the individual in relation to other people and objects determines the

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order of public life. Conceptions of space are changeable depending on the intended and actual use. Any conversation about space, whether conceptual or material, is tricky because it relies on some mutual understanding of space among all parties. However, in language and practice we conceive of space in multiple ways, sometimes simultaneously (McKeon 1994). We then fight over place – meaning individual instances of space – as a representation of general spatial dominance and in order to earn social recognition and, possibly, political power (Harvey 1989).

We see these struggles in personal interactions of everyday life between neighbors as well as on a global scale. We need material evidence of social control such as a denial of rights to own land or entrance to a building based on visible factors of identity; otherwise, how would we know when boundaries are being breached? This need for visible, bodily evidence such as codes of gender, race and class points to the social nature of space, a connection which has been addressed by feminist geographers and other scholars of space and place in considering the intertwining of space and identity (Spain 1992; Massey 1993, 1994; Rose 1993; Keith and Pile 1993).

AUTHENTICITY AND AUTONOMY

The connections between space and identity, and particularly in the forms of boundaries and norms, reveal what is at stake in tossing out feminisms in any form, and how arguments between feminisms function as a decoy for deeply ingrained structures of gender norms. Situations, places and bodies are regulated and evaluated in carrying out the small tasks of everyday life – moving through a coffee house, a grocery store, a

school – as schema in which to situate our bodies as part of a larger social structure (Willis 1990). Harvey has explained the need to connect perceptions of spaces on different scales:

> [T]he mix of performative activities available to the body in a given place and time are not independent of the technological, physical, social and economic environment in which that body has its being. And the representational practices that operate in society likewise shape the body (and in the forms of dress and postures proposal all manner of additional symbolic meanings) (2000:98-99).

In order to know what is in this "mix," meaning the range of options for social interaction and consequent performances of identity, it is necessary to locate cultural boundaries. Agreement on these things is in part accomplished through the reproduction of social standards based on *habitus* as defined by Pierre Bourdieu (1990). Dependent on place, location and situation, *habitus* is spatial in nature and functions through collective assumptions of what seems natural, right and normal. It is the intersection of the possible and the probable in everyday life: the boundaries of potential as presented in the common situations and reasonable responses to them that define a society or one of its segments, and based on a lost history of experience. This history is lost not in that it does not exist or no longer matters, but rather that it invisible, having been absorbed into the rhythms of everyday life and resting on our sense of what has always been.

We reproduce these defining habits and tastes through common narratives, constructing history in order to make sense of our situation; narrative is a framework within which *habitus* can live, practically hidden. An act as seemingly innocuous as

reading in a sparsely populated coffee house is meaningful as spatial practice which, as

de Certeau has determined, "structure the determining conditions of social life"

(1984:96). A narrative of everyday life in terms of space and boundaries is performative

in Goffman's sense of the term in that successful navigation requires a series of

performances that demonstrate we are in line with cultural norms; particular places and

situations have different requirements. We need to know how to act and to distinguish

"front stage" from "back stage" in Goffman's (1959) formulation, meaning respectively

the area for enacting the performance and the area in which the performance is conceived

and planned out. This knowledge depends on our ability to decipher a "key," which

Goffman has defined as "the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already

meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned

on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else" (44). We have the

key to participating in and understanding performances if we are able to accurately read

sociocultural codes, meaning that we understand them in accord with other actors. While

reading the codes is not equivalent to agreeing to adhere to them, and of course there are

many ways of interpreting and reacting to a situation, the key persists through

reinforcement of common social assumptions based largely on markers of identity. In this

way, women and young people among other populations often have been excluded from

full citizenship for an assumed lack of sense rather than a failure to actually adhere to

standards of responsibility.

In performing appropriately according to dominant social expectations,

disenfranchised populations might also be fostering their own exclusion from the public

sphere. Validation and survival of habitus depends on the "rational actor" who responds to conditions and situations within reason, meaning within socially acceptable boundaries given identity and situation (Schutz 1970; Bourdieu 1990). However, in many instances actors' lack of rationality is assumed even when they are performing in line with social expectations given their identity, such as teenagers' acts of rebellion or women being labeled overly emotional by weeping openly at a melodrama: a stigmatizing *action* which renders the actor undesirable in public despite a cultural understanding that the action is appropriate given the actor's status and identity. Individuals not deemed rational actors, with or without evidence of irrationality, are unlikely to have a place or voice in the public sphere. Cynthia Fuchs Epstein has summarized the very real issues at stake for embodying difference that is equated with irrationality: "Belief in difference invariably results in inequality, in invidious distinctions. Thus, women suffer from the distinctions that proclaim them as different from men; blacks suffer from the distinctions that characterize them as different from whites; youths are regarded as morally deficient compared to adults" (1992:232).

Issues of space and identity depend on a notion of authenticity, which is responsible for defining social boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. It is not surprising that the meaning of authenticity as a term is disputed when at stake are fundamental categories of what counts as real, true or absolute in terms of identity and culture (Zukin 1991). Underlying these problems, which define in part a rhetoric of Cultural Studies as it seeks to address identity and power, is an apples-and-oranges comparison of two discourses of authenticity, both foundational and seemingly at cross-purposes:

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authenticity as defined by Simone de Beauvoir as action in opposition to bad faith ([1946] 2004; and Benjamin's conception of authenticity as an aura of singular exceptionalism (1968). This articulation does not, of course, cover the complexity and gravity of either Beauvoir's or Benjamin's concepts. However, it does shed light on reasons why feminisms appear unable to find accord on desired goals, appropriate embodiment or effective strategies and tactics, and that these reasons are related to spatiality and action, as I will explain here. Seen in this light, Beauvoir's moral authenticity of social action and Benjamin's authenticity rooted in an experience of visibility appear to align with, respectively, the second and third waves of feminism.

Given that belonging (designated by inclusion) and acting (a form of establishing authority) depend on a common understanding not just of what counts as authentic, but on what (or whose) terms, asserting the accuracy of a narrative and the relative permeability of boundaries is an assertion of social control. In terms of feminisms, a perceived rupture between second wave and third wave markers of authenticity makes it seem as though feminists of different generations are speaking different languages and contributes to a sense of antipathy. Such a conflict is more exciting to follow than would be a narrative of feminist history founded on intergenerational respect and thoughtful discussion.

For Beauvoir authenticity is *action* in recognition of the rights of others and a refusal to support norms that would deny these rights. It is the connection between individual and social responsibility and is attainable through actions which have material consequences in order to set in motion a transformation. Beauvoir ([1946] 2004) has

argued that it is in an individual's responsibility to act to attain authenticity, which is revealed in choosing to take these actions. This perception is reflected in second wave feminist tenets and strategies: women determining a lack of rights and then amassing support and acting in concert to counter this lack, with the aim of fundamentally changing social conditions for all women, even those who might not suspect a problem in the first place. At issue in this has been whether these women have the right (and the appropriate experience and knowledge) to speak for what all women need. Second-wave feminism as it was popularized in the 1960s and 1970s has been criticized for essentially narrowing the scope of authentic femininity by eliding the needs of white, educated, middle-class women with those of women of color and who inhabit other social worlds.

For Benjamin, authenticity is a *quality* residing in objects; it is inherent and mystical, an "aura," and is demonstrated through display and performance. Benjamin's version of authenticity means to hold a quality of remarkable originality, access to which reproduces structures of inequality. Reproduction and distancing from the original weaken authenticity; mass production and image dissemination in a sense dim the very quality through which the object held high value in the first place. However this diffusion is measured against the democratization of culture through redistribution of the image so that the value is shared – and is inevitable in light of technologies. Authenticity found in aura is inherent and mystical but, as with Beauvoir's definition, requires taking action and, along with that, an assumption of materiality in which the aura, as authenticity, is displayed. However, as Sarah Thornton (1996) has argued, in the age of mass and easy reproduction, true particularly for images and sounds, aura remains but is transferred to

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different aspects of whatever object is valued. Thornton has explained that this occurred with the music industry in the transference of the value of the song/work of art to the performer and even some sense of an original recording. Aura then becomes relational and experiential: having *been there* or *seen that*, and so fundamentally spatial. This is the authenticity of third wave feminism in its original intent: the value in demonstrating a supernatural individuality through presentation and a view that reproduction and dissemination of images and cultural forms decreases the aura of the individual but, importantly, also makes the image more accessible and more visible. This increased opportunity for presence of an image earns both the subject and the producer wider recognition and consequent access to the public sphere. Choices made by individuals about when, how and how much to present themselves might then be political acts in so far as they provide evidence – often visual evidence in choices of clothing, hairstyle and other consumer tools of embodiment – that there are a variety of alternatives for claiming femininity, and this evidence is revealed through mass dissemination.

It seems impossible to accept both of these meanings at once since they appear to be an argument over tradition versus anti-tradition. Stopping there, though, has helped incubate a perception of fractious arguments between feminisms (including anti- and post-feminisms). Second-wave feminism in a popular narrative reflects Beauvoir's sense of authenticity in an insistence on collective action, seen in wide-scale protests supporting women's rights and needs. Third-wave feminists seem more in alignment with Benjamin's sense of aura as it depends on scales of visibility for recognition and a voice in social arguments, as seen in their insistence on self-definition and presentation as a

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political tactic. The persistence of these disagreements suggests motion without movement: activity without action which indicates an inadequate definition of space as only confining rather than potentially transformational in nature (McKeon 1994).

It is worthwhile to consider the integration of these spatial relationships and not only how they appear incompatible. In the first instance, both versions of authenticity require calculated performance, and each critiques the systems of production and reproduction of meaning and power. In addition, both value transformation as meaning the potential for expanding what is possible; in this case, potential is not necessarily a movement toward the ideal. Finally, both encompass issues of choice and action in terms of the relative importance of having authority to make choices, the scope of choices available and the specific choices an individual then makes (Purvis 2004). Each of these intersections underlies concerns about sex and gender, space and media that I explore here. With this in mind, it may not be necessary to position feminisms against one another, a point well argued in scholarship but earning little other attention in contrast to more salacious reports of inter-feminist battles.[3]

A GOOD PLACE FOR WOMEN

Media, images and representation are central to feminist scholarship, evidenced in the foundational feminist work in film and television theory (Mulvey 1975; Haskell 1974; Kaplan 1980, 1983; de Lauretis 1984). Social perceptions of media appear to have shifted

from media as a window on the world or a screen between our world and another to a more ambiguous relationship. I argue this relationship is fundamentally environmental and falls within the definition of social space. I define environmental here as encompassing a variety of integral factors and conditions such that production and consumption are indistinguishable. Feminism and media are forcefully intertwined in feminist and visual culture scholarship.

In the 1960s, feminism had a clear target in social institutions dominated by men. In the period around the millennium, more fluid situations of gender in which classifications based on sex seemed more a web of possibilities than a dualism also meant greater uncertainty about what, exactly, feminists and others seeking rights and recognition were reacting to in the absence of a clearly defined target. In accepting less-fixed identity parameters, the positioning of men and women as engaged in a tug-of-war for social power seen in early television narratives appeared anachronistic. For example, the machinations of Samantha in *Bewitched* as she deceived her husband by using her magical powers, when viewed in the 1990s on cable reruns, were humorous as much for Samantha's acceptance that she should at least appear submissive to a man as for the generic aspects of the show such as the one-liners and slapstick comedy. Similarly the 1975 film *The Stepford Wives* (Forbes 1975), a horror/suspense movie (based on a Ira Levin's 1972 novel) about an idyllic suburban community where men secretly replace their wives with subservient robots, was remade as a comedy for release in 2004.

The potential for self representation through mass visual communication suggests media is as much a location for social relations as it is a means for transmitting

information. Positioning media as space and space as structured by media increases the value of performativity and the need to convincingly present different selves depending on context. Media representations are widely known to be constructed by systems of people and institutions, including actors, artists, editors, producers, bloggers, networks and corporations. At the intersection of feminism and youth culture is a heightened understanding of always potentially being on display to a much wider audience than may understand the contexts of our actions. With this hypervisibility in mind, our performances in Goffman's sense of everyday social interactions might seem to require as much maneuvering as does producing a television series, in hopes of managing how we might be perceived both within and outside of our intended context.[4] The ramifications for women are clear: as objects of the gaze – and I believe this is still true – we are familiar with being looked at as objects without being recognized as subjects. Amplifying this situation to a wider range of situations – and with varying terms of permission for who gets to look and what they get to see – may foster resignation among women that our images are not always under our control and one option is to create and disseminate our images ourselves. The translation of this sense to young women, however, who have grown up with hundreds of channels, digital imaging and immediate global communication, means girls' oppositional strategies undertaken in scholarship, filmmaking and photography, among other areas, claim the gaze without questioning the unstable positions of the gaze and the gazed-upon. Without this context, what is left is an understanding of the importance of disseminating pictures without much acknowledgement of the material consequences such as loss of control on a wide scale

over when and where your body is viewed, evaluated and sexually desired, or the more practically important loss of a job. There is neither a clear power relationship between viewer and image nor certainty about how great the distance between them.

CHAPTER 3: *ALIAS*, A CAUTIONARY TALE

The opening shot of the pilot for the television series *Alias* (Abrams 2001b) is a close-up of the pale face of a young woman submerged in water. As her head is jerked out of the water, the camera pans out to reveal she is in a dark and closed room being roughly handled and interrogated by two Asian men who are armed and in military garb, who then immobilize her by handcuffing her to an office chair. She hears ominous footsteps coming toward the slatted wooden door into the room. She stares wide eyed and terrified at the door, appearing otherworldly with day-glo red hair, dark-ringed eyes and black clothing contrasting with her pallid skin. The door opens and we see a professorial white man with unruly white hair coming through to enter the room. He looks serious but pleasant and wears a cardigan and bow-tie. The camera pans out from the man to reveal a completely different context: an airy college lecture room in which the same young woman, only now with brown hair and wearing jeans and a pale pink t-shirt, is taking an exam. Her professor immediately addresses her as "Sydney," thus giving her a name. This recognition through naming in conjunction with Sydney's conventional appearance in the classroom as opposed to when we first see her under water position the real Sydney as a girl who does not stand out and who lacks the obvious masquerade and the dangerous existence of the red-haired prisoner.

These dual introductions to Sydney identify her as a graduate student who works at an international bank and as a spy for whom the bank job is a cover. This first

sequence reveals Sydney's identities as discrete and requiring different kinds of performances. The slatted door between one form of her life and another suggests the permeability of the boundaries around Sydney's different versions of herself and underscores her own lack of agency in guarding movement between them. The dissolution of the boundaries Sydney has worked to maintain between her different selves sets up the action for the remainder of the series, complicated by her family, friends, enemies and co-workers. If space constructs identity, as these scenes illustrate, and space is defined by Sydney's identity in the situation, Sydney's use of space in simply acting and reacting has the potential to transform both her identity and the place itself.

The title, *Alias*, highlights the centrality of social passing, of embodying alternate selves, of deception by transformation to inhabit social places where one would not be welcome should one's true self, however difficult that is to locate or define, be revealed. Goffman (1963) has described social warnings against passing as an intersection of space and identity:

> Given that the individual's spatial world will be divided into different regions according to the contingencies embedded in them for the management of social and personal identity, one can go on to consider some of the problems and consequences of passing. This consideration will partly overlap with folk wisdom; cautionary tales concerning the contingencies of passing form part of the morality we employ to keep people in their places (83).

Alias is such a cautionary tale, one which illustrates social anxieties about femininity and gender norms and, as Goffman indicates, that passing is effectively the

refusal to recognize authority given one's identity and the system of power. The context of the original broadcast of *Alias* – the time period of its initial run, its position in the subgenre of shows featuring tough, active female protagonists; its general popularity and critical success – renders it immediately relevant to questions of gender and power. The pilot titled "Truth Be Told" (Abrams 2001b) promises a celebration of girl power while progressively constructing a situation in which Sydney's agency is undermined by her decreasing ability to control the boundaries of identity as well as of place, resulting in the destruction of spatial order.

Gender norms are foundational in determining social structure, and the definition and regulation of space and place in relation to gender function to maintain social order or instigate disorder. The show's success and the consistency of Sydney's likeability (to fans) and good moral character (within the show) require that she be tough and non-threatening, sexy and virtuous, each in the proper place and the ability to switch among these at will. Her capacity to compartmentalize allows her to navigate her worlds so that each of these characterizations is evident only at the appropriate place and time. The social relations established in *Alias* through the definition and regulation and space, along with Sydney's actual embodiment – her comportment in particular places – structure the narrative to reflect real-world concerns about appropriate gender behavior, concerns rooted in the natures of public and private. Lefebvre's sense of spatial practice, or perceived space, is that it allows us to believe in continuity and cohesion. An analysis of *Alias* in these terms points to the value of having a cohesive sense of self and our place in the world, and what happens when we see fractures which threaten us with incoherence.

Alias frames contradictions in feminine embodiment and feminisms through its structure and narrative. These contradictions are ultimately resolved, albeit abruptly and after years of complications, in tandem with Sydney's integration into a conventional family. I am not situating Sydney as in direct contrast to male heroes in the same general time period and genre; Sydney shares characteristics of conflicted male protagonists of the same era, continuing the male-hero trajectory of movement away from a stoic, independent hero to a conflicted, sensitive hero with deep emotional involvement in all aspects of life, not least about family (Jeffords 1994; Tasker 2004). In situating Sydney this way, *Alias* represents the assumed conflicts over public and private as potentially life- and world-threatening without Sydney's careful maintenance of physical, social and personal borders, which are her personal responsibility rather than a series of choices divorced from contexts, spatial or otherwise. Sydney ultimately comes to peace and fulfillment upon the reconstruction of public and private domains based on work and home and clearly identifying home and family as the priority and, as she always lacked permanence in her role as a secret agent, the sphere in which she claims an authentic and stable self.

Alias complicates the model of Sydney Bristow as a "new girl," one who views herself, as Gonick (2006) has perceptively defined this phrase, as, "assertive, dynamic and unbound from the constraints of passive femininity." The new girl positions herself as having more authority in self-definition than girls of earlier generations; she does this through her actions and, importantly, her intentions with the assumption that these are rooted in personal (individual) choice. This general description does not seem to oppose

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the claims of second-wave feminism, but rather appears as a rethinking of them when adopted by girls who have grown up assuming equal sex and gender rights rather than expecting to fight for them. However, considering the fusion of issues of choice with issues of rights, different feminisms diverge on some of the specific choices attributed to new girls which circle back to tropes of conventional femininity, albeit taking them in different directions.

This reconstitution of the feminine is evident in the hyperextension of girliness in order to have sexuality available as a means to some other end as well as the transformation of "girl" to "grrrl" (Taft 2004; Kearney 2009). Laura Mulvey has argued the entire sense of space and structure is altered when a woman is positioned as central to a narrative: "[T]he generic space seems to shift. The landscape of action, although present, is not the dramatic core of the film's story, rather it is the interior drama of a girl caught between two conflicting desires … the female presence as center allows the story to be actually, overtly, about sexuality: it becomes a melodrama" (1990:30). Visibility, violence and sexuality inspired by or even involving pornography can be empowering means of personal expression and illustrate awareness of genders and sexualities. But the potential for empowerment is countered by the fact that such actions would not be acceptable in every situation and for all girls, and might have serious material consequences which fundamentally depend on space, place and embodiment, ranging from losing a job to physical harm, both frequent concerns for Sydney throughout *Alias*. Sydney's willingness to take on the role of fetish/object is never suspect as she is always working for some greater good. Further mitigating this contradiction of sex object/good

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girl, the narrative consistently refers back to Sydney's desire for normalcy in the form of nuclear family and romantic love as a frame for the series, reflecting a key part of a socially conservative agenda more than any form of expansive girl power.

IT'S COMPLICATED: IT'S FAMILY

The life of *Alias*, including its star, popularity and subject matter dramatizes contradictions women face in the early twenty-first century by making visible conflicts within and among feminisms over the definition, demarcation and representation of space. *Alias* was one of the longest-running and most commercially successful tough girl-hero shows, and lead actor Jennifer Garner's celebrity image was and is recognized beyond fans of the series. Garner did win the 2004 Teen Choice Award for best TV actress in a drama/adventure, perhaps more an indication of her status as a young female celebrity than evidence that teenagers in 2004 were fans of her work in *Alias*[5]. While not a super-hit, *Alias* maintained enough acclaim and audience market share to last five full seasons (James, 2003). Its demise was attributed to changes in Garner's life, primarily her pregnancy and motherhood, and scheduling of the show against tough competition. In 2005, soon before the network announced the show would end in the spring of 2006, *The Boston Globe* reported:

> Despite a cult following over five seasons and intense media coverage of the
> personal life of star Jennifer Garner, *Alias* is struggling in its new Thursday time
> slot. … This season, the spy drama featuring a pregnant Garner on the show, is

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airing Thursdays at 8 p.m., opposite CBS's blockbuster 'Survivor: Guatemala.'
Only 7.1 million viewers are watching (Ryan 2005).

At that time, shows were considered to be doing well only with nearly twice that
many viewers. Yet *Alias* had enough fans that, upon the initial release of seasons one
through four on DVD, sales placed it on *Billboard*'s top DVD sales charts for those
weeks (Billboard n.d.).

Alias begins as the story of Sydney Bristow, a secret agent who believes at first
that she is employed by the CIA but finds out she is actually working for SD-6, a rogue
international espionage organization operating counter to the CIA. When SD-6 has
Sydney's fiancé Danny assassinated because Sydney had revealed to him that she was a
spy, she becomes a double agent for the CIA in order to bring down SD-6 from the
inside. In the run of the series, Sydney, aided by others, succeeds in destroying SD-6, and
continues to work for the CIA in an underground, "black ops" capacity. *Alias* maintains
mystery about the legitimacy of the different organizations Sydney works for throughout
the series as a key part of the drama and deception.

Despite *Alias*'s adherence to generic conventions of action/adventure, family and
personal relationships underlie the narrative of international espionage so that *Alias*
functions equally as a melodrama. Sydney's family structure is as confusing as that of
any conventional soap opera. Her father, Jack Bristow, is revealed in the pilot episode to
also be an agent of SD-6 working as a double agent for the CIA. Sydney's mother Laura
Bristow, presumed to have been a school teacher who died many years before, is revealed
in the first season to not only still alive but also a nefarious secret agent named Irina

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Derevko, whose loyalties to family and others are doubtful at best. Later in the series, Sydney finds she has a half-sister who is a secret agent, the daughter of her mother and Arvin Sloane, her self-serving boss at SD-6; and also two aunts, her mother's sisters, who are secret agents with questionable loyalties.

Sydney's relationship with her father has always been troubled, made clear in the pilot in a nostalgic scene of one of Sydney's childhood memories of their relationship. Her relationship with her mother is vexed. When at first Sydney presumes her mother is dead as the result of an accident long before, Sydney idealizes her as a kind and caring woman and mother. This becomes difficult when Irina is found to be living, quite less than kind and antithetical to an ideally good mother, and Sydney attempts to bridge the emotional distance between them. Throughout the narrative, Sydney seeks to bring together her nuclear family despite the obvious personal and professional complications. In this, Sydney is repeatedly betrayed by her mother, sometimes literally shot down by her.

After the first season of *Alias*, network executives said they would "unwind some of the dense plots" of the show which, given conventions of genre, seemed oriented toward women. *Alias* "aimed to have youth appeal with wild outfits and lots of action," the *Los Angeles Times* (James 2003) reported; "young women embraced the plot lines and tangled relationships of the characters … But young men didn't stick with the show." Strategies for earning male attention to *Alias* included running an episode immediately following the Super Bowl in 2002 and airing ads during the game featuring Garner, "strutting around in attire arguably better suited for a Victoria's Secret catalog than to a

TV drama" (James). *Entertainment Weekly* reporter Lynette Rice suggested in 2004 that

the complex plot of *Alias* was a symptom of ABC's inability to connect with a broad

range of viewers and draw in commercially desirable demographics, and that the network

should move away from "bold dramas that are too complicated [and] either learn from

CBS and NBC and create a procedural franchise (*CSI*, *Law & Order*) or re-embrace your

thirtysomething roots and give women something to (willingly) cry over," like ABC's

own *Desperate Housewives*. These suggested fixes encouraged gender-based

narrowcasting through compartmentalization of programming assumed to elicit emotion

on one hand (women crying about women catfighting) and reason on the other (the

puzzles of formulaic crime procedurals).[6] Despite these considerations to redirect *Alias* as

either a women's show or one that would appeal more to men, the series continued to

meld family melodrama, Sydney in sexualized fetish-wear, and often-violent action.

GIRL-POWER TV

Recent characterizations of tough girls reflect a focus and situation that differs

from their predecessors. This is particularly evident in how these new girls are situated

alongside male characters and in relation to the social institutions represented in the

shows. The active woman of 1990s television did not emerge out of nowhere, and was

part of a broader cultural interest in girls and women apparent in the number of books

about girls published during the 1990s, with 1992 labeled The Year of the Woman in

politics and popular culture.[7] Females who kick ass, literally and metaphorically, are

certainly not new to the twenty-first century: on television, *The Avengers* (Newman

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1961) and *Honey West* (Spelling 1965) in the 1960s, *Charlie's Angels* (Spelling and

Goldberg 1976) in the 1970s, for example; and Hollywood cinema's early years featured

assertive, smart beautiful women including Norma Shearer, Barbara Stanwyck and

Katherine Hepburn (Neely 2003). Television also has a substantial history of

supernaturally abled women and girls threading through decades. These magical girls

were visible most prominently in the 1960s and early 1970s as a reflection of anxieties

about the rise of second wave feminism, and again in the 1990s as arguments about the

viability and relevance of the second wave surfaced (Appendix A).

The earliest incarnations of fantasy women on TV were both supernatural and

comedic, with the humor stemming from the women's desires to use their exceptional

abilities in opposition to their spouses' desires to have wives unremarkable for anything

other than being pretty and a good hostess. The lead characters of *I Dream of Jeannie*

(Sheldon 1965) and *Bewitched* embodied frustrations with pre-women's-movement

ideals of womanhood. *Jeannie*'s Jeannie, an actual genie, and Samantha, the witch of

Bewitched, struggled to balance their supernatural powers with the suffocating but

normalizing suburban housewife ideal that Betty Friedan described in *The Feminine

Mystique* in 1963. The primary plot device was the series' male leads forbidding these

uncannily able women to use their powers and the women subversively defying them in

order to solve problems, and in the process reaffirm their sense of self as exceptional and

capable of accomplishing the unthinkable when not restricted by standards of normalcy.

The 1970s brought girl-hero shows, which included *The Bionic Woman* (Johnson 1976),

Charlie's Angels and *Police Woman* (Gerber 1974), where the girls were encouraged to

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use their powers, supernatural or otherwise, but under the supervision of men and male-dominated institutions, and with the girls' actions revealing the assumption that there would be conflicts between being a working woman and an ideal woman (Romm 1986).

This conflict as seen on TV was negotiated openly in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (Brooks and Burns 1970), a sitcom about the everyday life of a woman with no superpowers or secret identity, no spies or villains bent on world destruction. Bonnie Dow (1996) has discussed *Mary Tyler Moore* as representing feminism in a way that was palatable to an audience skeptical of a women's movement but which paved the way for expanded representations of women. *Mary Tyler Moore* initially aired just as the women's movement was making inroads in conventional culture, and was a rerun staple for many years after that. The show featured actress Mary Tyler Moore as Mary Richards, a young, educated, middle-class, single career woman living on her own in Minneapolis. Mary was a groundbreaking characterization of femininity in her enjoyment of independence and seeking of fulfillment through work as much as through friendships and home life, and in that all of these figured prominently in the show. Mary was quite conventional, however, in her characterization as a motherly mediator maintaining peace in both her home and work environments (Bathrick 1984). Her image resonated as both real, in the difficulties she faced retaining respect in the patriarchal environment of a television newsroom, and ideal in the way she did this without being labeled a bitch, not least because she was stylish and pretty in addition to her integrity and capability. Like Sydney Bristow, Mary Richards struggled to maintain boundaries between her home and work spheres, although in the case of *MTM* the frequent breaches by friends and

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coworkers were humorous rather than dangerous. Mary carried conventionally feminized traits into her workplace, as did Sydney decades later, including compassion, empathy and a cooperative spirit, suggesting (albeit in the service of comedy in *Mary Tyler Moore*) that inclusion of women into a male-dominated workplace might have fundamental benefits beyond providing secretarial support and something pretty to look at, and that there is value in not containing women in the private sphere.

The 1980s saw a drawing in of this discourse of home and work in relation to femininity. Television women of the 1980s indicated a renewed focus on affirming notions of sex and gender such that women attempting to exercise power in areas other than motherhood and domesticity were damaged or culturally damaging (for example by destroying the family through neglect) and unfulfilled (Jeffords 1994; Feuer 1995; Helford 2000; Early and Kennedy 2003); if women were going to venture outside the home, everyone would have to pay. This backlash fostered the fracturing of feminisms which at its core was a contest over what counted as feminist and the efficacies of different forms of femininity, giving rise to the new girlhoods of the 1990s; these new girls claimed the labels of third wave or postfeminist or else declined the term feminism entirely.

Third-wave feminists generally disagreed with the idea that embodying "girly" norms including shopping, clothes and makeup indicated weakness or subjugation to patriarchy (Baumgartner and Richards 2004). With new technologies and the rise of an information based society over one based on industrial and other labor associated with masculinity, the mid-1990s brought a trend of "kick-ass" female heroes (de Lauretis

1987; Best 2006) that lasted into the 2000s. Some of these shows, like *V.I.P.* (Lawton 1998) starring Pamela Anderson Lee, unabashedly highlighted the protagonist's sexualized appearance with camp and parody. All of these shows addressed what has since the 1980s popularly been termed "work/life balance" (Bunting 2005; Kaye and Gray 2007), and suggested that women more acutely than men were under enormous stress because of the complications of blending a demanding (and perilous in the cases of these TV shows) job with romantic love and a related desire to be normal rather than exceptional. Situating action and aggression as in opposition to normalcy and balance reveals a fundamental set of problems in claiming the label of feminism as "girl power": what constitutes power and whether empowerment for girls and women depends on having a range of options from which to choose, or means choosing the option that most clearly signifies authority; and the related issue of whether culture is fundamentally centered on males or if, instead, girls rule.

Among these shows were *Charmed* (Burge 1998), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon 1997), and cartoons appealing to children such as *The Powerpuff Girls* (McCracken 1998) and *Kim Possible* (McCorkle and Schooley 2002) (Appendix A). These series illustrated that if a girl took matters into her own hands, questioned authority, knew a few good fighting moves, and looked adorable while doing these things, she could change the world. Add to this girl divinely granted or supernatural abilities and she seemed unstoppable, although she usually earned no public recognition for her efforts and, like the magical girls of the 1960s, needed to keep any exceptional abilities, magical or otherwise, under wraps for fear of censure by family or community.

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Media attention to these shows, despite television critics' generally lukewarm reviews, signaled wider public interest in girl power and in how girls navigate a tricky path to adulthood. The lead characters were almost universally white and in the broad sense middle class and outside populations considered "at risk," a term used in policy discussions to characterize children and teens who, because of socioeconomic situation, do not follow social standards in a way that insures productive adulthood (Harris 2003. See also: Lees 1993; Pipher 1994; Orenstein 1995; Sadker and Sadker 1995). At the same time, a discourse arose about poor girls and girls of color as morally endangering society because they fought back against systems of domination (Anders 1993; Sikes 1997; Gray 1996). These contrasting narratives warned that girls were both in danger and dangerous and shared an assumption that girls should be closely regulated and, if necessary, contained. In addition, both sets of assumptions implied that girls were making their own choices (not always good ones) in a way that suggested this younger generation considered second wave feminist concerns about agency as already adequately addressed rather than continuously negotiated struggles. Girls could fight their own battles and move from the position of potential victim to that of someone to be feared, articulated by *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* creator Joss Whedon in an interview with *Rolling Stone*:

> The blonde girl in the alley in the horror movie who keeps getting killed ... I felt bad for her, but she was always more interesting to me than the other girls. She was fun, she had sex, she was vivacious. But then she would get punished for it. Literally, I just had that image, that scene, in my mind, like the trailer for a movie -- what if the girl goes into the dark alley. And the monster follows her. And she

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destroys him (Udovitch, 2000, p. 62).

Whedon's celebration of girls' rejection of victim status as recognition of girls' empowerment was mitigated by the representation in many of these shows that the strong girls were, without proper guidance, unruly and required oversight, usually by a man or male-dominated institution, to responsibly handle their powers: Buffy had an adult male "watcher" with this function; in *Alias*, Sydney had several males as guiding forces, including her love interest and fellow agent Vaughn, her father Jack, her work partner Dixon, and her boss Sloane. Despite Sydney's chronological age indicating adult status, she is positioned as a girl with special abilities who needs to learn how to manage them. If girlhood precedes womanhood with all of its gender-based restrictions and adolescence is a time of identity formation through experimentation, and if choices are equated with agency, who would want to grow up if it means losing options? (Eisenhauer, 2004) To be labeled a girl, then, suggested empowerment through action rather than infantilization and passivity (Brown 1998).

THIRD-WAVE HEROES: "BOY, ARE THOSE GIRLS HOT!"

I do not discount the potentially exhilarating vindication of seeing a girl aggressively taking down bad guys with grace and skill that simultaneously celebrates action and feminine form. Sydney does this in *Alias* with martial arts fighting that mirrors a dancer's precise yet fluid motions. However, a common critique of television's images of tough, active girls is that they also are situated as objects of sex and fetishization. At issue are the correlations of beauty to sexuality to power. While these imaginary girls

represent physical and moral strength and at the same time are less than perfect in having failings, their characterizations universally conform in some way to conventional beauty standards, adding to the multitude of impossible images against which real girls find themselves coming up short. Further, claiming that ass-kicking girls have functioned as unquestionably positive role models refers to a specific form of middle-class success and morality.

The creators of these imaginary girls and the actors who embody them consistently have claimed that their representations have helped to shape a new generation of empowered young women and that physical beauty is ancillary as simply a requirement for the medium of television. This implies viewers will see beyond the girl hero's prettiness and toughness to her true nature. In a news article tracing girl action heroes of the millennium back to Title IX's directive in 1972 promising girls and boys equal access to space and time for education and athletics, Whedon, Abrams, and film and TV producer James Cameron, creator of *Dark Angel* as well as the *Terminator* films and the 2008 television offshoot *The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, (Cameron 1984, 1991, 2000, 2009; Mostow 2003; McG 2009) all have asserted that the girls they created were powerful yet also emotionally vulnerable in order to seem, as Cameron explained, "real" (Goodale 2002). Jennifer Garner explained in another article that physicality was crucial to Sydney's appeal to her as an actress and to others as an object of sexual attraction: "This is the kind of character I love to see. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *Charlie's Angels* were my favorite movies last year. I left them feeling empowered, and my husband felt, 'Boy, are those girls hot'" (Walter 2001).[8]

Visual evidence undermines the claim that sexualized beauty is not of primary importance over moral and physical strength in these instances. This contradiction and what is at stake for girls in ignoring it is evident in a promotional image for *Alias* that appeared on billboards and in other advertising outlets in 2004 and early 2005 featuring what one news story described as, "a slightly glistening Jennifer Garner," accompanied by the caption, "I can be anyone I want to be" (Storm 2005; Respective Production Studio 2004). The image was a head shot of Garner staring seductively and intensely into the camera with her lips slightly parted, lit from behind and in soft focus, and was reminiscent of both iconography and pornography. Considering Lefebvre's conception of spatial practice, which includes media models as maps of social norms and standards, the photograph and written text together are troubling. First, the use of the first person "I" indicates Sydney as in control of her own identity and that her choices are hers alone; the language of other promotional images for *Alias* generally was not active but rather descriptive, either of the show of Sydney, using the third person "she."[9] Secondly, though, the fact that her body is absent from her head makes it seem inconsequential to her identity; it is a place to hang the signs of whatever identity she chooses. This sense of the body reflects what Anthony Giddens (1990:225) has described as the abstract conditions of modernity in which, "[S]elf and body become the sites of a variety of new lifestyle options," and illustrates the function of abstraction and dismemberment in maintaining a social structure that permits the subordination of women, particularly young women, as Lefebvre (1991) warned of abstraction in social space. Considering visual culture's long history of imagining women as a set of parts, each with its own

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signification, this image of Sydney as claiming agency without her body is, as spatial practice, a map illustrating fragmentation and incoherence. The result of this is to situate girls as requiring fragmentation in order to "be" anyone they want to be and at the same time lacking the coherence and authority to define these selves; we often describe this as "compartmentalization" of identities, which sounds less destructive than dismemberment or fragmentation and implies acting rather than being acted upon.

Alias viewers holding post- and third-wave feminist assumptions about empowerment through embodied femininity are more likely to understand physical beauty and accompanying objectified sexuality as key weapons in a girl's arsenal, not as handicaps to be excused or overlooked (and to be fair postfeminism generally argues for a return to conventional femininity while third-wave feminism seeks an expanded definition of femininity). This claim to conventional femininity also speaks to the third wave's rejection of an overvaluation of the masculine that may be ascribed to second-wave goals (i.e., wanting to be equal *with* men, to have the same opportunities *as* men, rather than elevating the social status of the feminine). The show's narrative overtly and repeatedly illustrates that a girl can go places by using her looks to get through the door, particularly with the right clothing, makeup and other consumption-based tools of presentation, and still remain confident in her intellect and ability because of her context. Sydney knows (and the viewer knows) that her performances are for some greater good, either saving herself, her friends, or the world. *Alias* embraced this form of femininity in Sydney's need to don sexualized disguises which are essentially costumes in the service of justice and order, thus Sydney is redeemable even for viewers not identifying with

later feminisms. This recalls the Bush Administration's directive after the events of 9/11 for the nation to go shopping as a political strategy of consumption and decoration as displays of unified citizenship with a moral component: dressing up is Sydney's duty in doing her part to save the world from forces of evil, and it is her responsibility to position herself as a sex object in order to ensnare wicked and unscrupulous men, albeit a sex object capable of killing should other tactics fail. Contextualizing identity and sexuality, though, is problematic when issues of space and identity are considered, seen in longstanding anxieties about girls being in the wrong place at the wrong time as a way to explain acts of violence against girls who appear not know their place.

Choices of location and mobility are not universally empowering and not available to all girls, particularly girls who are not white and middle class (McRobbie 1991; Rose 1993; Chesney-Lind and Irwin 2004; Ward and Benjamin 2004). While Sydney plays at racial, ethnic and cultural embodiments not her own, her job success is based on her ability to read and mimic social codes of gender in different locations in addition to her wigs, makeup and clothing (often fetish-wear appropriate to the numerous bars and nightclubs she enters in her missions) as well as technological gadgets of the James Bond variety. Some of these things can, of course, be bought, and are a necessary part of her work uniform. Her real currency, though, for entry into the dangerous and foreign situations of her missions is her ability to be completely convincing and/or distracting so that she diverts the guardians of the places and secrets to which she wants access from their own responsibilities. Sydney is neither materialist nor sexually inappropriate: there is good moral reason for her tools of performance. Her wiles are by

turn rooted in family and community loyalty, or patriotism and international security: her motives matter in that her actions are necessary for security rather than for destructively deceptive reasons.

In her "real" self, the Sydney we see at home and when her guard is down, she is, like Mary Richards, nice and well-loved by the constellation of people around her: she has fortitude but is not unfeminine; she is smart but not pompous. Unlike for Mary, Sydney's girl friends and other women in her life are fleeting or untrustworthy; she has a close friend in Francie, her roommate, and finds another in her sister Nadia, both of whom meet tragic ends. In contrast, the small circle of men around her remains fairly constant: her father Jack; her love interest Vaughn; her boss and mentor Sloane; her close friend Will; and her spy partner Dixon. Each of these men wants out of love in some form to protect Sydney, each thinks he knows what is best, and all perceive her as fragile and valuable. This confirmation of value by a jury of men allows Sydney to remain likeable and fundamentally good when she takes on guises less appropriate to conventional middle class femininity, such as dominatrix or prostitute. Underlying her deception is the assumption that she does what is necessary in making the best and most honorable choices in ambiguous situations.

PLACE AND THE NARRATIVE OF ALIAS

Alias first introduces Sydney in the pilot episode as having essentially two identities, ambivalent about this division but maintaining each in its proper place. The narrative is propelled by her inability to close completely the borders among her identities and the complicated interweaving of her personal and work lives: people originally relegated to one sphere show up in different contexts and spaces -- and consequently know more than what Sydney (and viewers, presumably) imagined. The separation of Sydney's contexts of space and self is clearly coded in the series through conventions of lighting and object placement.[10] Sydney's consumption of space is visibly relational; places indicate different versions of her self, such as the university or the offices of SD-6. In the pilot, spaces of home, school and office are initially discrete and correspond directly with Sydney's distinct roles. As these distinctions break down, Sydney increasingly opts for interactions in liminal spaces as a way to navigate her identity flux.

The opening segment of "Truth Be Told" situates Sydney in places linked alternately to her performances as a normal, conventional girl and those in which she is a professional spy. Sydney's conventional/home self is both authentic and inauthentic, which is a source of anxiety for her and creates narrative tension: she can not reveal in her most intimate relationships (her fiancé Danny, her roommate Francie and her friend Will) that she is a spy and not what they think she is, so that even in the intimate space of her home Sydney is performing a false identity. While there are obvious difference is in a comparison of Sydney's home and the SD-6 offices, her life is not entirely a neat home/work split.

Despite the tidiness that comes with explaining public and private as gender-specific realms, Susan Gal has explained that even feminist scholarship to which this dichotomy is central reveals that: "Far from being incompatible, the principles associated with public and private coexist in complex combinations in the ordinary routines of everyday life" (2002:78). That Sydney has no place for close relationships that are both authentic and honest demonstrates the inaccuracy of assuming spatial distinctions are absolutes; defining categories of space as in opposition (along lines of public/private or of gender, for example) misrepresents the nature of space as relational and determined by actors and activities. *Alias* presents spaces as differentiated according to subject identity and function, but only after setting up a pretense that specific places are absolute for Sydney. The places that correspond to Sydney's different selves in "Truth Be Told" include her home, the university, the SD-6 office, and the sites of her field assignments, the last almost always outside the United States and distinguishable as foreign/other through both visual codes of culture and the appearance of the location name at the beginning of a new scene. The tones of these locales presented as *mise en scene* establish different regions for demarcating Sydney's identities. By the end of the pilot, the falsity of these distinctions becomes clear as the function of the places and of Sydney shift in terms of safety and certainty, revealing the relational nature of space and the risks of assuming it is fixed.

Home. Sydney's home is an apartment on the ground floor of a large wooden house surrounded by a yard. The outside of the house, not often seen, is earthy tones of brown and green. The inside is comfortable and tidy, with unremarkable furniture that

might have come from Pottery Barn or Ikea, two staples of young professional décor. Details such as framed pictures, matching furniture, and flowers and potted plants, suggest Sydney is a clean and responsible adult who has created a peaceful domestic nest. The lighting is soft and sepia-toned, indicating warmth. It is a nice place to come home to at the end of the day. Sydney lives here with her roommate Francie, a close friend from college. Francie (played by Merrin Dungey) reflects the sense of their home. She is a curvaceous black woman who smiles often and is busy with her own career. In the pilot, she adds to the sense of Sydney's home as a space of normalcy, where she and Francie talk about boyfriends, mothers and weddings.

School. The university Sydney attends for graduate school appears to be on a large campus. The lecture hall is lit warmly but without the intimacy of Sydney's home.[11] It has high ceilings and large windows that let sunlight in to reveal light filtering through the dust of old books. It is both venerable and comfortable. Light filters through the dust of old books. The tones are cool greys and browns with accents of the dark red of old bookbinding. The outside portions of the school are green and wide, lined with buildings reflecting the architectural diversity of most large universities. It is peopled but not crowded, a pleasant place to study and socialize. The spaces are clearly bounded but not totally enclosed and indicate safety without a sense of restriction. The upper boundaries of both the lecture hall ceiling and the open sky suggest limitlessness in rising above. Sydney and the professor are the only identifiable people in the lecture hall; while it is filled with students, they are anonymous and disconnected from Sydney's life. The professor appears as a voice of reason and impossibility in his assumption that school

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should be Sydney's top priority and that this is her avenue to being her best self; his appearance is anachronistic and suggests a way of life no longer available to Sydney.

The outside space of the campus figures prominently twice in the pilot. The first time is when Danny proposes to Sydney loudly and publicly on one of the green quads between buildings. This suggests a more plausible avenue for normalcy for Sydney, which of course is later ruined. Finally, at the edge of campus Sydney is approached by her SD-6 partner, Dixon, about her need to return to work; she is literally drawn to the margins of this space of normalcy in order to be repositioned into spaces of limited agency.

Work. The offices of SD-6 are a stark contrast to Sydney's home and school. The exterior is a large, anonymous office in downtown Los Angeles set back from the street, a sleekly modern but unremarkable building. The outside indicates it is the office of an international bank. Anyone entering SD-6 must pass through the rigorous checkpoints of a guarded elevator and a body-scan. Everything seems black or grey or beige, including Sydney's clothing here. The one spot of color is when Sydney goes through the body scan and is bathed in its red light. The internal architecture is industrial in style, with exposed utility pipes and lighting fixtures. There are no windows and light comes from overhead fluorescent lights and the glow of a multitude of identical up-to-date computer screens. There are no obvious openings in any walls and doors, and workers sit in a large open room of desks. There is neither privacy nor access to or by the public. There are many workers at SD-6, all seeming to be busy but rendered irrelevant by their drone-like situation, as though they are as easily replaced and interchanged as the computer

terminals on each of their desks. Here Sydney interacts primarily with her partner, Dixon and her boss, Sloane, who represent the good and bad implications of surveillance. Sloane, a white man, slight and with small round glasses and a demeanor of anxious reserve, is untrustworthy and uses surveillance as control. Dixon, a tall black man whose dignified and kindly manner suggests he is trustworthy, is Sydney's protector and thus watches her and those around her to maintain safety.

The Field. Taiwan, the site of Sydney's field assignment – and then her own rogue mission – is represented only at night and as a stark contrast in light and dark. The dark spaces, both inside and out, provide cover and secrecy. The reception hall in the stately building where Sydney attends a diplomatic function is lit with yellow, garish and bright. The space is active and anxious. The ceilings are high and the room is large and open. At the reception, most guests are dressed in sharp tones of black with splashes of white, other muted tones, and the cold glitter of fine jewelry. Sydney stands out in a bright red dress and red lipstick (her lipstick tube is also a camera and measuring device) as she moves through the crowded room. The additional interruptions of red that occur in this building at different points in the narrative, including the mysterious device she seeks, mark Sydney as an interloper; while it is easier for the viewer to find her in the crowd, it is also trickier for her to blend in and disappear in order to accomplish her mission, adding to the tension. The building also includes a laboratory and the room in which Sydney is tortured at the start of the episode. The lab is large and mysterious, unpeopled but with signs of scientific experimentation such as beakers and implements. The torture room is shadowy and in dingy contrast to the reception room upstairs. Dark

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browns and blacks color the room, with the exception of harsh, intrusive lighting coming through the slats in a door or shined in Sydney's eyes during interrogation. Furniture is government-issue, institutional and old. In here, Sydney appears as her otherworldly self who is also a direct contrast to home-Sydney and even work-Sydney. She is angry and violent and it does not matter who her captors are but rather how they can be dispensed with.

Places of Liminality. In the beginning of the episode, liminal spaces are unremarkable and often unseen. These in-between places at the beginning of the narrative are simply for passage through one state to another and are not destinations in themselves. Liminality becomes increasingly important to Sydney after her known world becomes unstable. In the beginning of the pilot, each place is distinct in term of inhabitants, boundaries and tone, and each carries a set of expectations which Sydney is able to meet. As boundaries are breached and these worlds seep into one another, expectations become less certain and Sydney's conceptual map of her identities is inaccurate. After the spaces she had considered clearly bounded and regulated are revealed to be dangerous to her and always potentially under surveillance, she turns then to liminal space, transitory no-man's lands unclaimed by permanent inhabitants: a parking garage; an airport; a skyscraper roof; a busy downtown Los Angeles street. These are the places where she has honest conversations and feelings, and is able to reestablish herself by collecting her fragmented parts and resituating them in relation to her changed worldview. Such spaces correspond to Soja's thirdspace in being outside of authority, but the specific places for Sydney's liminality are fundamentally public in terms of

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accessibility. Sydney learns to use this public liminality as space for her authentic self to plan the distribution of her other identities; public liminality is for Sydney a staging ground rather than a place of resting or waiting, and becomes central rather than peripheral or inconsequential. This centralization of liminality reflects Sydney's status as *becoming* throughout the narrative of the series as she seeks a solid, coherent identity that will allow her control of her own transformations rather than having her identities dictated by outside forces.

IDENTITY MANAGEMENT

"Truth Be Told" runs slightly over 100 minutes without commercials and had a two-hour primetime slot for its network premiere. It contains no less than 38 distinct places in which actions occur that move the plot forward (and are more than interstitial), some of which are different locations within single buildings but in which different actions occur to a degree that they deserve to be considered discrete. The pilot's plot spans seven years, some just hours from the starting point, others years; only a small portion of this episode is flashback to Sydney's freshman year of college; most of the action occurs seven years later over a period of several months. Within this time frame, "Truth Be Told," has 64 changes of location that often are interspersed with scenes of other times and/or places (Appendix B). On average, then, the scene changes for the viewer once every 90 seconds, although of course some segments are longer than others. By the episode's conclusion Sydney has presented eleven distinct embodiments of identity, including a slightly drunk southern belle (as a cover at a reception in Taipei); a

conservatively dressed and hard working bank employee (to her friends outside of work), who is also a conservatively dressed and very hard working SD6 operative (once in the SD6 building); and a stealthy spy clad in tight black clothing.

Unifying these multitude places and embodiments is Sydney, who is always central and recognizable. Her success depends on synchronizing her identity with each space, defining space through embodiment. Gillian Rose has described the relationship women have to their bodies and space as a sense of being confined in space from the awareness of the inscription of these properties on the body, "part of a self-consciousness about being noticed" (1993, p.145). Sydney's job as a spy is to be noticed in masquerade, and also to stealthily fade into the background when doing covert activity, or to do both at once: to be seen for something she is not as a strategy of distraction. When a deception is revealed in *Alias*, a problem arises that must be resolved by insisting on the legitimacy of that particular identity in that space – and, if that fails, by physical force. While Sydney exemplifies Goffman's identification of space with self, her selves are ultimately revealed to be deceptions so that she lacks a single authentic identity on which to center.

Sydney's fiancé's death in the pilot is pivotal to revealing the fragility of borders between Sydney's identities and is the catalyst for the structural disintegration of what she had believed was a carefully bounded existence. Danny's murder is the death of a Sydney's chance for normalcy and the birth of a period of extreme anxiety. It is through this event and in the visual sequence around his death that we also see, in short and rapidly interspersed shots of different locations, Sydney's boss working with her father, Jack, and SD-6 tapping Danny's phone line, which suggest the urgency of the direct

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conflict between Sydney's selves. She can not be both an honest wife and a good agent.

Danny's death removes for Sydney the option of conventional marriage even though,

given her career, her hopes were questionable in the first place. The loss of Danny also

allows Sydney to reconnect with her father and initiates her struggle toward a

conventional nuclear family in which she is the child, not the wife/mother in a second

chance at appropriate emotional development. When the proxy family she had sought in

SD-6 is revealed to be more flawed than her own parents, and her father-figure boss

Sloane to have ordered Danny's killing, Sydney begins a journey through stages of

growth to adulthood that mitigates her troubled childhood and family dysfunction.

The collapse of the spatial and identity boundaries that Sydney counts on to keep

herself safe, but which she has chosen to breach in her anger and sadness, are made clear

in a scene taking place after Danny has died and her life turned upside down. Sydney is

sitting alone in an outdoor cafe at night in Los Angeles where her father was supposed to

meet her, but did not. Her clothing is casual and she appears unassuming and quiet: she is

ordinary. She leaves the restaurant and enters an unpopulated parking garage, a classic

situation of anxiety in fiction as well as fact, particularly for women. She gets into her

pickup truck and notices a laser light aimed upon her; shots are fired at her window as

she dodges automatic gunfire from two men in suits. She runs through the garage to find

a way out, but the exit doors are locked. She does not panic and resituates herself as a

fighter/spy rather than a victim/conventional girl so that she masters the space and her

body by demonstrating mobility, efficiency and strength. The garage becomes a stage for

her empowerment rather than a place of fear and anxiety.[12] To fool her attackers, she

intentionally collapses her conventional and spy realms, weakening the barriers between them that have been disintegrating since she revealed herself to Danny: she uses her cell phone to call her unknowing roommate, Francie. We then see Francie at home, listening to music and cooking, smiling, domestic and unaware of Sydney's predicament. The scene switches back to Sydney in the garage in a hushed but urgent tone asking Francie to call her back on her cell to which Francie, perplexed, agrees.

The garage is coldly lit, empty of people and grungy in the way of most parking garages. The music and camera work in the garage establish suspense and urgency, while the shots of Francie at home are warmly lit and the music is upbeat and relaxed. In the final switch back to the garage at first there is no music over the scene. When Sydney's cell phone rings, driving techno music starts abruptly as she jumps out of hiding and kicks her attackers back. They engage in violent but athletic and graceful martial-arts fighting. Sydney finally kicks one assailant in the face, disabling him as his head shatters a car window. Sydney's mastery of martial arts indicates control over her body, and her grace allows her a measure of femininity despite her aggression in a way that carrying a gun would not. Her other weapon in this battle has been her cell phone, an appropriate weapon for a girl. We are reminded through product placement that technology is a woman's best friend, as carrying a functioning cell phone is a primary way of ensuring safety or at least the ability to find help after something does happen to us, and the most commonly imagined "somethings" are feminized: rape, assault, a car breakdown.

Safe for the moment, Sydney stands up as she hears a car screeching toward her. She picks up her now immobile assailant's big gun and points it toward the car. The car

pulls up to Sydney, and she says with breathless alarm: "Daddy?!" to which her father, in

the driver's seat, orders, "Get in! Now!" Sydney appears confused in a soft-focus close-

up of her face, but gets in the car. Looking at her father, Sydney yells with astonishment:

"Daddy, you have a gun!" At the same time, her cell phone rings and it is Francie. As

Jack drives frantically through garage for escape while being pursued by Sydney's now

reenergized assailants, Sydney, out of breath, attempts to sound normal on the phone with

Francie, who from the safety of their home says, "Sydney, you will *not* believe the day

I've had." Sydney, now a passenger in her father's car, contained and without control of

the situation, ceases aggressive action while Jack drives and shoots. By assuming her role

as a daughter Sydney is granted protection and despite her poor relationship with her

father finds safety in a conventional family dynamic: a girl chatting on her cell phone as

her father navigates their car through a dangerous world.

This scene illustrates that while *Alias* is an action/adventure series, it is highly

melodramatic, resembling a soap opera in that much of its tension is produced by the

revelation of surprising familial connections and deceptions.[13] Sydney's rocky

relationship with her father is central to the narrative and is formative in the pilot episode.

More importantly for melodrama, though, is that underpinning the anxiety and the drama

of all other relationships in *Alias* is the issue of mothering, a key component in the genre

(Kaplan 1992; Horsley and Horsley 1999; Jacobs 2009). At first this is presented as an

absence of Sydney's mother as both lack and potential. This quickly becomes

complicated as her mother appears throughout the run of *Alias* with a series of promises,

disappointments and deceptions. Wanting a mother and ultimately becoming one fuel

Sydney's quest to determine her own public and private realms in order to define herself rather than being defined by others.

"LIKE MOTHER, LIKE DAUGHTER? LIKE HELL"

The image of another promotional poster for *Alias* shows Sydney and her mother Irina (played by Lena Olin) and suggests a distancing from one another: Irina is in the background and looks into the camera; Sydney is in the foreground, her back to the viewer and her head turned so that she also looks into the camera. At the forefront of the image is a gun which Sydney holds behind her back. Over this image is the text: "Like mother, like daughter? Like hell." (Respective Production Studio 2001).

Alias reconstitutes traditional womanhood in which non-maternity demonstrates an absence or lack of feminine qualities. Arguing for the need to unfix mothering from normative gender roles as crucial to expanding gender boundaries, Robyn Longhurst has contended of motherhood that the ideal is not natural and also related to space and social context:

> Maternity is not natural, innate, or essential. It cannot be taken for granted that women who have given birth will be "good" mothers who love their children unconditionally and meet their children's needs selflessly day after day. Maternity is shaped, and reshaped, over time and in different spaces (2008:).

Alias positions motherhood as natural and the desired end to a woman achieving stability. Irina's self-interest makes her a bad mother, equates with her bad womanhood, and these make her an immoral person, reflecting classic melodramas of disgraced

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motherhood popular in the early days of film (Jacobs). Sydney by contrast is in the first

instance a moral person, which situates her as a good woman and, as she battles her way

toward creating a conventional nuclear family and a desire to be a good mother. Sydney's

quest for her own good parents complicates her drive for self determination: she seems

unable to move forward without their support, or at least their recognition, despite all

indications that they will fail in this. While Jack ultimately redeems himself, Irina does

not. Horsley and Horsley (1992:375) have characterized melodrama as including "focus

on personal and familial relationships, the presence of moral polarities, and an emphasis

on private sentiment, emotional moments, and pathos … Closure in melodrama is

satisfyingly achieved, with the family acting paradoxically both as the site of alienation

and as the means of resolution." When her daughter Isabelle is born, Sydney struggles

with finding childcare (at one point federal agents serve as her nannies) and when on

missions – away at work – fears that she will die and leave her daughter, as her own

mother did, or will miss important milestones in Isabelle's life.

While men also face ambivalence about maintaining a work/life balance,

increasingly and especially among middle class men as they are more involved in day-to-

day childcare and other domestic matters, for women maintaining a distinction seems

particularly acute in terms of managing expectations that tie good womanhood to an

idealized notion of good motherhood. *Alias* illustrates that this constant negotiation

rooted in ambivalence has normalized the possibility of separate but equally authentic.

The theme of maternity seeps through the walls Sydney has tried to set up

between different aspects of her life; the pilot episode and the series finale bookend *Alias*

by addressing Sydney's changing relationship with her mother and her own initiation into motherhood. In the end, the series positions Sydney's mother as monstrous enough to attempt to kill her own child and grandchild, a woman who not only abandoned her offspring for self-gratification through her career, but who was willing to sacrifice Sydney's life for these things. The *denouement* situates Sydney as a profoundly good and present mother who is able to continue with her career part-time and on a contract basis to be able to spend time with her children and husband.

Irina in her absence represents for Sydney both a lack and an ideal. After Sydney and Danny become engaged, Sydney has an intimate chat with Francie in their kitchen. Guitar folk music plays through this scene of twentysomething domestic comfort. As they talk, the camera moves between their two faces in close-up.

Francie: So, have you told your dad yet?

Sydney: No, I haven't told him yet. I don't want him to ruin this … Not
                 this, you know?

Francie: Yeah, I think you're right. I think if you call him, he's just going to
                 find some way to let you down.

Sydney: *(with sadness)* Yeah, I know.

Francie: Your mom would be so happy for you.

Sydney: Yeah, she would. Maybe I should call my dad. I mean, he's my
                 dad.

Francie: You are *so* schizophrenic.

Sydney's father has clearly not functioned as she imagines her mother should or

would: mothers are supposed to be caring, nurturing and loving, while fathers, ideally, are associated with responsibility and respect (Longhurst 2008). Sydney seems to have had neither in her parents, and after Sydney's mother is revealed to be not just alive but a secret agent who had left her family for her career, her transgression is compounded when in a later season she is revealed to have abandoned another daughter, Sydney's previously unknown half-sister Nadia.

Irina appears in body at the beginning of the second season, and the connection of the first season to the second is Sydney's introduction as an adult to her mother. The mood of place works with dialogue to situate Irina as Sydney's key problem: despite Irina's bad motherhood and unapologetic quest for power, Sydney will continue to seek her love and approval and give her chance after chance to redeem herself, all of which Irina chooses to fail.

The first season ends with Sydney's mother visible to Sydney but not yet to *Alias* viewers (Abrams 2002). Sydney has been captured while on a mission in Taipei. She is tied to a chair in a small, disorderly, gloomy room that appears to be a neglected catch-all storage area, although a working desk lamp indicates some regular use. The lighting is dim and red; a doorway into another room glows pink, indicating a brighter light source there. A tall, somber man walks through the doorway to Sydney, carrying a bowl of food, and sits facing her. The space and relations are claustrophobic and stifling. With a knowing glare, Sydney says with rancor: "You're Alexander Khasinau," identifying him as a longtime enemy who is the object of her mission, known in the international spy circuit as "The Man." Khasinau offers the food to Sydney, and she refuses. As he stands

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and turns to leave, Sydney says with authority: "Wait. I have questions for you."
Khasinau responds: "You can ask my boss," to which Sydney replies, "Your boss? I
thought 'The Man' was the boss." Khasinau corrects her: "Yes, but I am not 'The Man.'"

Khasinau leaves and a looming silhouette appearing to be a large, broad-
shouldered man fill the doorway. As the shadow moves across the door toward Sydney,
we see it is a woman's profile. Sydney's eyes indicate confusion, sadness and wonder as
the camera closes in on her face. The woman says to Sydney: "I have waited almost 30
years for this." The camera remains on Sydney as tears trickle down her face. Voice
wavering, she says, "Mom?" as the screen goes black and the episode and season end,
and she is left positioned as an immobilized child until season two begins.

The opening scenes of the second season's first episode, titled "The Enemy
Walks In," (Olin 2002) show Sydney rapidly going through stages of childhood and
adolescence in this brief introduction to her mother after so many years. This scene
between Sydney and Irina is fundamentally about choices for women and the effects of
these choices on girls. Irina opted out of motherhood and her words imply that she had
considered terminating her pregnancy or killing infant Sydney because caring for a child
conflicted with her desires. Sydney is left damaged as a result and is effectively is in
danger – at risk – of both physical harm of ending up an inappropriate adult. Sydney is
reborn in a sense through this introduction to her mother and is again rejected by her
mother as nothing more than a means to something Irina desires more: power.

The room in which this occurs transforms reflecting the context of the personal
relationships within it. Sydney had spoken to Khasinau with authority and no

demonstration of fear despite his clear dominance, yet she breaks down, becoming childlike and uncertain, when her enemy – "The Man" – is revealed to be her mother. The room defined by Khasinau and Sydney was disorganized but impersonal; a place for storage of unwanted junk. At the same time, it does appear to be some sort of residence: there are dishes and other things that indicate habitation. While it is guarded and regulated as a prison, it also suggests the interior intimacy of a home. It is also a place of disorder and low visibility: who knows what lurks in the corners and containers. When Sydney meets Irina here, the space transforms. More evident is a sense of pink-tinged enclosure. This place, where Sydney as an adult comes face-to-face with her mother, suggests a womb that is unkempt and unclean, not a good place for a child. The situation of the womb as space is, of course, at the heart of social arguments over regulating the female body. Despite the unfitness of the space for a mother-child reunion, and the clear indication that Irina is an unfit mother, Sydney reverts to a scared child who needs her mother regardless of how flawed a mother she is.

The second season opens with a few moments' overlap from the last moments of the season one cliffhanger, beginning with Khasinau offering the food to Sydney up to the point where Sydney identifies her mother. New material begins as the camera moves from Sydney's face to her mother's. Irina is attractive; her hair is pulled up, but not severely, and she wears a small diamond pendant around her neck. The dialog between Sydney and her mother increases the sense of chaotic, messy intimacy in the room. Irina stands in front of Sydney, who remains tied to the chair. Their faces are illuminated but most of the space remains in shadow.

Irina smiles wryly and says: "You must have known this day would come. I could have prevented all this, of course." She adds, musing: "You were so small when you were born. It would have been so easy ..." as her voice trails off. Irina then interrogates: "Tell me, Sydney, who sent you here?" The camera follows Sydney's gaze moving down Irina's body until her eyes stop with a look of alarm as Irina is revealed to be holding a gun in her hand. Irina repeats, with anger: "You must tell me." Sydney, quietly but angrily retorts, "Or what -- I'm grounded?" Irina fires the gun at Sydney and the bullet hits her, although not fatally; the chair tips over and Sydney falls to the ground and moans. The camera again tracks Sydney's gaze and Irina appears in the frame from Sydney's perspective, skewed diagonally. Irina moves closer to Sydney, and the camera reveals Irina's pantsuit and stiletto heels, stereotypically uniform staples of women in the business world (and resembling Sydney's own outfit when we first see her entering the SD-6 office in the pilot), as she says caustically: "Tell you what: Think about it." Sydney's face, shown in the frame sideways as though from Irina's perspective, reveals she is holding in sobs as Irina says, "I'll come back and ask you about it." While in "Truth Be Told," Sydney's father's possession of a gun indicates safety and protection, her mother holding this phallic sign of power here is threatening and in the context of motherhood highly deviant. The promotional image described earlier has Sydney holding the gun but not revealing it to Irina, implying that Sydney, ultimately, will restore order by wresting control from Irina, who suffers for not, in fact, being a man and also not being a good woman.

Sydney's struggle to counteract the effects of her bad mother, which occupy a

significant portion of the narrative throughout *Alias'* five seasons, begins in this room

where they first meet. The disorder and privacy, and the attire and attitude of both

Sydney and her mother, suggest a rebellious teenager trapped in her messy room – over

which she exercises only nominal control but which is the only space truly her own – and

arguing with her mother (Harris 2003). Sydney has in effect been grounded for

disobedience so that she is contained and can not cause more trouble. Writing about

girlhood, Anita Harris has contended that the ability to shift identity and context is seen

as a necessity of successful modern womanhood – with the caveat that a child's "failure

to thrive," a phrase used in public policy to indicate lack of success in school and social

relations as well as poor health, indicates inflexibility because of a lack of parental ability

or desire to shift priorities. These limitations, according to this measure of child

development, lead to poor individual choices and engaging in negatively inscribed "risk-

taking" behaviors for girls (2003, p.132), although whether it is the girl or others who are

at risk is uncertain. Irina's unwillingness to be flexible or accept a compartmentalization

of different forms of femininity position her as a bad mother and thus a bad woman in her

refusal to care for others. Sydney is left attempting to compensate for this lack; through

most of the series, she seeks completion by restructuring her family to include her

estranged mother and father. The scene immediately following Sydney's first meeting

with Irina illustrates her struggle with this.

Sydney is still in the room where Irina has confronted her. Irina has shot Sydney,

but not fatally, and we hear a door closing as Irina walks out. The camera pans out to

show Sydney writhing and sobbing on floor amid the mess of the room. Over this image,

we hear an unknown female's voice, calm but incredulous: "You were shot. By your mother." The image of Sydney in pain goes dark and the next shot is of Sydney clean, calm and dressed in business clothes as the unknown woman continues talking: "… And you don't have a problem?" As the camera moves out, Sydney responds with composure: "Yes. What I mean by that … Yes, of course I have problems. But the problems I have, I can handle." We see she is in a book-lined office seated on a couch in a counseling or debriefing session. The therapist, a woman with blonde hair and of Irina's generation, appears frustrated with Sydney's response but sits back calmly and asks, "How did you escape?"

The office is private and clean, the light within it is bright and clear, and there is an appropriate distance between the two women; they are both seated and separated by a desk and do not appear to be engaged in conflict. Sydney tells the woman about her successful getaway by using physical force, reason and guile, and through which she was able to finally come to this room as her composed adult self who "can handle" her dysfunctional family literally because she escaped her mother. Sydney indicates that she has no need to discuss her mother further and that she is only in the session because she has been ordered there by her CIA superiors. The final scene of the episode, however, shows Sydney returning to the therapist's office. Irina has resurfaced and is turning herself over to the CIA, where she is wanted as a criminal. The last moments of the episode juxtapose shots of Sydney entering the sanctuary of the therapist's office as her mother walks up to the reception desk of the CIA, a devious gleam in her eye: Sydney is not rid of her toxic mother. Sydney has made a good choice in appropriately using the

sanctioned private space of therapy to resolve her emotions about her mother. At the

same time Irina chooses to use a public arena in which Sydney has a stake for deception

and personal gain. But these situations are more complicated than simply examples of

good and bad behavior as related to public and private: both are part of the CIA, itself a

tangle of issues around public and private spheres (and information), and Irina and

Sydney both operate outside of general public knowledge. While Sydney and Irina are

exercising agency, literally within The Agency, Irina is deceptive and selfish while

Sydney seeks truth and personal growth. This distinction is what makes Sydney likeable

and redeemable while Irina is not: Sydney's choices reflect conventional notions of good

womanhood; Irina's directly oppose them.

FRACTURING THE MIRROR

Throughout the remainder of the series, Sydney and Irina cooperate, deceive, and

clash with one another. Sydney's relationship with her mother proves to be the ultimate

conflict to be resolved before the series can end, and even Sydney's romantic

relationship, marriage and motherhood are dependent on extraction from the clutches of

Irina's bad mothering and selfishness. Irina is all the more despicable because when

Sydney was a child, Irina was positioned to be a "good mother," as culturally determined:

White, affluent, geographically stable, and married (Longhurst 2008; Sampson 1998;

Ladd-Taylor and Umansky 1998). She then rejected the very situation Sydney has fought

so hard to achieve by the end of the series.

In the final scenes of *Alias* that end the entire series Sydney confronts Irina and

reveals that Irina's ambition is her downfall and positions Irina as an anti-mother in contrast with Sydney's maternal goodness (Sampson). Irina has masterminded destruction of the world's defense and communication satellites and at the same time holds the possible key to immortality, a small red sphere the size of a child's ball. In an office at the top of a Hong Kong skyscraper, Irina smiles coolly as she and Sydney confront one another. Sydney says angrily: "You shot the man I love. You betrayed my trust. You risked my daughter's life. Over *that*," referring to the sphere. Irina responds with venom: "I don't expect you to understand. We're very different, Sydney. You still cling to naïve ideals. I learned at a very young age that the only currency really worth anything is power. ... I've spent a lifetime acquiring power. With this, I don't ever have to give it up."

They stare at one another. Irina is cool. Sydney is teary-eyed. They continue hostile but constrained as Irina says: "I offered you an out. I gave you your daughter. I was hoping you would settle down, leave me to my affairs." Sydney answers, "You don't know me very well, do you," and Irina retorts with a half-smile, "Sadly, I think I do. After all, I'm still your mother." Sydney then says: "That doesn't mean anything. Not anymore. I am through being disappointed by you." Irina then says: I hate that it's come to this," and Sydney replies, "I suppose it had to." Irina, recharged, declares, "I've come too far to let anything get in my way." Sydney coldly warns, "Then you'll have to go through me first," a reference to her situation in Irina's eyes as an obstacle to success.

The scene ends abruptly and the next scene cuts back in time to reveal an event not shown earlier in the series when Sydney, a few years into working for SD-6, is in

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Sloane's office and he offers her the choice that her mother had faced as a young woman.

Sloane: I've been reviewing your evaluations since your arrival at SD-6. To a letter,

they are nothing short of exemplary. I've upgraded your clearance, and I'm

considering promoting you to field officer.

Sydney: *(with pride)* "Really?"

Sloane: Sydney, I want to know that you have given this job its proper

consideration. I realize that you have a romantic notion of the espionage

trade, but this job is more than just brush-passages and dead-drops. You'll

be facing life-threatening situations on a regular basis. Do you understand

that? You'll be forced to make decisions that will haunt you for the rest of

your life. (*Sydney nods, very serious*.) This job requires sacrifice, and you

need to know that you are able to live with that.

Sydney replies adamantly: "I can, sir. For as long as I can remember, I've been

searching for what I'm supposed to do, for what I'm supposed to be. This is my purpose.

It's in my blood. It's who I am. I have never been so sure of anything in my life."

The sacrifice Sloan speaks of points to Irina's sacrifice *of* maternity rather than

for it and Sydney's need to make a similar decision. This scene cuts quickly to the

present, where Sydney and Irina are fighting in the room in Hong Kong. Sydney stabs

Irina in the leg with a large shard of glass from a broken mirror, using the reflective but

fractured glass to disable her mother. Irina attempts to strangle Sydney, pulls the glass

out of her own leg without expressing pain, and pushes Sydney down, holding the mirror

glass to Sydney's throat. Both are bloody and, interlocked, they go through a glass

window and land outside on the hard surface of a rooftop high above the ground. They separate on impact and lay apart on the ground. Sydney, among tiny pieces of glass, attempts to get up. Irina also is conscious. They remain next to one another, no longer fighting, gazing at the sky as they discuss their options at this point. This speaks to mother-daughter relationships more broadly when for a moment the two women are positioned as equals. But what each of them desires requires destroying the other, erasing a lifetime of choices and values. There is no common ground or room for compromise.

The movement from the glass of a mirror to the glass of a window signifies the importance of this moment in closing the series. Colomina has described the use of mirrors in the "stage" setting of any defined space:

The reflection in the mirror is also a self-portrait projected onto the outside world. The placement of Freud's mirror on the boundary between interior and exterior undermines the status of the boundary as a fixed limit. Inside and outside cannot simply be separated … [M]irrors promote the interplay between reality and illusion, between the actual and the virtual, undermining the status of the boundary between inside and outside (1992:86).

Irina uses Sydney's reflection of herself as a weapon. At the same time, Sydney must look at her mother's face as a possible reflection of her self. In a palpable reference to the mirror stage in Lacanian psychoanalysis and by extension early feminist film theory, breaking the mirror shatters the maternal connection between them and their next move is through a window, suggesting a reframing of their relationship (Kaplan 1990; Doane 1991; Grosz 1990). It is night and the darkened window reflects the women

fighting, but upon their impact shatters the reflected image and instead becomes a framed stage on which mother and daughter battle. Irina states: "I'm afraid I can't allow you to be such a complication in my life any longer," as she stand up and throws Sydney against a wall near the roof's edge, adding: "But for whatever it's worth, I do truly love you."

Sydney looks up at Irina with hope but Irina smacks her to the ground again, and they restart their physical battle. Sydney throws Irina and she lands on a glass skylight; the sphere also lands on the skylight but out of Irina's reach. As Irina moves closer to the sphere across the skylight, the clear glass bearing her weight begins to crack, and we see it is a perilously long fall to the floor below. Sydney says with concern: "The glass won't hold you. Mom, you need to come back," but Irina ignores her. Sydney repeats her warning with an offer of help: "Mom! You can make it. Give me your hand." But Irina looks back at her. "I'm sorry, Sydney," she says as she writhes slowly toward sphere. The skylight shatters and Irina falls. Sydney looks down at her mother, who is laying on her back on the ground, with one hand behind her, eyes open, unmoving and apparently dead. Sydney starts to weep quietly. Vaughn, her partner in love and work and the father of Isabelle, opens the door to the roof and looks at Sydney caringly, and the two embrace while romantic music plays over the scene, with the city night skyline behind them. Sydney has just watched her own flawed mother destroy herself through selfishness and refusal to connect with her child, even to save her own life. Sydney responds not with grief, but relief that she is redeemable as a mother and a woman through Vaughn. They will have a "modern" and honest relationship rather than one based on the performance and deception that defined Laura/Irina and Jack's failed marriage, reflecting Nancy

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Chodorow's assertion that a classically oedipal girlhood requires a girl's acceptance of her own femininity accompanied by a devaluation of her mother's (1978:182). Sydney and Vaughn will do better having learned from her parents' mistakes. The next developmental step, according to Chodorow, is a girl's devaluation of the self upon identification with her mother.

The next scene, the last in the episode and the series, situates Sydney as a good mother clearly not repeating Irina's mistakes. The scene opens with a close-up shot of a yellow toy shovel in the sand and pans out to reveal a sandcastle on a sunny and otherwise empty beach. The sand glistens and the water is blue. A young girl calls out happily, "Daddy!" as Dixon, Sydney's former spy partner, walks up the beach and greets Vaughn and the now-older Isabelle at the doorway to a simple white cottage. If this house is a stage on which, as Colomina describes of home interiors, "What is being framed is the traditional scene of everyday domestic life" (1992:86), it represents progress and improvement undergirded by tradition. Inside the décor resembles the deceptive simplicity found in the pages of a Pottery Barn catalog; this house is modern in its decoration and traditional in its structure and layout, reflecting Sydney's perception of her family structure in which she is the mother, not the child. The windows are wide and open and invites a looking outward to the view so that the interior – the place of the family – is the primary position by which all other things are framed; and from this particular family position the view is natural and pristine (Colomina 1994). There are no neighbors or traffic; it has neither the anxiety of urban life nor the monotony of suburban life and, exotically Mediterranean in feeling, is presumably more sophisticated than

American rural life.

The men, Dixon and Vaughn, discuss how difficult the house is to find, revealing how happily isolated and contained is this family and the benefits of living off of the map. In the house, Sydney steps out of the shadows into the daylight wearing flowered sundress and carrying a baby. She seems relaxed and, smiling, greets Dixon: "Hello, stranger!" Sydney tells Dixon the baby is named Jack, after her father who had died on their last mission together. As Sydney hands Dixon a glass of fresh lemonade, she says: "Why do I get the feeling that this isn't a purely social call? Dixon, his words mirroring the title of the pilot episode, responds: "Truth be told, I could use some field assistance." Sydney looks into the distance and then at Vaughn as Dixon explains a mission that could use Sydney's skills.

The scene cuts to Isabelle in her bedroom, opening a box with curiosity as if uncertain of the contents. Back in the living room, Dixon is explaining to Sydney that the assignment is not a difficult one and might even be "fun." Smiling, Sydney responds: "That's what you say every time you show up on my doorstep. And the next thing you know, I'm jumping over canals in 3-inch heels while Napalm explodes around me," as Vaughn smiles knowingly at Sydney. Dixon jokes: "Yes, that's how I define fun." Vaughn diverts the conversation by interjecting, "Why don't we finish this conversation after dinner." Sydney adds, "And you haven't lived until you've seen our sunset."

Sydney has been handed a key means to demonstrating successful femininity and motherhood for women after the millennium: the option to work such that work is a choice and is fluid, so that she can enter and exit her career at will. Rather than riding off

into the sunset as hope for the future, she has found it in her present. The series ends without Sydney saying yes or no to the mission; taking the job seems to depend on whether or not it will be "fun" and also convenient for her. She has, as this episode's title suggests, "All the Time in the World," (Gates 2006) and control over both her space and her time.

Sydney calls to Isabelle and the scene cuts to Isabelle intently working on something in her room. Sydney calls again, saying they are going for a walk, and we see Isabelle working on a puzzle. It is a tower of shapes featured earlier in the series in scenes from Sydney's childhood, and had been given to Sydney to discern if she had the natural abilities that would allow her to excel in the complicated strategizing and maneuvering required for international espionage.

While this might read as a sign of Sydney determined not to expose her daughter to the evils of the outside world and Sydney's own traumas, it also indicates that Isabelle is clever and gifted, with the potential to excel outside this small domestic sphere her parents have created. Making a choice, Isabelle looks at the puzzle she has successfully constructed, looks at doorway, looks back at the puzzle and intentionally knocks it over before running happily to her family outside; the puzzle will be waiting for her if she wants to do it later. The next shot is of Sydney framed against a backdrop of ocean and sand, holding baby Jack and smiling. She says to Isabelle: "Honey, what have you been doing back there?" Isabelle replies: "Nothing, mom." Sydney looks back toward Isabelle's room with a hint of concern, but then gives her full attention to the baby, kissing him and at ease again. She walks toward Dixon and her family to watch the sun

set.

This closure situates Sydney with a nice house on a beach, married and with children, and with flexible and meaningful (albeit dangerous) part-time work when she feels like it. Granted, this is a way of resolving the many conflicts of *Alias* in a way that satisfies the need for a narrative ending. But it also serves to erase what made the show and the character so compelling – that Sydney, albeit through hyperbole and with many costumes, embodies key conflicts of femininity and womanhood. After a tumultuous and extended "youth" of danger and excitement and ambivalence about conventions such as marriage and motherhood, Sydney's conflicts are resolved – she is completed upon achieving marriage, children and the ability to work if she *chooses*, and it would be for personal fulfillment rather than financial reasons or other factors less within her control. This ending is not entirely closed: among the usual uncertainties of life we don't know what adventures any future work for Sydney – or for Vaughn – will bring. But Sydney's choices here suggest she is positioning herself as a good mother to her children, and especially in the context of the series to her daughter, in part by creating an ideal world for Isabelle in which there are no bad options or choices, and which assumes Isabelle will have at least the same opportunities that Sydney had, only with her parents' moral and emotional support.

MOTHERHOOD: "IT DEFINITELY CONFLICTS WITH MY JOB"

Jennifer Garner as a celebrity has changed from the woman who publicly claimed excitement about her action scenes and proudly displayed injuries sustained in filming the

series, to one who takes more care – less risk – in order to responsibly be a mother and wife (Harris 2003). Starting *Alias* in 2001, both Garner and Sydney represented the new girlhood, even though Garner was at that time married and by media accounts a responsible young woman from a conventional, middle-class background. She had no known history of bad mothering, either by her or to her. She was a spandex-clad action star but at heart a nice girl from a normal family. A 2002 article in *USA Today*, when Garner was married to actor Scott Foley, explained her view of motherhood given her career and lifestyle:

> Garner says she and Foley would like to have children some day, though since they've been married only a year, 'some day' is not on the immediate horizon. That should come as good news for ABC, because it's hard to imagine a pregnant Sydney karate-kicking her enemies in a blue rubber dress. "Scott and I feel like when we're ready, we'll address it. But it's definitely a priority. And it definitely conflicts with my job," she adds, laughing, "so addressing it will be an interesting problem (Bianco 2002).

In this statement, Garner situates motherhood as a problem, reflecting a state of girlhood rather than womanhood; when stated by women rather than girls it would likely be reason for suspicion. Since the end of *Alias*, Garner has focused more on comedy or melodrama roles. She is married to actor Ben Affleck (she and Foley had divorced) and they have two young daughters. As a real mother, and as an imagined one in the spaces of *Alias*, we do not see her simultaneously committed to motherhood and aggressive, violent action. Much of Garner's popularity and charm is her ability to appeal to a wide

range of people specifically by not appearing in any way threatening or discordant. This translated well into the character Sydney Bristow so that she was even in the beginning admirably strong and independent but also feminine and friendly. Throughout the series Sydney needed people to like her, trust in her, and believe what she said – whether she meant it or not – and throughout the series she lied and deceived. Sydney is always, somehow, putting on a performance, until her fixed, authentic self is revealed at the end to be maternal and existing only in a secure domestic space.

Similarly Garner has represented herself as now fundamentally stable through maternity, and "real," with bodily flaws and related emotional insecurities. Garner's represented self, like that of any celebrity, is itself a performance. Considering the visibility of Sydney's body in the show, it should not be ignored that the body of the actress Jennifer Garner fits into prescribed notions of beauty, not being an unruly body. But we still need to consider postfeminism's wrapping of potentially feminist representations in commercial femininity and glamour, which is at work in *Alias* (Press 1991). The protagonist's body image still conforms to traditional standards of the current era: compact and slender, yet muscular (Bordo 1993, 1997; Brumberg 1997). While Sydney actively occupies space as a form of empowerment, discourse around Garner's body does not suggest an alternative to conventional femininity. In one conversation several girls evaluated Garner as having a "man body," citing what they described as her broad shoulders and small breasts and hips. Various fan Web sites about Garner have cited her pre-pregnancy measurements as approximately 5'7" and 110 pounds. Her post-pregnancy size both in 2005 and after her second child was born in 2009 invited much

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public and media discussion of how and when to lose her "baby weight," meaning changes in her body related to pregnancy and childbirth. In an interview published in the women's fashion and lifestyle magazine *Marie Claire* in 2007, Garner caused a stir by admitting to wearing more than one girdle at a time in order to look appropriately glamorous for red-carpet events, in essence hiding her body's evidence of childbirth despite public knowledge about it (Connelly 2007).

Garner's body changed, as would anyone's, depending on her life and her health. Public conversation around Garner's body centered on her health and biology, including weight gains and losses and especially in relation to pregnancy. Sydney's body also is neither stable nor static, but the focus is on masquerade and performance as she constantly changes identity, clothes and position to address changes in the spaces she inhabits and exercise some measure of authority there. As a spy, Sydney has the ability to change identity to fit into any social environment, of opening up the options for her spatial relationships. This is a more extreme version of the role-changing many women feel required to perform in order to navigate the variety of situations in which we find ourselves, and which is compounded by the collapsing of womanhood and femininity with good mothering. In this sense, it is possible to feel like a spy: an interloper who, while dressed for the occasion, is masking some form of real, authentic self. But when asked where or what this true self is in relation to these performances, it is difficult to respond accurately and honestly.

While Garner is no longer publicly uncertain but rather quite enthusiastic about motherhood – since she has children negative comments might indicate bad mothering,

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although she has admitted to being at times tired and challenged – she has expressed ambivalence about her body in relation to pregnancy and motherhood. An obviously pregnant body was not until recently normal for a red-carpet celebrity event. After a photograph of Demi Moore's naked, pregnant body appeared on the cover of *Vanity Fair* in 1991 invited both awe and controversy, and confirmed by Angelina Jolie's very public pregnancies and adoptions did little to alter her image as sexy even after motherhood, it is part of many celebrity representations now. Media, including magazines, blogs and news shows, frequently discuss which celebrities deserve to be mothers and whether those who are mothers are good or bad ones. Occasionally there are cursory attempts to bring fathers into this discourse, but of a different type and scope, and usually with regard to financial support or praise for men who spend time with their children in ways that are not usually deemed remarkable for women.

It does not seem in 2009 that Garner would need to hide a pregnancy or diminish its importance, and with celebrity gossip culture she is not likely able to. At the same time she needs to maintain control over her career by managing her bodily evidence of motherhood and childbirth. This is further complicated with the expected cute paparazzi photos of Garner and Affleck with their children presumably involved in mundane activities like shopping or going to school, demonstrating parental involvement and close parent-child bonds. Despite claims of new girlhood and values that are beyond gender, much of Garner's currency as female is based on physicality in a way that is more acute than for men, particularly in entertainment industries. This suggests that the very mutability and flexibility identified as potentially empowering for young women persists

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in positioning subjectivity in the body, with the body the most accurate indicator of an authentic self. Instead of accepting a more diverse array of bodies as normal, there is increased pressure on bodies to conform: the best way to master any situation is to look good in all of them. If we are always watched and judged, and all spaces require performance, there is no space for unruly or deviant bodies that cannot, in some context, be contained and controlled and do not apologize for nonconformity.

Here, I have explained the importance of performance, in Goffman's terms, associated with *Alias* as a key factor in embodying girlhood and womanhood after feminism. If a worldview from *Alias* and other representations of kick-ass girls has infiltrated the collective consciousness of real girls, it is not necessarily one of expanded boundaries for gender norms and behavior. Instead, there seems to be affirmation that a multitude of "selves" are required to negotiate social interaction combined with an acceptance of sexuality is an effective means for meeting needs and desires that are not sexual in nature, so that using one's sexuality divorced from one's sexual desire is, really, a currency, as Irina stated, and the best avenue to any sort of social agency.

CHAPTER 4: ONE TRUE SELF: NAVIGATING CHOICES AND RISKS

A college student who said that as a teenager she had watched "a bunch of episodes" of the television series *Alias* as it was first airing explained why the show and its girl hero Sydney Bristow did not keep her interest: "I remember when it first came out. And she had like the bright red hair. And she kicked ass. And then I just remember seeing it later through the series and she just kind of got more generic." In using the word "generic" the girl implied that Sydney had lost her edge in the qualities that made her exceptional and therefore interesting; she was no longer special. "Generic" recalls Mulvey's proposal about genre and gender that when conventional femininity becomes central to a narrative, it becomes about sexuality and thus melodrama instead of some other more conventionally masculine form, such as adventure or in Mulvey's example a Western. The college girl's claim reveals at least two important assumptions. First, her comments suggested she placed a high value on Sydney's appearance as an indicator of both her exceptionalism and the show's worth. Second, the girl's recollection of her teenage self suggested that for her at that time, an ass-kicking girl hero was a good thing and representing Sydney as moving toward a more conventional lifestyle prioritizing what might be called family values meant Sydney was opting out of the more exciting and enviable aspects of her profession.

Considering the themes of *Alias* of empowerment and fluid embodiment and that the girl who had assessed Sydney Bristow as generic was part of a generation assumed to

celebrate these things, the show might have held more appeal for her. The girl was the right age (early teens) when the show first aired in 2001 to be receptive to the kind of girl power *Alias* seemed to promise, and she had also professed to have been a fan of other girl-hero shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Charmed*. But while in the course of *Alias* there was no remarkable decrease in the amount of ass-kicking by Sydney (except, perhaps, during actor Jennifer Garner's real pregnancy), her goal evolved from one of vengeance – for the murder of her fiancé in the pilot – to a quest for a stable and heteronormative family structure. For the middle-class girls (and one boy) whose conversations constituted my research for this chapter, Sydney embodied both a good model and a fundamentally uninteresting one. This perception points to the relationship of space to identity in performances of femininity as affirming or rejecting socially accepted public/private distinctions. Choices made based on what counts as public or private then determine morality, but a morality based on whether a girl seems "real" or "fake" in the words of the girls taking part in these discussions.

In this chapter I explore how girls' relationships to media images as rooted in Lefebvre's concept of representations of space – space as culturally conceived – reveal the function of space in reasserting old arguments of gender and power and a rethinking of media as spatial in nature. I consider how media determine the boundaries of both identity and place as a result of the norms accepted through spatial practice presented in the discussion of *Alias*. What emerged from this research were claims about space and gender in narratives of self-improvement and performativity. These claims hinged on a shared notion of what counts as right and normal voiced in a complicated mix of moral

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judgment and moral relativism, and presented as questions about autonomy, choice and authenticity.

Writing about youth and geography, David Oswell (1998:44) explains: "With the increasingly globalised television environment the temporal and spatial dynamics of youth programming have significantly shifted. … It becomes a day-in and day-out production, and viewing becomes very much a secondary activity," such that media is always on, it is around us, and we think of ourselves as within it (particularly considering online socializing and gaming). This is enhanced by increased options for interacting with visual media. Rather than being an object or activity, media conceptually adheres to Emile Durkheim's (1965) definition of space as the fundamental classification system in determining social order. This disrupts the binary of television as on one hand an activity (something to do) and on the other an object (something to be used) so that it is perceived as both at once. Television is part of a vast and omnipresent media environment that defines this world rather than offering another one (Burgin 1996). This means that the representation of space as imagined for any television program, even if it is a fantastically impossible world, is part of the environment of the lived world.

The discussion participants valued visual literacy and fluency in mass culture as allowing them to demonstrate their skills of observation and back up their critique with an authority evidence rather than only sentiment. The information this requires is readily available through the multitude magazines, TV programs, Web sites and blogs focused on celebrities. Through these, regular citizens can amass enough knowledge of stars and celebrities to discuss with authority an actor's performative talent, and discern what some

public statement or acting role revealed about her inner "true" self. As one sixteen-year-old girl said of professional acting, "I think that's bravery all in itself: trusting yourself that you can change your character but you can be able to come back." In addition to assuming an identifiable authentic self, this situates identity as spatial: that we have a core identity from which we leave and to which we can return.

Three themes that frame issues of space and gender emerged from these discussions: self-improvement and the feminine body; the function of performance; and distinctions of authenticity and bad faith. For the girls taking part in the discussions that frame this chapter, deviance was universally considered optional and self-determined rather than socially constructed and determined: it was a choice. The discussions overall pointed to a perception of media as an environment for girls' development, positioned often in the discussions as self-awareness and personal growth: learning life's lessons. These lessons should then translate into an individual's ability to understand what is at stake in opting to adhere to social norms in the performance of day-to-day life; opting for deviance was a clearly intentional rejection of these standards. A circling back to the models that inform these lessons to be learned reveals a notion of authenticity that reaffirms old sex/gender conventions rather than always expanding into new forms of acceptable femininity. Performances were judged on how "real" they seemed as a measure of authenticity based on the performer making good choices. One girl, a teenager involved in her school's drama club and classes, said she had "a hard time watching phony actresses," and when asked what she meant by "phony," explained it as someone "who hasn't stretched her boundaries and who I feel has that big of a range" in

terms of the choices she has made in roles and how convincing she is in her performance.

Several girls praised actresses who they felt took "risks," in their term. One girl cited as a

model Cate Blanchett because, "she has played every part in the book," and all of the

other girls agreed, again collapsing roles and public persona when one girl claimed of

Blanchett, "I just think she's done a lot with her life" in part because of Blanchett's

ability to use different regional accents in her roles. Among those deemed to have not

appropriately "stretched their boundaries" in one girl's words, the girls listed: actor

Amanda Bynes for not taking on a variety of roles despite having acted since childhood;

Paris Hilton, of whom one girl expressed concern saying, "I'm kind of scared for her.

Anybody could fall into that trap if they're rich;" and Britney Spears because they felt

she had ruined good opportunities with poor judgment. One girl who said she was not a

big fan of Spears (and a different girl than the one who was worried about Hilton's

future), attempted to justify Spears' public failings: "They're saying she's going

psychotic. And I mean if you have the cameras in your face twenty-four, seven … or they

won't stop making up stories about how you are a horrible mom. But unless you sit down

and talk with Britney Spears you're not going to know what it's like, what's going on in

her head. I don't know. If I were her I would probably go into an asylum too." Her

statement suggests that a safe but in a sense private space of a psychiatric facility,

regardless of the stigma attached, would be preferable to relentless pursuit by the

paparazzi and lack of control over her image and dissemination of private-life matters. In

response another girl declared authoritatively of Spears, "She's not an actress," as if to

say that Spears, who gained notoriety as a teen pop singer in a fetishized schoolgirl

uniform, should not be included in these evaluations of authenticity, performance and femininity and despite that Spears has had acting roles beyond appearing as herself in cameo roles. Considering this evaluation, Spears then might deserve her poor public image which, importantly here, includes a public narrative of poor choices in mothering.

This discussion of acting range and ability indicates that problems arise when an attempt to present a particular form of self and the reception of this performance are not synchronized, resulting in viewers (the audience reading the image) potentially misunderstanding the motivation for an action. The key point here is not the problem between production and reception of an image, but rather the issue of motivation for choices, as if we could know this in any instance, whether in dramatic performance or social situation.

The language of choice is intertwined with conceptions of women, girls and femininity, with identity and other social factors establishing choices available and related restrictions. Alongside this relationship of femininity and choice are perceptions of youth as early-stage impending adulthood and the stage of life with the most opportunities and choices – and thus most fraught with the possibility of making a bad choice that sets one on an undesirable and far more limiting life trajectory (Bynner 2005; Arnett 2004; Schwartz 2004). This characterization of life based on choice rather than circumstance ignores that options differ depending on factors of identity and social position and not all options are available to all girls. The risks engendered by presenting oneself in public depend fundamentally on Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* as driving the dominance of bourgeois tastes and habits. Flaws in the sense here appeared to be aspects

of personality beyond an individual's control and/or not fundamentally her fault, and potentially overcome if actions resulted in learning how to be a better woman. Bad judgment, or making bad choices, seemed founded in holding inappropriate values and knowing one's choices are immoral but for selfish reasons making these choices anyway. The difference between flaws and bad judgment articulated by the girls can be discerned through *habitus*, through which a girl would know the proper contexts for performing different versions of herself, meaning acceptably feminine in conformity with a conventional bourgeois definition.

NO BOYS ALLOWED

The ethnographic research for this chapter involved twenty girls and one guy (see Appendix B); here I use the term "guy" as I do "girl," which I discuss in more detail later in this chapter. This segregation was not my intention. That there was only one male participant in the series of discussions set up for this research is founded in assumptions about space, place and gender. This exception took place in a common room of a college dorm cluster. All other sessions were in private homes and my relationship to these participants was strictly professional rather than that that of friend or neighbor, as in the other cases. My original research plan assumed both female and male participants, and my initial forays into finding participants included reaching out to girls as well as boys and their parents who indicated interest (some fathers but mostly mothers). When I approached contacts for this study, the parents of boys and the boys themselves initially expressed interest but none followed through, seeming reluctant to ask their male friends

to participate in this form of discussion and on the topic of television and popular media. But so did the women and girls involved in organizing most of the sessions.

When recruiting, I always explained that my research was on gender and media. Almost universally, anyone responding wanted to know whether I wanted to hear only what girls had to say or if I wanted to include boys' voices as well, reflecting a common collapsing of the term "gender" with women's issues. I always stated that I needed some participants but welcomed boys in the discussions. However, the girl participants, and in cases their mothers, gender-selected at each stage: in agreeing to participate; in choosing to exclude males from the discussion when planning; and in who, ultimately, did show up for the sessions.

Of the girls who finally agreed to host and invite other discussants, all indicated they knew girls *and* boys to invite. However, except for the one college guy, no other males participated in the end and the few males present in the homes during the discussions stayed well away from us. The father in one home indicated clearly at the beginning of the session that he did not want to be involved in this particular discussion and purposefully stayed in another room behind a closed door for much of the session. In another case the host's teenage brother was at home and could have participated, but was amicably discouraged from doing so by his older sister despite a friendly relationship between them. When he walked through the room during the discussion his sister joked, "I know how he's going to be the male influence: coming downstairs and getting a cupcake!" When I said he was welcome to join us, she laughed but stated firmly, "No. We don't really need him," and the other girls present laughed as if having a boy

involved was a ridiculous idea. In another session the host girl said she had invited male friends who indicated they would come, but when some canceled she uninvited the others because she felt the imbalance toward girls might be awkward. In another case, males had absolutely not been invited by the mother and daughter hosts, who said matter-of-factly that a discussion of women and media would be more honest and productive without boys in the room.

Considering the relationship of television and mass culture in general to gender and power, this is not surprising. The fraught relationship of gender and television is rooted in the historical moment and marketing of popular television in the 1950s. Television scholar Lynn Spigel has explained that television, situated as a passively consumed form of mass culture, threatened masculinity's affiliation with action:

> Mass amusements are typically thought to encourage passivity, and they have often been represented in terms of penetration, consumption, and escape. ... The case of broadcasting is especially interesting because the threat of feminization was particularly aimed at men. Broadcasting quite literally was shown to disrupt the normative structures of patriarchal (high) culture and to turn "real men" into passive homebodies (1992a:212).

By potentially entrapping men into inactivity, a form of impotence (Grosz 1994), television threatened social structure through contamination of a patriarchal family structure. Spigel's description might seem outdated now: after all, men and boys watch TV all the time alongside female friends and family, and programs now often blend genres (soap opera and adventure, for example) to appeal to a broader audience.

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However, even with TV networks targeting male viewers beyond sports programming and with far less gender stigma attached to watching TV, the act of inviting males – especially male peers – into one's home to discuss viewing habits seemed both inappropriately intimate and potentially stifling to discussion.

This concern is a spatial one and points to the persistence of gender/sex tropes sometimes thought of as long buried, a view often affiliated with third-wave feminism despite that it is certainly not universally held among girls claiming this label. Theory and material evidence convincingly support the inadequacy of universally aligning public with action, voice, and a public sphere that lies outside the home and thus is the province of men while the private is affiliated with home and domesticity and positioned as intimate, interior and for women. But social norms depending on this classification system endure. A standing assumption is that "girl talk" should take place in the home, and particularly in feminized rooms such as the kitchen or a girl's bedroom and perhaps extended to the perceptibly private regions of public spaces of consumption: store dressing-rooms, coffee houses and certain restaurants. This effectively quarantines speaking the truth about girls' tastes and habits and has at least two implications. The first is an assumption that the presence of boys during a discussion among girls – regardless of the relationships among them and particularly when this might involve affiliation with feminized forms of culture such as melodramatic genres and concerns with body image – might result in stilted, thus inauthentic, expressions of value. Second is the underlying idea that cultural forms and texts that girls consider worthy of time and attention will naturally lack value in broader society and should not be aired in mixed company if girls

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want to retain respect.

These implications reaffirm the alignment of public with male and private with female in direct opposition to a public discourse that this split no longer holds true, if in fact it ever did. These categories also point to a requirement of performance for femininity: girls in public should demonstrate an appropriate valuing of texts – television shows and music, for example – in which "girly" things can be enjoyed but not taken seriously and in spite of the efforts of *grrrl* culture in the 1990s to repossess aspects of conventional femininity as empowering and not antithetical to physical strength and expressions of anger. A girl should know her place; by this, I mean the perception of a proper place and time for different demonstrations of self (activities, habits, tastes). Not knowing the right context for discussing, for example, *Desperate Housewives* or model and television personality Tyra Banks' body weight, is evidence of inadequate social navigation and thus either outsider status (stigma) or bad judgment.

THE GIRLS' ROOM

To address these questions, I conducted and analyzed a series of open discussions about media. In these discussions, rather than having specific questions and a set of expected responses, I came with an opening question to get the conversation started but generally let the conversations develop with as little interference as possible. I had also planned other questions in the event the conversation faltered, which I did need to use in a few instances. In the cases where the participants were already good friends with one another, I did not need to use these at all. In the two instances where either the

participants did not know one another or knew one another but did not consider one another good friends I did need to restart a few faltering conversations by asking a question, either one I had prepared or one based on what the girls had said earlier in the session. In all cases, the participants without my prompting brought up and discussed at length celebrities, their use of time when not in school and where they spent this time, and online identity and other forms of communication such as mobile phones and texting. Such discussions have value beyond what participants said they liked and disdained – what they watched on TV and what they said they refused to watch. Patterns emerged that revealed values and priorities about morality and gender norms. Their comments about tastes and habits and what these revealed about values and priorities provided insight into the importance of space to schema of social relations. In these I saw discordance between assumptions that space and place and related definitions of public and private are based on promises that sex and gender are no longer of concern, and an underscoring of a system based on maintaining distinctions found in categories of sex and gender.

For this project I conducted four discussion sessions in 2008 in the Virginia suburbs and exurbs of Washington D.C. (Appendix C). Among the twenty-two participants the age range was from thirteen to twenty-one years, and each group included from three to eight participants. Participants represented a range of races and ethnicities; while I did not solicit this information several participants indicated racial or ethnic affiliation, most often (but not always) when claiming affiliation other than white. Three of the four groups were ethnically/racially diverse within the groups, while a fourth was

by appearance all white with none of the participants indicating otherwise.[14] Comments suggested that despite a fairly wide range of socioeconomic situations for the participants' families in terms of assets, income, profession and education, all considered themselves middle class. All participants were attending middle school, high school or college; those not yet in college assumed it was part of their future.

I use the term "girl(s)" rather than young woman or young people when referring to participants. This is not to elide the age range by suggesting age thirteen is no different from age twenty, nor do I want to erase the presence of the lone guy. It is, rather, a choice that points to the complexity of the term "girl" as a particular construction of femininity and as changeable depending on context. I use the terms girl and participant interchangeably so that "participant" is not just a euphemism for the one guy. "Girl" is also how female participants referred to themselves, their peers, and celebrities with whom they felt a connection, in part as a term of endearment and familiarity but also reflecting their perceptions of themselves as not yet within real, meaning adult, life (Bynner 2005). In referring to males the participants most always used the term "guy" and occasionally "boy" and only rarely "man."

The specific places of the discussions as spatial situations reflected the different tones of the sessions and the content and intimacy of information participants chose to reveal. The different situations I encountered suggest the primacy of spatiality to gender norms for the participants' everyday lives as well as for how they viewed media representations, supporting Lefebvre's description of spatial distinctions on a variety of scopes reflecting a broader worldview and assumptions of normalcy and order.

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In one session in a home the girls were at least three years out of high school; they had been friends in elementary school but had not all gone the same high school; a few attended college out of state; two attended the same college and were friendly but clearly not close friends. Although they had not all remained connected with one another, all had stayed on close terms with the host so that the session was something of a reunion. The talk was lively and there were numerous references to people and events in the past, including memories of what they and people they had known had watched on TV during different life stages in a way that suggested a progression toward adulthood (Vinitzky-Seroussi 1998). These memories of media experience included references to girls with whom they had not been close friends but who they remembered as avid fans of particular shows, usually spoken about with a sense of stigmatization of the girls' perceived excessive interest in her show of choice; two shows named were *Charmed* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Several of the girls in this discussion group were nearing college graduation, and discussing the future appeared to cause some anxiety for them as they moved into a less certain and contained life stage which also seemed to offer a broader array of options but in which choices were more difficult to reconsider once they were made.

The session was held in the dining room, which was decorated with a mix of comfortable antiques and souvenirs suggesting world travel. The dining table took up most of the room, although a sideboard and display cases were squeezed in. When I arrived, a few of the girls and their mothers had eaten dinner together and were still sitting at the table. The mothers moved to another room shortly after I arrived. As the

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other participants arrived they pulled up chairs around the table. With everyone there, it was crowded but did not feel stifling. The girls seemed comfortable being in such close quarters with one another and the conversation was a lively chat among friends to which I occasionally contributed or asked a question in response to something a girl had said. While they did not talk much about personal relationships in great detail, the tone was still one of free-form girl talk, but informed by a few years of college seminar classes and familiarity with terms such as "globalization" and "social action" and the language of social science disciplines. This group also stood out from the others as fairly comfortable using the term feminism, which one girl brought up without my mentioning it. .

Another session consisted of five girls whose mothers had been friends since the girls were babies. The mothers had remained friends, but it appeared that close friendships among the girls had not developed outside socializing planned by their mothers. Though all five girls were attending the same high school and in the same grade, they had not gone to the same elementary or middle schools and, more importantly here, were currently in different social circles: there were several specific references to this during the discussion. This group had a certain amount of tension as the girls sought to negotiate their high school situations in the context of this discussion group, which I believe was at the request of their parents as a favor to the host's mother, although the girls did seem genuinely interested in the topic. In addition, there was a sense in this household that much popular culture was inappropriate for teens and when consumed by adults a sign of bad taste and judgment; this likely curbed discussion of specific topics that came up in all of the other groups such as shows like *Flavor of Love* (Abrego and

Cronin 2006) and online social networking. For example, one girl (not the host) cautiously asked the others whether they had Facebook accounts. After a few seconds of awkward silence while the girls looked expectantly at one another, all vehemently denied using Facebook because, as one girl explained, it was not "safe" and might air "private" information. But while the discussion topics may have differed from those of other groups, the discourse and underlying issues were similar.

This discussion was in the family room of the house, which was clearly the main living and working area. The room was adjacent to the kitchen and dining rooms and within clear view of a more formal living room on the other side of the dining room. It was filled with school-related and other papers that accumulate in daily life as well as books, family photos and souvenir evidence of travel; it was also the TV room and although the television was on when I arrived it was immediately turned off. Both parents left the family room where the discussion took place, but as the room was open to other public areas of the house the host's parents always appeared to be within earshot even if they were not actually listening. The girls sat scattered in chairs and on the floor around a coffee table which displayed some snacks neatly arranged on plates. I was shown by the host girl to an armchair that was almost, but not quite, part of the circle that the girls made up when seated. The coffee table was small, but the girls did not move in close to it and kept a fair distance from one another considering the set-up and size of the room; and they all seemed hesitant to eat the snacks. These cues suggested the girls' uncertainty about the situation and one another. The discussion was slow to start; I asked questions, but the girls were reluctant at first to respond to one another and would only respond to

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me. When they did start talking more conversationally, several times the conversation stopped abruptly when a girl seemed to feel she had said something that might be perceived as a criticism of the others' tastes and habits. This discussion suggested the trickiness of navigating high school and the discomfort of venturing outside of one's normal social world, related in particular to the clear distinctions between the girls' perceived home and school versions of themselves and the embarrassment of the intimacy of the home to outsiders from the public context of school, at which they would likely engage in a very different kind of performance.

A third discussion consisted of eight girls between ages 13 and 16, including two sisters and their friends from the schools they were currently attending and friends from earlier school experiences with whom they still kept in touch. This group was the liveliest in participants' interactions with one another in terms of telling jokes and teasing, and making loud and often quite funny declarations about schoolmates and celebrities. They also discussed their consumption of popular culture with more enthusiasm than other groups, seldom couching statements about likes and dislikes in shame or disinterest. Comments from participants in all groups did not suggest that these girls watched more television or with more interest than in other gorups, just that they were less inclined to dismiss it during the discussion. I attribute to the current close friendships among several of the girls so that individual tastes were already known to the group, at least in part, and that expressions of likes and dislikes previously unknown to group members were a form of confessional that would further solidify their bonds. The openness among the friends

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in the group then allowed the girls with less immediate relationships to more openly state their opinions as well.

This discussion took place in the basement family room of a house. The room was neat, with carpeting, an L-shaped sectional couch and a few easy chairs. It was also the TV room. The colors were subdued and the walls featured simple, stylish artwork. The room felt new and modern. The girls all crowded together onto sections of the couch, and I sat in an armchair facing them. The splayed themselves comfortably on the furniture, put their feet up, and leaned into one another. They seemed to constantly be in motion even though they rarely left the couch. The hosts' mother was present for most of the conversation and the girls seemed comfortable with her in general, although occasionally looking at her with concern when the conversation ventured into areas that might be inappropriate for a parent's ears such as teenagers having sex. The session was loud and with much laughter and girls talking over one another; pauses in conversation were rare and the dominant discussion shifted quickly from one topic to another and then often back again.

For the session in the dorm complex, participants were recruited by the university's housing staff as an open call to dorm residents, bringing in the one male participant. While the participants knew one another peripherally and seemed to enjoy the discussion, none considered themselves friends (although at the end of the session when they had been talking about online social communities some suggested they might become Facebook friends). The comments generally suggested these participants had thought carefully about matters of media and culture. This discussion illustrated more

depth of analysis of media than the others, generally. The tone at least at first was as if we were formally interviewing one another, although in became increasingly less so as the conversation progressed.

The location of the discussion on a campus, the room setup, and my relationship to the participants as a researcher and in cases known as an instructor was at first reminiscent of a regular seminar class early in the semester: I would ask a question, and one or two of them would thoughtfully answer, and then await another question. The room was newly constructed, with glaring fluorescent lighting and institutional chairs and carpeting, and not at all inviting to comfortable conversation. However, the group was small and the discussion quickly became more casual so that participants seemed to express opinions more freely than at the beginning and it was more of a conversation than question and response. The participants, though, never seemed to entirely lose the sense that they would be graded on their responses. This did not detract at all from the value and relevancy of the discussions, but did illustrate in terms of spatiality and power relations the defining nature of location to social interactions. After all, I was a teacher and the participants were students, and even though I was not *their* teacher and was a guest in their living area, we were situated on school grounds so that anything said was never really outside this structure of authority.

LIVING IN THE REAL WORLD

The discussions overall made clear the view that anyone in high school or college is unformed and exists outside "real life," recognizing an adolescence in which they were

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protected from the real world but still needed to grasp skills and information needed for successful adulthood. This suggests adults are essentially fixed so that authenticity is based on constancy, while adolescent authenticity depends on being always transitional and impermanent. The girls' comments implied that moving from a state of transience to one of permanence could be accomplished by careful study of adult social interaction as represented on television, not to find individual role models but as a way to consider the types of conflicts that arise in what they viewed as the adult and thus "real" world. These girls seemed to be looking for a map of appropriate social interaction which would come with a suggested course of navigation and both good and bad examples. With this in mind, the context and assumed demographics of the audiences of particular television networks mattered greatly: kids' channels, even those like Disney featuring narratives about teenagers, were for most of the girls not considered acceptable venues for studying social dynamics.

In the group that included girls from ages thirteen to seventeen, two middle-school girls were embarrassed by some of the high schoolers when the younger girls said they liked to watch *Degrassi* (Moore and Schuyler 2001) a teen soap opera that airs on The N, an MTV affiliate network targeting tweens and young teens. While some of the older girls responded that they had loved the show when they were younger and implied they no longer watched it, others dismissed it as "so gay" (using gay to mean juvenile and lacking value) and "stupid and badly acted." One older girl attempted to mitigate the middle schoolers' embarrassment by noting that the characters on *Degrassi*, several of whom were beyond high school in the new episodes airing in 2008, "started as little kids"

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but had become, "like grown-ups doing grown-up things, like drugs and sex," implying this would be a favorable reason to watch the show in terms of it being educational for social navigation. Only one of the girls in the discussions of this show was aware it was based on a series from the 1980s, *DeGrassi Junior High*, which aired in the United States on the PBS public television network and so by affiliation a show with some presumed educational value, and was lauded for its honest portrayal of adolescence. A main character in the new series, Emma, is the teenaged daughter of a character on the old series, Spike, who was pregnant with Emma in the 1980s series as the result of having sex with an insensitive boy who leaves her to single parenthood (the same actress plays Spike in the old and new series), having made a bad choice.

These judgments of taste about what television shows the girls currently watched or had watched in the past were positioned as in line with moral judgments about what actions and decisions they deemed to be age-appropriate. This connection points to the importance the girls placed on their articulation of human "flaws," a term that came up frequently and in every group's discussion, and the nature of choices and options. For example, it was clearly permissible for the girls in the discussions to reveal having had past "bad judgment" in the sense of bad taste in TV shows, particularly those they now deemed childish, as part of their growth. All participants enjoyed discussing shows they liked as children, and that certain shows marked different stages of life. To not have watched the shows popular at the appropriate age was to have missed out on childhood's pleasures and also social opportunities. A girl who had grown up watching very little television in her home (although she said she had watched as much as she could at

friends' houses) faulted her limited television viewing for her and her sister's less-than-ideal social standing: "We don't have cable. We really didn't watch much. I think that's why we weren't really a success" in elementary school, adding that this set her up to struggle socially in middle school, with her inference that the stakes increased with age and grade level.

Even the thirteen-year-old girls who participated in the discussions referred nostalgically to their favorite shows at age nine or ten, such as *Lizzie McGuire* (Minsky 2001) rolling their eyes at their tastes when children – and confirming themselves as now within the scope of adolescence. In a discussion that included girls from ages thirteen to seventeen, all of the girls agreed that they had started becoming disillusioned with child celebrities and children's programming at around age twelve, after which they felt they needed to turn to what they considered more sophisticated programming. Memories of media were recalled with fondness and also embarrassment, with the assumption that the shows which participants liked in the past were functional to life stages and thus excusable. This performance of embarrassment in sight of peers allowed them to demonstrate an older and thus better self (Vinitzky-Seroussi 1998), as though choices are automatically progressive toward some form of adult good taste that would remain static upon being reached. Under this assumption, incomplete media experience interfered with healthy social development, a failure to thrive in a teenage value system.

All four groups talked about watching the Disney Channel as a formative part of elementary school culture, followed usually by a declaration that they now saw Disney programming as immature or insubstantial. One 16-year-old girl in a session with others

from her high school stated that she still watched and enjoyed Disney's *Hannah Montana* (Poryes, 2006) which features a teenage girl as the main character but has a vocal fan base of tweens and even younger girls. When she said she valued the show because, "the songs are very catchy," and "it's a show that can kind of teach you lessons," the other girls in the room looked away in obvious discomfort, embarrassed for the *Hannah* fan's misstep in claiming affinity for a children's show without irony or nostalgia: these lessons should have already been learned.. Despite this, the girl unapologetically stood by her claim and did not mitigate or qualify her opinion. Even though the *Hannah Montana* fan qualified her reasons for liking the show as in alignment with reasons expressed by her peers for liking shows not intended for children – fun to watch and, more importantly here, able to teach life-lessons – her choice of texts was stigmatizing, in Goffman's (1963) sense of the term. It is worth mentioning here, considering the importance of the body in these discussions, that this girl also faced stigmatization related to physical disability and had experience being visibly different among her peers.

Girls in three of the groups joked about having watched the family-friendly series *7th Heaven* (Spelling 1996) which aired on The WB, during later elementary school and middle school and on all three occasions other participants indicated with some embarrassment at their younger selves they had done so as well. For example, a college student, laughing as she related this story, said her father still teased her admiration of *7th Heaven* when she was a child and young teen.

My dad told me that when the show first came out, I was like, 'Why can't you be like the *7th Heaven* dad? Why can't you handle that situation like that dad did?

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But now we have shows like *My Super Sweet 16* on MTV, which me, my mom

and my grandmom love to watch together, because I'll sit there and say, 'If I said

that to you, you would have smacked me in my face!'

In a more serious tone, this girl, a Latina who indicated her parents had

immigrated to the United States and had worked hard to maintain middle-class status and

send their daughter to college, added, "I appreciate all that I have and I'm not spoiled like

those girls [on *My Super Sweet 16]* on TV, and I'm like, 'Oh no, that's not reality for

me!' so it goes both ways." Here the college girl indicated that she saw her idealization of

the very traditional family relationships of *7th Heaven* as naïve and not entirely fair

standards by which she had judged her father. Secondly, she implied that transitioning to

watch other shows with an understanding that television representations are fictional

constructions was part of becoming an adult as she became for her mother and

grandmother the cultural translator of what counted as "reality," giving her authority

within her family based on knowledge and values. Thirdly, her newfound understanding

had fostered bonds among generations of women in her family so that they formed a

sisterhood of television viewers; family ideals and values were reproduced through their

consensus critique of the girls on *My Super Sweet 16* (Chang 2005) not expected fare for

a Latina grandmother but which, on consideration, is the counterpoint to the conventions

of family the girl had desired through *7th Heaven* in reinforcing the difference between

good girls and bad, greedy ones.

In addition to structuring family dynamics, television provided for the girls points

of reference for moving beyond their own nuclear families. During a discussion among

college students, all agreed that the 1990s series *Friends* (Crane and Kauffman 1994) the

iconic sitcom about a group of young people living in Manhattan which aired from 1994

until 2004 on NBC, was "an important show," in one girl's words, for their college

experiences even though all had attended different universities and none had watched it

with regularity during high school. Several girls indicated that *Friends* in syndication was

consistently on televisions in dormitory common rooms in the evenings and students

passing through would frequently stop and watch as a social activity. *Friends* presented

them with an idealized form of young adulthood no more believable or representative of

their own real situations than the family life of *7th Heaven,* but which more directly

reflected their recent independence from parents and compulsory education as well as the

dynamics of dating and hooking up and what happens after.

Television as they expressed their tastes and habits did not need to be believable,

in the sense that viewers thought it was an accurate representation of their own lives or

moral according to adult standards of teenage behavior, or of high artistic quality, as long

as it is morally redeemable, illustrates appropriate milestones of age and generation, and

lessons can be learned from watching: cautionary tales.[15] Redeemable in this context

points to learning to make good choices that direct the chooser to a responsible and

generally conventional adult femininity. However, the value of these lessons depends on

the context of any show as clearly associated with or leading up to adulthood, as

illustrated in one girl's regard for the hospital-based sitcom *Scrubs* (Lawrence 2001)

because of the absurd honesty of the characters' interactions with one another:[16]

The characters on *Scrubs* deal with their problems really, really well. I wish if I

had a fight with someone I could just be like, "This is about your insecurity with your father, projected on me!" Instead, we just get mad and petty. I wish my life worked the way their social interactions work, where they always *deal* with it. And then I watch *The Hills,* and I don't want to be like *that*.

While she recognized that *Scrubs* is surreal and also a comedy, she appreciated the form of honesty she felt it illustrated – an honesty which would be entirely inappropriate in the lived world. It was not the characters on *Scrubs* with whom the college student felt affinity, but rather the awkward situations and attempts to resolve them that figure prominently in the narrative. In contrast *The Hills* (2006) an unscripted series which follows a group of privileged young people in and around Los Angeles, has as a key part of its narrative the cast not being entirely honest with one another with the dual effect of allowing them to seem to maintain social standards of politeness as well as developing intrigue when secrets are kept or someone is left out of an event; drama and further tensions, rather than closure, ensue when there are direct confrontations and secrets are revealed.

FLAWS AND FAKES

The differences in these media worlds both as they are produced and as they are experienced suggests that perceptions of authenticity do not rely on accuracy through a probable simulation according to standards the girls experienced in their own lives, but rather hinge on a sense of honesty of feeling and expression that is, in this girl's experience, improbable in day-to-day life but also desirable. While distinctions of genre

might suggest incongruity between either the shows or the girls' perceptions of them, the difference in spatial elements in *Scrubs* and *The Hills* illustrate conflicts in the meaning of authenticity. *Scrubs* is a situation comedy and, true to the genre, is spatially fixed: the action takes place in a narrow scope of places (most often the hospital at which the characters work and the lead characters' living spaces), and the characters for the entire run of the series are tied to these places. In terms of spatial construction, sitcoms are strictly bounded environments in formula and tone. This is seen in the positioning of the world within the show as limited, with a small and rarely changing regular cast of characters and others coming in and out to disrupt the stasis but leaving usually by the end of an episode or brief story arc. Sitcoms for the most part have been filmed in indoor studios; even though the ceiling of the studio is unseen this adds to the sense of enclosure which comes through in filming. The conventional narrative structure of sitcoms is a series of individual units – episodes – designed so that viewers are able to understand the context and characters without having viewed all of the episodes (Dalton and Linder 2005; Mills 2005; Mittel 2004). Despite the absurdity of the story lines and dialog, the way the world of *Scrubs* is enclosed, stable and predictable allows it to feel safe and navigable. For example, characters address race and gender differences openly and without tact as part of the show's humor. In relation to the girl's appreciation for the openness of the characters with one another, this safety translates to the ability to reveal one's true self who can say and do anything no matter how strange or foolish in its directness. It is almost like home, ideally, but with the camaraderie and possibility for romance of a school-based social circle.

In contrast, *The Hills* is filmed as a reality series with the requisite shaky camera work and sometimes muffled dialog expected of a visual recording of real events and following the cast through a variety of locations and situations: indoors and outdoors and at work, at play, or shopping. New locations show up in almost every episode, and the characters are frequently shown driving around greater Los Angeles: their world appears to have far fewer spatial limitations, reflecting also a sense of young adulthood as a time of limitless possibilities. However, this suggestion of a more accurate representation of the real world might be authentic in terms of place, but does not necessarily translate to a similar authenticity of character, effectively ripping apart a sense of consistency between the body/self of the characters and their situations. It is a removal of the authentic self from space which is destabilizing and unpredictable, with many opportunities to make the wrong choice and suffer the consequences. These lives and the venues seem to encourage bad choices and to increase the tension the representations offer what may be the characters' worst selves rather than their best.

The term "flaw" in relation to female characters and actors came up repeatedly and in every group, and consistently as meaning shortcomings in personality and character which could be overcome by self-awareness and subsequent self-improvement. Flaws were perceived as humanizing and functioned to make a celebrity or character role seem more "real" in a word that came up frequently during these discussions and thus worthy of praise and further attention. This attention might include watching a television series because of dedication to a character, but more frequently meant consistently watching films and TV shows when they featured a particular actor, and following a

celebrity's life and career in entertainment news and gossip. Flaws might lead to bad judgment, which is then potentially excusable if the actor learns from her mistakes. Repeated failure to learn becomes not just bad judgment but bad faith in Beauvoir's term, in a refusal to recognize the rights and needs of others in relation to structures of power ([1946] 2004); and bad faith indicates absence of authenticity. To appear to purposefully make bad choices in pursuit of public attention was in this context the meaning of "fake," constructed as poor valuing criteria of an individual rather than caused fundamentally by outside forces: these were "flaws" and potentially excusable.

While the girls determined "realness" to mean having flaws and not being ashamed to reveal them, in order to be perceived as real the flaws had to be of a specific nature and not include forms of stigmatized difference. Acceptable flaws included physical clumsiness, self-doubt, and sexual promiscuity, the last only if it appeared to be a result of having bad parents and if the girl seemed conflicted about her sexual experiences and choices. Flaws resulting in bad choices had to end in the girl learning something that would fundamentally change her behavior so that she would not make the same choice again. Lauren Conrad, a character on *The Hills*, was judged to be at once "so pretty" and "real" because she appeared to the girls in the group to be conflicted about her celebrity status and at the same time have an enviable lifestyle (in terms of money and clothing); one girl praised Conrad because "she tries to be a good person." Lauren was deemed "real" because she had opportunities at every turn to seem "fake" by having access to a lavish lifestyle that might invite bad choices. Instead, though, she appeared to be honorable and with conventional values, such as humility, ambivalence about the

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public eye and, over the course of her TV habitation, clearly chose a path leading to redemption..

On the other side of "real" and having flaws were distinctions of "fake" and not being "true" to oneself, in the words used by people in all of the discussions. The girls generally situated fake as indicated by a series of bad choices with transparently selfish and/or self-promoting motives, rather than the result of something beyond a girl's control. The girls seemed to agree that people could change, although there was not agreement among them as to which characters and actors were flawed (real) and which were fake. They did appear to agree on the general qualities which distinguish between a real and fake persona. This was articulated best by a high-school girl in her explanation of why she could relate to a character on the primetime soap opera *Desperate Housewives* (Cherry 2004) Gabrielle, specifically because she appeared to be fallible: "I think it's interesting. It has real-life conflicts, but it also has humor and it seems like [characters are] like real people who are relatable. They have problems and they have flaws. Like Gabriella Solis: she's selfish, she fights with her husband, she has an affair and she's not a good person." The girl then immediately equated Gabrielle's humanity with a notion of realness that suggested Beauvoir's formulation of authenticity, and at the same time attributed this realness to a maternal drive: "But she loses her baby, she adopts one, and you see a human side of her. You see a maternal side, so she's real." In stating this, the girl used the term "real" to describe the desire of the character to become a mother in spite of past moral transgressions. This determination suggests that "real" relates to emotional states and reactions more than to an accurate representation of conditions in

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the girl's lived world through a plausible narrative and likely series of events. The place and context of the narrative was not as important as the emotional responses and social interactions, regardless of how unrealistic these contexts appeared. Gabrielle's melodramatic life and the cohesiveness of her character mattered less than how she was able to change to face adversity.

The girl's explanation of her affinity with Gabrielle suggests foundational feminist scholarship in popular women's cultural texts, particularly soap operas (Modleski 1982; Ang 1985) and romance novels (Modleski 1982; Radway 1984; Ang 1985). Conventions of women's genres, such as family conflicts, motherhood and personal tragedy, remained appealing to this girl. Also evident, though, are retrograde (at least in terms of feminism) characterizations of *Desperate Housewives* pointed out in critiques of the show (Pozner and Siegel 2005) alongside with its narrative of a closed world in which outsiders coming in to the sunny subdivision that defines the parameters of interaction are untrustworthy and dangerously disruptive. In a feature in *Ms. Magazine* in 2005, writers Jennifer Pozner, who has strong affiliations with third-wave feminism, and Jessica Seigel used *Desperate Housewives* to stage essentially a second-wave vs. third wave debate about representations of women. In this article, Pozner and Siegel engaged in a friendly argument about the political ramifications of the show's production as well as of watching it considering the lives and personalities of the main characters, and in relation to the fact that the show was created and produced by Marc Cherry, a politically and socially conservative gay man.

The girls in another group, also discussing Gabrielle Solis (without any prompt from me) were universally negative about this persona while easily collapsing the character with the actor who portrays her, Eva Longoria. Several girls stated in some way that Gabrielle/Longoria was far from ideal and was "fake," and others agreed by nodding to affirm this as an accurate description. This fakeness was attributed to rumors of Longoria being difficult on set of the show and of seeming in interviews and other public appearances to be overly materialistic, perceptions which crossed into her characterization of Gabrielle. In this part of the discussion the girls switched between references to Gabrielle and Longoria fluidly and without distinction so that it was difficult to discern which they meant, as though the two women were one and the same. In essence, there was no clear distinction, even though other statements had made clear that all were familiar with standards and methods of dramatic performance and that actors were not the same as their characters.

Comments about Gabrielle/Longoria included that she was "a bitch," and that she was "ugly in real life" evidenced in tabloid photos of Longoria ostensibly without makeup on. Tacked on to this statement was that Gabrielle, who at that point in the series had almost always appeared thin, immaculately dressed in flashy, revealing, expensive designer clothing and makeup that supported the character's back story as a former model, was actually too perfect in her appearance so that it appeared she was "trying too hard" as one girl said, to compensate for the fact that "her head is too big for her body" and the previously mentioned lack of natural beauty and her disagreeable personality. In this discussion, Gabrielle/Longoria was always in the context of a mediated image and,

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having been judged to be fake meaning lacking value, she existed for these girls only within a representation of space as a reference to a larger social order so that she was a sign rather than a subject. Considering her in different contexts and as not always in control of her image did not seem to make sense. Conceiving of media as space rather than as a filter or means of transmission illustrates a problem with bodies and context.

In another example equating moral choices and sexuality, a high-school girl spoke with sympathy about a character on the teen (and now young adult) prime-time soap opera *One Tree Hill* (Schwan 2003). Brooke, a pretty girl, white (as are the show's other lead characters), who had at times been sexually promiscuous, consumed illegal drugs and alcohol to excess, and turned her back on her friends. The girl in the discussion, a high school sophomore, assessed Brooke sympathetically: "She's flawed and she's a flirt. But over the course of the show she's showed that she's loyal and that she has dimensions. She's also very strong. She used to, ummm, *date* a lot and she let guys take advantage of her." Her emphasis on the word "date" suggested she meant hook-ups or sexual encounters that illustrated poor judgment, and not simply accompanying a boy on an outing; in this way, Brooke's transformation into an honorable and complex girl was admirable because she had learned, at least in some ways, to make better choices regarding her relationships. When I asked the others group what kinds of flaws they related to in film and television, one response was: "If they're clumsy, because no one can ever not trip while you're walking with a guy you like. Not too much the kind where you're like, 'maybe if I'll trip, he'll like me, because I'm ditsy.' Not that kind, but like actually falling and being able to get back up and be like, 'well, that was humiliating, but

let's just keep walking.'" While the comments about Brooke highlight morality, this last statement points more to appropriate attitudes for girls than about an actor's ability to be demonstrate either moral or immoral behavior based on motive. There is a certain way in public to recover from an embarrassing situation, and being able to do this in a way that is modest, self-aware and not inviting attention illustrates some form of authenticity. If a performance is clearly a ruse the character's reedemability is less likely. The stakes are raised in the presence of a romantic partner so that her performance of graceful fallibility must be flawless and appear totally natural, regardless of how much embarrassment she actually feels. She must appear imperfect in her actions and perfect in her response. If her actions are transparently performative she might appear to have orchestrated her downfall and recovery and thus fake, implying she is the wrong kind of girl and undesirable by the right kind of guy.

In describing this scenario, the girl's easy elision of media worlds with her own experience suggests Lefebvre's representations of space as providing boundaries and signs in a situation – essentially spatial indicators of what actions define the boundaries of femininity and in what places. More than providing clearly ideal and undesirable examples of role models, the importance of these narratives for the girls is that they present in visual terms a series of situations, possible responses and outcomes that might matter in the face of a difficult choice. Rather than identifying with a particular character (a sort of mirror or desiring to be someone else), the girls focused on desirable situations and outcomes, gleaning a series of options and reactions from the representations they liked as well as from the ones they professed not to like. In addition, though, her elision

suggests media is interchangeably a boundary and a bridge, and so spatial in Lefebvre's sense in that I suggests the limits of possibility and a means of moving beyond these limitations.

In light of these assumptions, the discussants' reactions to *Alias* and Jennifer Garner reveal a narrow definition of normal femininity. Every participant in all sessions was if not familiar with *Alias* at least aware of its premise, and all could identify Jennifer Garner.[17] Garner's most popular performances among the participants did not include her turns as a spandex-clad superhero in the films *Daredevil* (Johnson 2003) and *Elektra* (Bowman 2005), but rather her roles in the films *13 Going on 30* (Winick 2004) and *Juno* (Reitman 2007). The genre conventions here align with the girls' perception of Garner and within women's culture rather than a fetishized albeit empowered action hero. *13 Going on 30* is a comedy in which Garner starred as Jenna, an adolescent social climber who by magic finds herself in the life of her professionally successful but emotionally unfulfilled adult self. In addition to labeling the film "fun," participants also praised Jenna's willingness to learn from her mistakes and reconsider her options upon attaining this knowledge. Adult Jenna learns how to be both nice to others and successful in her work so she can return to her teenage self with key information on becoming a good woman which includes, importantly, ending up with the right guy instead of the wrong one. In *Juno*, Garner plays Vanessa, who despite her strained relationship with her husband seeks to adopt a baby conceived by two high school students. Ultimately Vanessa and her husband, who is not sure he is ready for fatherhood, split up and Vanessa adopts the baby as a single parent. The film's narrative and Vanessa's character

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on the surface suggest that imperfection and rejecting conventional family structure in favor of nonconformity might lead to a positive outcome, or at least the best outcome given the available options for mothering the child. The interest in these films in particular points to the idea that errors, shortcomings and flaws are excusable if one learns from them how to be a good woman, meaning one who is moral and within conventional sex/gender norms. In *13 Going on 20*, Jenna learns to be kind and thoughtful and to value a fulfilling romantic relationship as well as career success; in *Juno*, Vanessa learns to value motherhood over other relationships and, in spite of an unconventional road to becoming a parent, to deem herself not just a potentially good mother but in the end the best one.[18] These values are further illustrated in a 16-year-old girl's analysis of Garner which collapses Garner's public persona and acting roles. The girl's comments here outline the limits of acceptable flaws in relation to self improvement as a measure of Garner's authenticity:

> She's always cast in hero figures where she's like down to earth, but has quirks. You don't see that a lot, where being strong doesn't mean being perfect. Like the character she played in *Juno*: very strong; had very clear flaws. But in the end you realize she's the one who's going to be raising the kid the best way. And the same with *13 Going on 30*: the whole movie is this girl who realizes that the person she's going to become has these flaws, and she has this self realization, and she goes back. Her characters seem to be about discovering yourself and discovering the best way to be who you are and to get what you want without needing to take on someone else's facade of who you should be.

This assessment has echoes of Beauvoir's sense of authenticity as social conscience in striving for some form of responsibility. But it also turns on an assumption that gender performance is individually determined more than it is socially constructed, promising agency and authority over one's own body without necessarily situating the self among others. Accepting this suggests an assumption that embodying conventional femininity is a choice and so a personal responsibility which can be exercised outside of cultural constraints. Authenticity as social responsibility would then mean making educated choices that fall within a narrow realm of options in terms of sexuality and gender which suggests and acceptance of existing gender norms. A celebrity like Garner is valued for her acting ability in so far as it is assumed to be a display of authenticity as good judgment, which necessarily includes an appropriate display of flaws and attempts to overcome them along with the ability to embody numerous and diverse characters while holding some "true" self who is believable because of her adherence to conventions. The situation of the actor and the convincingness of her performance become a struggle over whether the missed connection is an error of production of the image or transmission of the image rather than in its reception as misrecognition of intent (Boyd 2008). This assumption privileges the viewer over the performer so that to be "read" by an audience is risky because it is easily determined to be a bad choice and consequently the image becomes one of a bad agent (both in the sense of not using resources and options to her advantage and in having suspect motives); Sydney Bristow was never a bad agent.

For women, already suffering from a conceptual fracturing of the body, this structure demands simultaneously partitioning of different situated selves (school self, home self, for example) to comply with social expectations, and then being blamed for any misinterpretation. This suggests a double-bind for women in which likely subject positions are as a passive viewer of feminized genres and forms) and vulnerability as an image.[19] A subject, abstracted in the sense discussed by Lefebvre meaning fractured unity of body and self, would then find it difficult to have a voice in the public sphere. This problem recalls the distinctions one girl made between *The Hills* and *Scrubs* which suggested an incongruity of self and spatiality. Rather than demanding recognition of all of these femininities and the problems of forming them into a cohesive subject it then seems prudent to perform identities, as did Sydney Bristow, with superficial changes such as distracting costumes and gadgets, which are easily discarded and kept out of sight to be taken up again when needed. Accepting this position as only consumption-based is a common misrepresentation of third-wave methods as only superficial in using performance and play rather than allowing for a possibility of revealing different forms of self, smartly compartmentalized.

BETTER SELF, BETTER BODY

The same girl who had expressed that lack of TV in her childhood had made her feel socially excluded later in the conversation explained that, after her perceived weak starts in elementary and middle school, entering high school had been an opportunity to change her "style," in her word. She explained these desired changes were

in order to improve her self-image and not necessarily to blend in more easily with a particular crowd or even change her position in school more generally:

> I definitely, *definitely* asked for a change going from middle school to high school. But I don't think I'm the kind of person that's doing this, as in changing my style, because I want to be like everyone else. Because I really don't like those kinds of fake people. I just sort of changed because I wanted to look different and I didn't like my look before. Because I really don't like those kind of fake people that will just go and shop at Abercrombie or Hollister[20] because they want the label of being the girl who gets the guys, and at school if you wear Abercrombie you're getting the guys. So I sort of changed because I wanted to look different and I didn't like my look before. It's not so much that I wanted *her* [indicating any celebrity or member of a social circle] look or I wanted to look exactly like *her*. It was more like, "Oh, this looks cool."

Her statements suggest the value of self-improvement through physical transformation, and "cool" here implied she wanted these changes for herself regardless of others' opinions. This first requires a realization that something is not quite right and should be changed, for which television easily provides visual and narrative evidence (not least in makeover shows and other programs encouraging self improvement through physical transformation of some kind). The end result must be that the changes allow a more authentic expression of self. These improvements rely heavily on clothing and other props as a way to demonstrate a desire to change attitude or interests. The girl's assumption was that using style to perform a different and more authentic self based on

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her new life stage would then facilitate transformation of her social context. New options available in response to her new look might be changing her social circle or declaring herself part of an interest group or subculture (drama kids or jocks, for example), or possible inclusion in a previously out-of-bounds clique (Eckert 1989).[21]

This same group, talking about female role models and what it means to be a particular kind of girl – the one who might trip on purpose in order to get a guy's attention – indicated in consensus that femininity, consumption and sexuality were combined forces which began working together in early childhood to form young women's values. One girl complained of films, including those she considered directed toward young children, tweens and teens: "In the movies, it's always the blonde ditzy girl who is getting the guys. It's like if you're not smart and you just go along with everything and you're the most easy, oblivious girl ever, you will get the man. And girls have to constantly always look the prettiest." In response another girl interjected: "It starts when they're five years old, and they're like, 'I have to get that guy' in kindergarten." The first girl added, "I did not even have a purse until last year. And now all these girls have purses. I mean, what could you honestly have in a purse when you're in first grade?" Several answered "cell phones!" while laughing, and a few girls rolled their eyes illustrating a view that providing small children with cell phones was ridiculous. The ease with which they pointed to purses and cell phones in particular as inappropriate for young girls because they signified a level of maturity corresponding to sexual desire and desirability suggested they read consumption as interrelated with a life stage closer to

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adulthood and, with these items in particular and for the very young an inappropriate demonstration of interest in both boys and consumer-based status symbols.

Without fail, these discussions of media and gender representations invited value judgments on the physical appearance of girls and women in celebrity as well as the discussants' everyday lives. Clothing and easily changeable aspects of appearance seemed to hold the same level of importance and invite the same amount of judgment as plastic surgeries and other more permanent ways of altering appearance. All of these resulted, according to what these girls said, from individual choice. While the girls clearly held some bodies in enviable esteem, almost every female celebrity mentioned in the discussions earned harsh critique of her physique, her face, her hair, and her general appearance and use of makeup and clothing, even in cases where the girls were also being complimentary. There was significant interest in whether a celebrity had undergone plastic surgery, what parts of her body were altered, the celebrity's stated reasons for the changes (often suspect if the celebrity had not indicated that she was simply uncomfortable with herself and wanted to make a change that would make her happier) and whether her resulting appearance should be deemed an improvement. However, any distinction between a celebrity's having self-worth and public evaluation was quite confused in these discussions, and whether a celebrity ended up looking better or worse as a result of body modifications relied on current popular notions of beauty and rested on a very fine line of appropriate femininity nearly impossible to achieve without either body modification or the digital enhancements that make up most fashion and style magazine photo images.

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This discourse of personal responsibility for self-improvement illustrates the assumption of personal choice and agency in identity formation, but also reveals the importance of a public/private distinction in how different bodies were evaluated: the more public a body, the harsher and more specific the critique was likely to be. However comments in the discussion indicated this equation was not just a matter of accessibility to images, but also a value judgment on the bearer of the image (the girl/woman herself) in spatial contexts: a presumption that girls in public, in the wrong place and time, were inviting attack and should know better. A clear assumption put forth was that girls who present themselves in public and particularly those who restructure their lives in order to have a greater public presence should then take on the added responsibility of maintaining control of their image as well as their physical appearance: to be in control of their bodies and any representations of their bodies. This means that in public – and the participants situated this as a choice – she should mold her body so that it is not deviant, or else capitalize on the deviance and live with the stigma. The other alternative would be to not lead any form of public life, which is undesirable in terms of agency (Arendt 1998) and nearly impossible in practice for twenty-first century girls with access to transportation, education and technology.

In one discussion the girls highlighted the simultaneously narrow and confusing standards by which female bodies are judged, as well as the ubiquity of bodily abstraction. Here the girls referred to several celebrities with a range of ages in their twenties (Beyoncé Knowles, Heidi Montag), thirties (Angelina Jolie) and into their forties (Lisa Rinna). The implication in common was that some part of the celebrities'

bodies was deemed inappropriately excessive, and in most cases reflecting assumptions about racial characteristics as beauty standards in terms of what size of body parts seemed reasonable for different celebrities.

Lara: Everyone in Hollywood who has a big butt has like no boobs. Like

            Beyoncé.

Lynn: *(in strong agreement)* Yes, she does!

Mary: And Heidi Montag [of *The Hills*]. She's out of proportion though. She got

            a boob job. She used to be flat.

Lara: She's got this tiny body and these huge boobs.

Emma: Like Lisa Rinna. Who do you think would do that with their lips? I can't

            think of anyone who's done that [lip injections] who looks good.

Lara: Angelina Jolie. But that's like natural and not fake because it's in

            proportion with her face. She has a bigger face.

These and other critiques of celebrity bodies during this discussion in particular suggested a relationship of making good choices with a social ideal of normal and natural based on physical appearance and white, stereotypically European features and standards of beauty. The discussion of prettiness and good judgment had an underlying discourse of race which suggested a connection of propriety and whiteness in which beauty is a segregated matter for which different standards apply depending on racial affiliation. This was most evident in the group with the widest scope of ethic/racial diversity. These girls, several of whom were good friends, expressed admiration of the beauty of non-white celebrities as well as for one another and other girls they knew at school. But there

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was a suggestion of beauty in celebrity girls of color as exotically other and not appropriate for a white girl, considering that they attributed questionable judgment to white celebrities whose alleged body modifications had resulted in features culturally aligned with blackness, such as full lips and broader hips and butts.

After determining that Angelina Jolie's full lips and curvy body were "natural" and therefore appropriate, the girls discussed at length their admiration of Jolie for her lifestyle, choice of family structure and lastly acting ability, attributing the latter to Jolie's good choices of scripts and roles.[22] The girls' critiques of female bodies often included an assessment of physical image in relation to perceived personality, talent and celebrity, often with one perceived positive aspect balancing a more negative view of another. For example, an evaluation of Cameron Diaz as having a less-than-ideal "manly" body was balanced by a perception that she dressed well and "is probably nice in real life."

Although seldom mean-spirited, the girls were frequently critical not just of general appearance but of specific characteristics, ranging from the size of a woman's ass to seemingly minute details such as the relative proportion of her nose and lips to her eyes, reflecting the racial assumptions noted above. Nobody was perfect, although Angelina Jolie came close. When I asked a group what they thought of Jennifer Garner, one girl's immediate response was a critique of her body as "manly" (like Diaz) and the other girls present agreed, specifying as manly aspects of Garner's body that she had "stomach muscles," "no hips or boobs or butt," and "linebacker shoulders." Given the photographic evidence of Garner's body, even considering digital alterations, this critique

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is a significant exaggeration. While these flaws might have worked in Garner's favor in these girls' estimation of her because they rendered her imperfect and thus relatable, instead the evaluation of her body as not feminine enough alongside her lack of controversy in her lifestyle rendered her unknowable, thus making it difficult to judge her performance against what might be her real self. This meant that her point of redemption, through motherhood and admission of self doubt about her body I discuss in the context of *Alias* is evidence of a less than spectacular transformation, and functions to make her perhaps likeable but not worthy of more than passing attention.

Of Garner, who had much less of a public presence than Diaz at the time of the discussion group, one girl said she lacked enough information to make a judgment on how Garner is in real life, implying that for Diaz more publicity as herself combined with her enactment of film roles allowed her to display a more honest version of herself than did Garner. However, a girl in another group complimented Garner as "real," and "down-to-earth," high praise in all of the discussion groups, in how she seems to interact with her husband, actor Ben Affleck and in contrast to Affleck's previous girlfriend actor/singer Jennifer Lopez. In terms of body and embodiment, Lopez was discussed in the group that had deemed Garner manly in a way that objectified Lopez, who is Latina, based on stereotypes of race and class. Diaz, who is blonde and blue-eyed and whose father is Cuban-American, was categorized along with the other white girls and her body was not discussed in the same terms as the other black and Latina celebrities.

When I asked the group who they thought did have womanly bodies after they had pointed out whose was "manly," one response was Jennifer Lopez, "but just her

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butt," which then invited comparisons to African American singer/actor Beyoncé

Knowles, also found to have a butt large enough that it made her breasts appear small,

and actor Halle Berry, whose body was judged to be womanly but faultless, which in the

context of this conversation meant that her body was without excess and found within

acceptable standards of proportion. This led to a general discussion of breast size and

surgical modification which implied the existence of an ideal size to which to aspire. One

thirteen-year-old girl said of plastic surgery: "If it's medical or it makes you look better,

then it's fine. If it doesn't mess you up." Another girl added that plastic surgery is a bad

idea only, "When they make a drastic change. Like stuff that doesn't need to be

changed." Of course, this begs the question of what would *need* to be changed, and

changed to what. In response, a sixteen-year-old declared of breast size and enhancement

surgery: "I think you should be normal." Immediately, the other girls in the group jumped

on this comment and questioned what she meant by normal. She replied: "When you look

like yourself." This claim made by a teenager points to girls' concerns with body

development as a move from fluidity to a form of stasis in adulthood which is limiting

and in which, as Elizabeth Grosz explains, "The fluidity and indeterminacy of female

body parts, most notably the breast but no less the female sexual organs, are confined,

constrained, solidified through more or less temporary or permanent means of

solidification by clothing or, at the limit, surgery" (1994:205).

The girls' quick refutation of the validity of "normal" breast size illustrates they

know that any universal standard would be false and unfair; however, their continued

judgments of female bodies indicated they were still highly critical of deviation so that

while they refuted the term "normal" they assumed a standard of what is acceptable. This suggests uncertainty over whether beauty norms are defined by drawing boundaries around a range of ideal femininity or in contrast by assuming some central singular ideal to which to aspire. The trickiness of staying within these bounds creates not just a sense of anxiety, but also a need to perpetually check whether and how far boundaries have moved and for whom, furthering the importance of being prepared for public critique because while body control and improvement might be a social obligation is also is a risk. This is a requirement to stay within the lines while the lines keep shifting. Change in this understanding is not progressive if it results in something outside dominant standards of normalcy; instead it is evidence of bad judgment. If a girl is going to put herself out in public, potentially making her private issues public, she needs to know how to navigate this distinction in a variety of media worlds and manage scrutiny. Knowing how to do this is the key to autonomy through self-definition and management of the contexts of one's image.

This perception of autonomy is tied to spatial navigation and representation. The primary critique of celebrities deemed inauthentic and fake equated the viability of the performances with the performers' intent and her perceived reasons for seeking this kind of notoriety. The moral implication for a girl was that placing herself in the public eye is at her own risk. To be in public and intentionally displaying the wrong kind of femininity, for example in a debased media world (even one that is fun to watch), is akin to walking alone at night in an area deemed dangerous: in a sense, "asking for it," with the "it" in this instance a potential violation of her body and resulting shame. This echoes

Lefebvre's articulation of the disempowering nature of abstraction through the carving up of the body for critique into separate parts, or zones, in which the parts are presented out of the context of the whole person/subject (Lefebvre 1991:310) This fracturing, which is a defining critique of representations of women in early feminist film theory (Mulvey 1975) results in an abstract rather than absolute representation of the body, a removal of the parts from any context that would allow them to make sense, thus weakening the subject's agency and self-determination by making her into a series of displaced objects. This representation of the body suggests a spatial scheme in which dominance is maintained by creating divisions that separate formerly cohesive areas into seemingly arbitrary regions, each subject to different regulations and each evaluated according to different standards. The parts are then forced to compete with one another for recognition, but without the benefit of historical and material contexts. They lack a cohesive narrative, which points to the efficacy of fragmented subjectivity as agency existing alongside autonomy, and based on significations of different parts of the body in relation to the whole.

FAKE LOVE AND BAD FAITH

Universally interesting to the girls taking part in this research was the strange carnival of reality television, and the more absurd the better. Of particular interest to three of the groups (and all without my suggestion) were the dating/contest shows featuring celebrities of questionable fame. The shows discussed most frequently and passionately were those airing on VH1, an MTV affiliate cable network focusing on

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music and music industry celebrities largely popular in past decades. These VH1 shows

in general encourage moral observations by providing viewers with glaring points of

comparison – demonstrations of greed, superficiality and sexual impropriety – from

which to distance their own actions. The most egregious violation of propriety was

inappropriate performance of the body in terms of appearance *and* in the wrong spatial

context. Three of the discussion groups specifically mentioned the VH1 reality dating

contest shows *Flavor of Love*, *Rock of Love* and *I Love New York*[23] Cast members on

these shows were perceived as inauthentic in their performances and not demonstrating

appropriate femininity which, given the casts of these shows, matters at the intersections

of race and class with gender.

Flavor of Love, which was the model for *Rock of Love* and the progenitor of *I

Love New York* among other similar series, featured Flavor Flav, famous as part of the

iconic rap group Public Enemy formed in the 1980s, and twenty women who competed

to be his girlfriend or "true love." The participants described it as a "guilty pleasure" and

said they watched it, in the words of the college guy, because, "It's funny and it's

ridiculous ... but it's not really great quality TV. But it still can be entertaining when

you're half asleep and you have nothing to watch." A girl in this group added, "It's just

the characters and all their ridiculousness." Another girl interjected that the most

ridiculous aspect of *Flavor of Love* and also *Rock of Love* is that the central characters,

Flav and in *Rock of Love* Bret Michaels of the 1980s glam metal band Poison, were "So

ugly! And all these females are like, 'I want you.'" When I asked about calling them

"characters," group members confirmed they felt this was accurate because, as one

explained, "They don't even use real names. They just make it up;" because the girls are all given nicknames by which Flav refers to them, such as New York, Cherry and Miss Latin. All of the characters have agreed to be on camera and these shows consistently prove that outrageous behavior can garner more time on screen when the footage is edited and restructured to create a compelling narrative (Gamson 1994, 1998; Press and Williams 2005).

The function of space in *Flavor of Love* alongside the comments of the girls in the discussion groups suggest that the low opinion of the *Flavor* girls is based not on their bold pursuit of fame as much as disregard for distinctions of space and place in defiance of conventional femininity. The word used most frequently in the discussions in relation to the *Flavor* girls was "fake," to the exclusion of more obviously derogatory terms like "skank" or "slut," terms used regularly in the dialogue of this genre of reality TV. "Fake," importantly here, echoed the representation of place in the tone of the set. While discussants found these shows compelling to watch specifically because they replaced a middle-class notion of romantic love with a carnivalesque performance of bad judgment and taste, at the same time they were scornful of the girls on the show for even taking part in this spectacle. While the discussion group girls in describing their viewing of this and similar shows claimed to pay little attention to even when it was on television in front of them and they had chosen the show, their descriptions of specific scenes and characters from *Flavor of Love* and similar series indicated they were significantly more invested than they would admit and perhaps than they realized.

When I asked what exactly made these reality TV girls fake, a college student

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responded: "They just want to be on TV and be famous." Another added: "They don't learn from their mistakes. And none of their relationships ever last ... Because if they stayed together, then it wouldn't be fun." This last statement in reference to the final outcome in the context of these contests for love and attention points to an inconsistency: recognition that stability and continuance make for a boring narrative, but that rejecting dominant social standards, particularly of what should be private and public, is suspect.[24] The *Flavor* girls reject middle-class femininity not just in their appearance and comportment, but in their perceived denigration of home and family as private and, in terms of the marriage chamber, sacred space. The *Flavor* girls represented the excess of the poor in not having control of self or body – of not recognizing boundaries of good judgment. Ricki Solinger (1998) has discussed this perception as a social assumption about women coded as lower or working class, and in this case usually not white, as an elision of having no choice with making a bad one.

The *Flavor* girls appear to be a multicultural rainbow and their dress, makeup, speech and other mannerisms indicate low class (based on codes of class and race rather than income, education or other socioeconomic factors). One contestant/character on *Flavor of Love* described the opening scene in which the girls first arrive at Flav's mansion as a "ghetto prom" (Sizemore and Kozek 2006). Considering the history and meaning attached to the term *ghetto*, this sets up the girls as already trapped in a space not of their own making or over which they have actual control: no autonomy. To link this with "prom," an elaborate coming-of-age ritual for teenagers, suggests passage into a debased womanhood from which escape – moving up the social ladder – is nearly

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impossible. The *Flavor* girls were denigrated under a problematic line of assumption: first, that they might have had the same choices available to middle- and upper-class women but opted not to consider these options; and, following, that the coding of the *Flavor* girls as "ghetto" reflects their actual social situation or at least a desire to embody these codes.

The opening sequence of the first season of *Flavor of Love* is a montage Flav looking soulfully through the uninhabited rooms of his large house. After the episode's introduction to Flav, twenty girls gather in an atrium on the ground level of the house to listen to Flav's welcome speech. Flav stands on a grand staircase as if guarding access to the upstairs private – and sacred (Leiris [1938] 1988; Colomina 1994) regions of his house. Flav's bodyguard/assistant Big Rick then orders the girls to "go upstairs and find yourself a room!" and the women scream and giggle and dash up the stairs in mile-high heels to claim a bed, pushing one another out of the way to get to the rooms first: there are fewer beds than girls and the girls failing to claim one are off the show immediately.

The filming style of *Flavor of Love* is low quality suggesting low production costs and so low value – and not in the sense of an independent film or documentary in which low-budget suggests proximity to truth through lack of manufacturing and manipulation. The *mise en scene* suggests a closed and stylized set rather than a real place of habitation; the walls and furniture hold a sense of being made of cardboard. It feels closed and constructed like a sitcom set and does not seem to be a real home in the sense of a private place of habitation and intimacy. The shared bedrooms have single beds and are decorated in bubblegum tones, suggesting tween-girl habitat but without any personal

effects. The ultimate prize of the show as a contest is graduation from these shared childlike bedrooms to singular admittance to Flav's master bedroom. This sequence, while spectacular, should be objectionable to feminists of any wave: it makes transparent a shameless competition among women – women who are "girls" – and breaches ideals of sisterhood. It reveals a competition among girls measured by sexual availability in public through media. This runs completely counter to middle class ideals of family and home, wrapped also in assumptions about race, and in which sexuality is meant to be private and hidden (Colomina 1994).

Each girl tries to maintain some private time with Flav, which demonstrates her viability as a girlfriend and also gives her better odds of being captured by the camera. The girls stand to gain by excluding other girls from the picture, sometimes literally pushing them out of the camera's frame, albeit assisted by editing. If a girl's time on camera makes it through the editing process, she is rewarded with dissemination of her image internationally and public recognition. Dismissal from the show, however, means a girl has no representation and no guarantee of her voice being heard, which echoes third-wave feminist directives for visibility as recognition such that girls should speak out, be heard and be noticed in order to feel empowered. The space of the screen, then, is more valuable than the space of the master bedroom. If you follow the casts of reality TV, this is clear: contestants booted from one show for egregious and disruptive behavior frequently turn up on other shows, and occasionally are rewarded with a show of their own. New York, who lost to another girl in the first season of *Flavor of Love* and whose obnoxious antics brought viewers to the show, was then given her own show, *I Love New*

York: cameras focused mainly on her and (at least for the run of the show) her own apartment, where she can further disregard appropriate recognition of public and private, sacred and profane, but through her own doing (producers aside) and on her own terms.

The *Flavor* girls are easily derided because they seem to have consciously chosen object status: they know they are meant to be looked at, judged, and dismissed at will. The struggle to win the series is not really a fight for Flav's love but rather an attempt to claim subject status by being recognized as subjects as well as in the celebrity sense by possibly earning a series of one's own or at least the right to appear on another reality TV series. This has the effect of fixing the *Flavor* girls in the permanently profane and feminized space of the screen by their own doing. Their representational and social immobility – only rarely do they escape the confines of their imaginary world – render them objects of scorn. Their perceived ignorance of or disregard for conventionally public and private behaviors renders them outside social norms; further, ignorance and disregard are collapsed which would easily allow misperceptions about intent. In contrast to Sydney Bristow's assumption of false identities in order to right a wrong and then to achieve an idealized form of conventional family stability, the *Flavor* girls (most remain unrecognized and their names forgotten) assume embodiments that, while not always far from Sydney's costumes on missions, result in instability. Their actions are situated as bad faith efforts at recognition and rights in both the public and private spheres.

The perception of the *Flavor* girls as transparently, unapologetically fake and willing to trade self-determination for an unlikely shot at low-level fame positions them as guilty of bad judgment and disinterested in morally and socially improving themselves

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-- with the implication that improvement depends on achievement of conventionally bourgeois standards. They are fixed into the permanently profane (and feminized) space of the screen, and they have done this by choice. While this is no different, really, than the concerns expressed about an other unscripted reality shows featuring other, more conventionally middle-class versions of femininity, the *Flavor* girls are seen as representationally and socially immobile by their own design in risking mobility in the lived world for a position within the space of the screen.

THE HILLS: PERFORMANCE AND A JOB WELL DONE

Discussing the MTV reality series *The Hills*, a 15-year-old girl stated that she felt sorry for the girls on *The Hills* for spending their youth on camera. She was responding to a statement by another participant that reality TV is largely constructed and heavily edited in order to be interesting and that, "on the kind of shows like *The Hills*, I definitely think they're acting." The first girl then interjected, "That's so sad!", her tone indicating that she was concerned for the girls on *The Hills* and not that she found them pathetic as most of the discussion participants indicated about the girls on *Flavor of Love*.

The Hills tracks a group of privileged early-twenty-somethings, mostly white and upper-class, as they navigate a glamorous young adulthood of shopping, dining out and bar-hopping in California. Several cast members of *The Hills*, including now-celebrities Lauren Conrad and Heidi Montag, had been part of the ensemble cast of an earlier MTV reality series, *Laguna Beach*, about teenagers in that wealthy Southern California

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community. The girl explained that she felt it was sad that Lauren and Heidi and their cohort by airing their lives on screen might have lost something she felt was important: the opportunity to form a "true" identity.

> I wonder if when they were in high school they spent a lot of time pondering who they are and everything. And I feel like if they did, it's just like throwing it all away to do something like that – a show like that. I feel like you're taking yourself like five billion steps backwards. I feel like it just ruins your mindset. Because you have no idea what you've become.

In this statement, she equated loss of autonomy (independent action) with the inability to have privacy in which to develop an authentic self. Media in this case is positioned as a public space and so the wrong choice in which to develop a central self who would, presumably, know good judgment from bad and regulate one's public performance. This suggests that portions of life made visible through a camera and appearing on a screen are automatically deceptive rather than representing some part performer's real self, bringing up questions of in what sense the girls on *The Hills* are actors and the authenticity of their performances. A related assumption is that the constant public judgment that comes with widely disseminating images of one's everyday life would naturally create a lack of a solid sense of self: of what one would "become."

As with *Flavor of Love*, *The Hills* is compelling in part because it disrupts conventions of public and private. Even more than the specific social interactions among the cast members (arguments, nights out together drinking in bars and clubs), the

narrative is founded on the nature and limits of the borders and the anxiety resulting from the understanding that any action, whether conventionally classified as public or private, has the potential to be widely disseminated and summarily judged by a jury of millions. These shows in essence are performances of risk. Perceptions of risk differ according to gender, but the different reactions to *Flavor of Love* and *The Hills* illustrate that the stakes of risk differ depending on other identity markers in terms of what the risk-taker has to lose. In contrast to the "fake" girls of *Flavor*, several girls in different groups described the girl on *The Hills* as "real," and one explained her perception that Lauren "tries to be a good person." It is reasonable, then, for her to perceive taking risks as bad judgment if the stakes appear more rather than less consequential for the individual involved and for society more generally.

The girls on *The Hills* seemed to be perceived by participants in several of the discussions as flawed but appropriately engaged in the process of "becoming": as acting in the service of learning even if also are performing inauthentically for dramatic effect. The girls in the discussion groups universally indicated an awareness that someone other than the girls on *The Hills* was creating their stories and that the narratives were constructed through camera work, film editing and the cast's creation of drama to provide material for the show's editors. This manufacturing of tension within the show was recognized by the girls, as one commenting on a cast member described her as, "So boring. She's pretty but she doesn't do anything. She has no opinions" and that, "supposedly she's going to get kicked off the show." A girl in another group explained that reality TV cast members create drama specifically to get screen time in order to save

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their jobs as performers on the shows as much as to resolve situations within the shows' narratives: "A lot of that has to do with them thinking there's not enough drama and so saying, 'Okay, I'm going to bitch-slap this girl right now,' and that kind of stuff. It can't always be reality or else things get a little boring sometimes." This form of anger, "bitch-slapping" is positioned as not a natural response for a girl, but rather manufactured for attention. However the everydayness of the plot of *The Hills*, in spite of its veneer of high-end consumer culture, allowed the *Hills* girls to in other ways appear unremarkable in their dealings with the small things that come up in young people's lives such as a difficult boss or a misunderstanding between friends over a party invitation. In this sense, the cast of *The Hills* seemed to be performing a glamorous version of the mundane and asking viewers to both judge them and find affinity with them.

The risk for the cast members of *The Hills* is within a context of self-improvement and labor appropriate to conventions of youth. These lives are not simply lived and experienced, but consciously represented in a way that is compelling to others and, as labor, requires planning, work and resources. *The Hills* represents Lauren and her friends doing some of the stupid things people do, like saying uncomplimentary things about their friends, but all on camera, on purpose and with the benefit of professional editing, style and music to enhance the scenes: it is, as Victor Burgin suggests, everyday life as film, complete with a soundtrack (Burgin 1996). Lauren and her friends are not dramatic actors in the conventional professional sense, but the narrative of the show suggests a future for them after they have been on screen so that the screen is a temporary location for them. This conforms to expectations for adolescence: that they will pass across this

stage on the way to becoming productive citizens beyond indiscretions of youth to a redeemable adulthood.

The transition of *The Hills* cast members from a youth citizenship based on consumer status that, based on class, is not tied to their earning money through conventional employment points to two related feminist economic critiques coming out of the second wave. First, that full citizenship with a voice and place in the public sphere requires independence. In this assumption lies the implication that women and young people are by definition not financially independent and so not full citizens, which in the case of women especially ignores that in the bourgeois tradition men's financial independence and related career success depends on the unpaid labor of women who care for children and the home (Smith et al.:428). The second related critique is the perception of marriage as inscription into responsible citizenship by providing financial security for women and at the same time a cure for adolescent transgressions (Bynner, Chisholm and Furlong 1997). An examination of Lauren Conrad and Heidi Montag, two central cast members of *The Hills*, and the surrounding public discussion of their choices illustrates that these second wave concerns are not necessarily over and done.[25]

At the end of the fifth season of *The Hills* in 2009, the narrative focused on the divergent paths of Lauren and Heidi. Lauren was positioned as admirably moving toward responsible young adulthood while Heidi invited much public ridicule. Before the final episode aired, Lauren announced that she would leave the series because she no longer wanted her life on screen and that she desired "to no longer have to schedule everything in advance" and with the approval of the show's producers (Martin 2009). Her screened

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self had transitioned from a frivolous teenager to a responsible young adult who was serious about a career in the fashion industry. She had been shown in internships and jobs to be a hard worker who was willing to pay her dues in order to be a credible professional and not a celebrity dilettante. MTV announced that Lauren would be replaced as a key character by former *Laguna Beach* party girl and troublemaker Kristin Cavallari, who would presumably bring more drama than the responsible Lauren, who "tries to do the right thing," in the words of one of the discussion group girls.

Heidi's choices presented a stark contrast to Lauren's. Heidi married her boorish boyfriend Spencer despite his infidelity and other perceived flaws as represented in the show's narrative. The two became known in tabloid-speak as "Speidi" and after the filming of the season of *The Hills* was completed participated in the reality series *I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here!*, which highlighted their incompetence as individuals and incompatibility as a couple. Heidi, it seems, made a bad-choice marriage and for the wrong reasons. The episode of season five centered around Heidi and Spencer's wedding. Lauren, who had estranged herself from Heidi in the show's narrative, attended the wedding appearing chic, appropriately feminine and independent. At the end of the episode Lauren literally walks off the screen to a career as a clothing designer and published author, having behaved gracefully at the wedding and in seeming generous in attending despite her stated reservations about Heidi and Spencer's relationship. Heidi is shown as a nervous bride – but anxious more about how she looks than her marriage or the wedding as a ritual of commitment and transition to adulthood. She wears a frothy wedding gown that appears excessively feminine and her most pressing decision seems to

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be whether her elaborate jewelry is "too much" with her dress (Lauren helps her decide that it is not in the context of her wedding day). The narrative implies she chose to get married because she wanted to be the center of attention and, really, despite her privileged position she imagines her best option is as a cast member on yet another reality television series. She is making a poor choice. Lauren on the other hand has used her advantages to achieve what many of the girls in the discussion groups indicated was ideal for a twenty-something girl: a career in fashion or the arts that allows for travel and does not close off the likelihood of marriage and children later in life. She is on the perfect path of becoming an exemplary twenty-first century woman. Lauren is redeemable and she has learned from her mistakes in a way that allows her to make "good" choices, in large part because she chooses to leave the show for noble reasons, at least as publicly stated, rather than over contract negotiations or inability to get along with other cast members. This collapses the categories of labor, work and activity that Hannah Arendt (1997) defines as necessarily distinct for a free society, and results in states of being and social interactions as a form of labor and thus meriting payment in some form.

Becoming involves action, motion and transformation and implies the ability to move back and forth across borders of identity and of location in order to gather information and test boundaries (Beauvoir [1946] 2004); it involves passing through liminal stages and places (Foucault 1986). Acting and performing are by definition social and relational in that they suggest the presence of some sort of audience to witness and validate the action; the girls of *The Hills* are engaged in a public display of their "becoming." Acting, the term, can mean either to represent, simulating, or impersonating,

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each implying some different degree of deception. But it also means to move with the goal of transformation: an attempt to make something happen through individual intervention. Performing is more specific. It means, in addition to dramatize, to accomplish, to fulfill, to function. This suggests both agency and transparency of motives and, consequently, providing immunity to others from the consequences of deception.

TRANSFORMING LOCATIONS

If performance as presentation of self exists in all spaces and situations and is equated with labor, it would follow that any public presence might deserve financial or other measurable compensation. In this way performing in Goffman's terms is collapsed with ideas of dramatic performance, especially as technologies of visual imaging and broadcast mean there are few places in which people might not be recorded and filmed. It then makes sense to seek fame and fortune for doing what we need to do anyway: for performing with the possibility of public dissemination of our performance, as do the casts of *The Hills*, *Flavor of Love*, and numerous other presumably unscripted television series. This labor, for which the casts receive payment in the form of money, usually, but also fame (or notoriety), suggests for viewers that the ubiquity of visual technologies in our own lives and the consequent assumption that what we do is always potentially public are conditions under the conditions of our work as social subjects. An authentic performance – authentic in both Benjamin's sense of singularity and Beauvoir's sense of social responsibility -- is a valued form of labor and so deserves at least financial compensation and, crucially, admiration, because it suggests forward movement toward a

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better self. This is why the girls in the discussion groups expressed sympathy and concern for the girls on *The Hills* and not for the girls on *Flavor of Love*, and also explains subsequent ridicule of Heidi and admiration of Lauren.

A performance of self that is inauthentic, such as those on *Flavor of Love* which were deemed by the discussion groups to be fake and transparently motivated by seeking to be an immobilized spectacle, deserves disdain, often in the form of harsh public criticism. Complicating this view of *Flavor of Love*'s inauthenticity are matters of race and class. The *Flavor* girls embody a stylized form of "ghetto" glamour and play along with these tropes. They meet and in cases surpass expectations of girls who are not white and middle class: they present themselves as hyper-sexualized and incapable of restraint and the implied "good" judgment of a bourgeois habitus. One high school girl in a discussion group, commenting on the girls competing for attention on Flavor of Love and also *Rock of Love*, declared: "They're all just strippers who want to get on TV to be famous," and then, noting that *Rock*'s Michaels had two young daughters, said with disdain and sarcasm: "Yeah, that chick is going to be a good mom." Regardless of the actual professions of the girls who have appeared on these shows, it seems that a move from stripper to television personality or possibly wife/girlfriend of a rock star, no matter how dated he is, would be upward mobility: as one girl in this same group explained of the girls on these shows: "They come from nothing," and that "none of them are that pretty." Another girl added, "It's funny how they don't learn from their mistakes. And none of the relationships ever last, because if they stayed together then it wouldn't be as fun."

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Situated as authentic performance and as labor in the production of an adult self *and* simultaneously providing entertainment is, in a sense, working while playing (even Sydney Bristow wants a job that is both optional and "fun"). In contrast, casting performance as "play," even considering a broad understanding of this term, suggests a benign recreation in the form of a kind of dress-up, which in *The Hills* is represented as manageable through consumption. Jagodzinksi describes the co-opting of adolescence, even as it is extended across ages, in the increasing commodification of identity politics: "Designer capitalism colonizes 'youth' in the sense that it turns 'play' into money and profit. Youth, who were once a threat to reason through their nonsensical escapades, have been harnessed, but not entirely" (Jagodzinski 2004:4). This promises difficulty in resisting definition by others in order to claim respect and selfhood, as even disruptive and deviant actions are potentially subsumed into identities as a marketing categories rather than expressions of free will. The response indicates identification of the citizen/self as empowered because of being a consumer. Consumption, however, is experiential as well as material in this understanding, so that the value of certain embodiments – performances -- is directly related to space. Distinctions of moral behavior, which is how the girls in the discussions determined authenticity, relied on determining public from private space, information and actions; this determination, however, is based on conventional, bourgeois gender norms.

Identity formation in girlhood is more complex than a clear switching of subject/object positions, but rather, as Don Merten (2004) has argued, authority over the narrative through which we structure our lives. We consider adolescence a time of

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conflict and transition, meaning movement from one stage to another and associated with growth and development. But whether adolescence results in transformation, or fundamental change, seems less certain. This is particularly important for girls who, as much as the girls here sought a real and authentic self on which to center behaviors, need to compartmentalize an array of embodiments and identities in order to be appropriate to a range of situations and spaces.

CHAPTER 5: GIRLS AND CONSUMER SPACE: "IT'S JUST CHILL"

A group of 16-year-old girls in the context of a conversation about dating described the importance of a particular Starbucks coffee shop in establishing relationships:[26]

Christine: It just really depends on who you go with. Because you can be friends with girls *and* boys. But a boy: if you really want that relationship, you could just ask him, "Oh, are you doing anything Saturday night? Do you want to meet at Starbucks for a little coffee?" But it just really depends on who you go with.

Sophie: People do go on dates. My boyfriend and I, on our first date we went to Starbucks for like three hours after doing something else. And we've been dating for three months. It's a good date spot.

Heather: Keeping that in mind, I just recently went to Starbucks -- with a guy, yesterday. But not on a date!

Molly: Uh huh [*skeptical of Heather's claim*]. Yeah, now every time a guy asks you out, a guy will be like, "So, you want to go to Starbucks?" It's *the* line now.

Sophie: It's just chill, though.

Heather: It's not so awkward and stuff, because you have a bunch of other people

around. And you're likely to know people, so it sort of breaks the tension.

It's better than a place where you'd just be [alone] with that person, where

it's sort of awkward.

Sophie: It also kind of announces to people that you're interested in each other.

And it's less pressure than, like, a movie. Because there are kind of

expectations for movies, or at least there used to be. So it just makes it

nicer.

The girls' description of Starbucks renders it highly symbolic – that to ask or be asked to Starbucks is meaningful – and also as Sophie said, "just chill," which suggests that for teenage girls it is a public arena in which expectations are easily managed (and lowering the likelihood of bad choices). These girls mentioned other local hangouts where they were sure to see people they knew, such as a nearby pizza place that is also frequented by families and children's sports teams celebrating something, but the Starbucks served a specific function that set it apart from other places. It was, to them, the perfect venue for the tricky dynamics of sex: it allowed everyone to know you liked a boy as a way to stake a claim on him with little risk to your reputation; there were no "expectations" of the darkness of a movie theater; it was not as tense and awkward as a more formal meal in a restaurant; and it avoided the intimacy and potential impropriety, and consequent opportunity for bad choices, of inviting the boy into your home or going to his house.[27] The girls valued having a public place where they felt they belonged and were respected, safe and visible.

These complications of girlhood are located in representational space, through which we make sense of the messiness of everyday life by promising symmetry between the known physical landscape and our understanding of social order. We conceive space and place through symbols experienced through our bodies and our senses. In Starbucks, for example, this includes signs of commerce such as a white cup, paper or ceramic, which declare a consumer's right to be there. Signs of gender such as dress and comportment declare us in step with or in opposition to local norms, and this experience is enhanced within a primarily consumer culture, as Anita Harris has argued:

> The reinvention of youth citizenship as consumer power has been largely enacted through young women. Girls have become the emblem of this consumer citizen via a problematic knitting together of feminist and neoliberal ideology about power and opportunities … Young women are also positioned as excellent choice makers, having taken the gains of feminism, such as increased freedoms, assertiveness, and economic independence, and applied them to the market. Their confidence and success are frequently measured by their purchasing power (Harris 2004:165-166).

The world of this Starbuck reflects the situation of coffee houses in public life and the aura of Starbucks overall, and illustrates the important role of the framing and regulation of space in sex and gender dynamics. Neither home nor work nor school presume any form of equality among inhabitants, which teenagers experience acutely. Starbucks permits human connection with low risk and a comfortable level of intimacy; as these girls suggested, the cultural understanding of "going out for coffee" is that it is

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low-key, and that patrons are on somewhat equal footing based on consumption of space as well as drink and food. It is experiential consumption of Starbucks' mien as much as commodity consumption. Coffee houses have long promised a friendly public space for discussion of personal and political matters with few of the restrictions of the home or institutions of business and education (Habermas, Lennox and Lennox 1974). They are perceived as neutral, meaning free access to all, places of open discourse, which, as Habermas has argued, has had the higher purpose of incubating the bourgeois public sphere in which individuals were able to meet on equal ground to vet opposing views on political and social matters. This historical perception of coffee houses painted them as permitting potentially divisive social interactions in the airing of contentious issues without much risk to personal safety.[28] Beyond being physical locations for meeting, talking and consuming food, coffee houses suggested the potential for social transformation: a "becoming" of individual and dissenting voices into a cohesive public. The very discussion of issues in an arena outside the home and not regulated primarily by the state promised greater agency for citizens. In this way, coffee houses as space symbolized a worldview which placed increasing importance of individual citizens rather than a single but distant voice of authority in instituting social change. Of course, this sense of equality historically applied generally only to white male citizens.

For women and girls, considering the uncertainty about what it means to be a good woman and the efficacy of different models of femininity in asserting authority and self-determination, access to a public sphere matters greatly. Girls need places to practice and evaluate forms of self. The creation and maintenance of the public sphere as

originating in Habermas' understanding of coffee house culture suggests that in the modern world it is a place in which girls can have visibility (through their presence), status (as consumers) and security (as within an enclosed and protected space) all at once. Starbucks is by design both homey and generic with, depending on the particular store, comfortable chairs and sofas and honey-toned café tables and chairs; it is intended to feel safe and intimate, and also function as a public meeting place (Shultz & Yang, 1997). Other places lack this congruence of qualities or historically have not been available to girls and women.

Adults largely form and define spaces for children and adolescents, but these places often fail to meet young people's needs (Thomas 2005). Considering that a dominant narrative of spatiality relegates women and girls to the realm of the private, girls in particular must find their own places while finding ways to resist boundaries that feel like constraints while also maintaining physical safety and navigating social expectations. Starbucks fills this need. Writing about coffee house culture and the role of Starbucks in social communication, Rudolf Gaudio has noted that safety and fear are "a recurring trope of middle class discourses of place," especially fear of men – with more anxiety around men of color and working class men – who are "seen to pose a particular threat to the middle class white women whose patronage of such spaces is actively sought." (Gaudio 2003, p.677).

Women use all kinds of spaces and places for empowerment, for example through community networking in places like playgrounds (Boys 1984). Similarly, adolescents are adept at locating spaces not already clearly claimed for their own purposes (Skelton

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and Valentine 1998; Bettis and Adams 2005). But there are different assumptions about teens and women in private: adolescents meeting in private are suspect while women in the same situation are perceived as safe. Mary Thomas has argued convincingly that because so much is required for girls to carve out space, "these maneuverings are seen as tactical responses to adult spatiality." However, as Thomas has noted, "hanging out in public space … is a subjective practice that entails much more than girls' agency and resistance to domineering adults and peers. Girls themselves reproduce spaces imbued with normative social meanings even as they resist social control" (2005:588). This suggests an assumption that adult space is masculine space rather than being created and defined by the feminine. In terms of space and social relations, girls do not just react to dominant social standards; they also create and support them so that girls' tactics may appear oppositional, the reasoning behind them and the resulting space they claim may be quite conventional. This paradox points to the importance for girls of Lefebvre's determination of representational space: our understanding of space in actual use as it explains a larger worldview. Examination of the construction and reconstruction of both social relations and physical structure of place brings light to the primacy of space in the contradictions about gender ideals articulated in the preceding chapters. Using evidence from my structured observations in and around the Starbucks over a period of nine years, from 2000 to 2009, my analysis here calls into question claims of a post-gender (and post-feminist) society considering Lefebvre's definition of representational space:

> Representational space is the lived world experienced through cultural signs and
> symbols which naturalized are both forceful and camouflaged. As Lefebvre has

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written, Representational space is alive: it speaks. It has an effective kernel or

centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard. It

embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus

immediately implies time. Consequently it may be qualified in various ways: it

may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative,

fluid and dynamic (1991:42).

PATTERNS OF CONSUMPTION

My research for this chapter was based on ethnographic observation and is

analyzed using thick description to present a close reading of social and spatial relations.

I had been a regular customer at the Starbucks since it opened, going there at least a few

times a week, and I began to note patterns of consumption within the shop and the

surrounding areas. A close reading of the situation – the physical changes and social

interactions – revealed struggles over social order carried out through conflicts about

space. My observations were informed by norms of gender and generation as suggested

by the instance of the girl with her feet on the furniture described earlier. I began

recording changes in the organization of the physical space and layout of the shopping

center that housed the Starbucks and observed patterns of people coming and going as

well as interactions among different customer categories based on signs of age, gender

and race/ethnicity. While I observed the situation regularly at various times of day on

weekends and weekdays, the after-school hours illustrated most richly the nature of the

conflicts of gender and generation and the ways in which ownership of space was

asserted. I eventually concentrated my research during these hours while continuing to record observations of other times and situations as points of comparison.[29]

The tone of the shopping center changed significantly after the Starbucks opened in 2001, and while Starbucks' insertion into the shopping strip was not the sole factor, the spatial modifications in and around Starbucks have shaped the nature of social interactions in the strip overall. This Starbucks, like many around the nation, is frequented at different times of day by different populations, including a steady flow of mothers with young children until the late afternoon (McGrath 2006). In the late morning and early afternoon it has been a meeting space for community retirees and mother/child groups. Teenagers arrive later in the afternoon, are gone during the dinner hours, and then return later at night, especially on weekends; nights and weekends teenagers do not occupy this Starbucks in the same overriding capacity as they do after school and they more comfortably share the space with other populations.

Since this Starbucks opened, groups of two to as many as ten teenagers – with totals peaking at 20 to 30 kids at once – have colonized it in the afternoons between 3:00 and 4:30 p.m. after the nearby high school lets out. While small groups of only girls would generally follow the conventions governing Starbucks during other times of day – talking quietly, maintaining zones of privacy, staying in one seat – larger boy-girl groups often yelled across the store and constantly moved around to change seats, tables and groups. In the past, other customers during these hours, including teenagers accompanied by a parent, often opted not to stay in the shop and would get their food and drinks to go. This was in part because free tables and chairs were scarce, but often even when there

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was unoccupied seating I saw adults of all ages enter the store and stop in their tracks with mouths agape when they were confronted with the array of teenagers; they would then approach the counter with a look of dismay and depart the store immediately after receiving their order.

The strip where this Starbucks is located is in a commercial zone near a wealthy, predominantly white, suburban neighborhood which has been in existence for about 60 years. Most of the older houses are solid red brick and based on standardized floor plans; they are not grand and, when built in the 1940s through the 1960s, housed many working and middle-class families, blue-collar and white-collar, who settled in the suburbs in the years following World War II. The county abuts Washington, D.C., and the neighborhood is about six miles from the city.[30] Most houses built in the late 1990s and 2000s are much larger and diverse in architectural style; many homeowners have also added on to the older homes, some to the point of doubling the house in square footage. I have heard many older local residents declare proudly that they raised three (or four, or five) children in a one-bathroom, three bedroom house and question why younger families seem to think they need so much more room.

County zoning is strict and spaces of commerce are clearly distinguished from residential areas, suggesting a local desire to make clear the boundaries between public commercial life and personal home life, and reflecting the values of post-war suburban development in which the neighborhood was largely built and has flourished (Spigel 1992b, 2001; May 1999). As a member of the community who had been coming to this shopping center since my childhood, I watched with interest as the strip underwent

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remodeling beginning in the late 1990s in a way that reflected changing expectations for

and by women as well as of the community overall. The main period of renovation was

from 2000-2002, and the most obvious change was the replacement of the somewhat run-

down supermarket that anchored one end of the strip with a more upscale grocery store.

Even after this was completed, the strip continued to undergo gradual but significant

changes in the types of businesses. In the late 1990s, in addition to the old supermarket,

shops included a chain ice-cream store franchise in a separate structure closer to the

street, and a poorly stocked chain drugstore. There were a few fast-food restaurants (no

more than two at any time) and a bagel shop; among other businesses and shops were a

drycleaner, a florist, a pet store, a fabric store, and a bird-watching supply store. The strip

also had an enclosed basement level not visible from the street that housed a ballroom

dance studio and a large store specializing in foam as well as some non-retail

businesses.[31]

While by early 2009 a few of the old shops remained, the strip had come to be

dominated by child and family-oriented businesses that suggested local residents had a

fair amount of disposable income – much of it spent at the discretion of women. The

changes mirrored the repositioning of middle-class femininity since the 1980s from

"housewife" to "stay-at-home mom," and a redirection of women's priorities from

husband and the household to a focus on motherhood and caring for children (Somerville

1990). Changes in patronage indicated also that local mothers were looking for company

and something to do with their kids. Of the twenty-two businesses at street level, nine

were casual restaurants or eating places, all of them accommodating children. Additional

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shops related to food and beverage consumption were: the grocery store, which carried a large selection of prepared foods; a liquor store; and a bakery for dogs. Even excluding the large grocery store, food related businesses occupied approximately thirty-seven percent of the strip's retail space.[32] Most of the basement portion of the strip was completely turned over to child-centered businesses, drastically increasing the traffic of mothers and strollers. The twelve operating businesses at this level (and in addition to a small upscale children's clothing store at street level) included seven specifically for kids' education and activities: a children's karate studio occupying two spaces; a children's ballet studio; two spaces occupied by a children's gym business (one for unstructured play and one for classes); a children's bookstore; a children's photographer; and a children's tutoring/study skills business. These child-centered enterprises made up some twenty-three percent of the strip (also not including the grocery store) and replaced, among other things, the foam store and a home décor consignment shop on the lower level; considered alongside the closing of the decorating fabric store upstairs and a flooring business that remains, the change in local priorities seems clear.

The later version of the shopping strip suggested this new form of womanhood: one engaged in everyday life in leisure-based consumption, although in the case of many of the child-activity businesses couched in ideas of child development. While mothers with young children still gathered at local playgrounds, the new strip presented another world of options in which women were essentially engaged in the practice of "hanging out" more often attributed to teenagers. Thomas has described this relationship of girls to their social worlds: "[Hanging out] encapsulates the navigation and creation of space by

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girls, their temporary inhabitation of different spaces for social activity, the simultaneous surveillance of their social practices by others, and the various practices of identities that shape the spaces of hanging out to include age, gender, sexuality, race and class" (2005:591). Interestingly, nannies who accompanied children to the strip's activities seldom hung out in Starbucks after a class let out or, if the children were older, waiting for them to finish a class. This suggests the distinction between the notion of childcare for pay as work and so it might be seen as slacking to stop for coffee; but childcare as a mother as including elements of leisure and, importantly, positioning it as a choice open only to those families who would afford to consume these kind of leisure time and activities while naturalizing these things as local norms. This also presented to teenagers a clear class distinction of normative motherhood marked by race and ethnicity.

If, as sociologist Mark Gottdiener has contended, "it is the activity of consumption that most people turn to for self-realization," (1997, p.147), the kind of leisure and experiential consumption in the strip and particularly in Starbucks, produces an image of womanhood (specifically upper-middle-class and, in this case, White) that includes the best aspects of adolescence, such as time to hang out, with the financial resources presumably available to adults. It might not appear to adolescents to be exciting, but it does suggest a comfortable life. Starbucks in this case became a key battleground for adolescents negotiating their own form of hanging out with the hanging out being done by adults, representing the teenagers' desire for rebellion with clear evidence of a privileged adulthood ahead of them.

COFFEE, TO GO

The path through the Starbucks from entering to purchasing to consuming to exiting has been the same since the store opened. As a form of representational space this suggests a worldview based on consistency and order and literally a narrow path of acceptable transit from beginning to end; but the relational aspects of Starbucks indicate some resistance. Because of a central dividing wall running much of the length of the store, customers following the indicated path do not get in one another's way unless acting out of sequence (Gottdiener 1997:150). At one end of the store is the entrance and at the other the ordering and pick-up counters. Entering the store, customers proceed to the right of the dividing wall past a group of armchairs and a small couch to the right, the only seating on this side of the store, and past retail display. At the other end of the store opposite the entrance, customers order and pay at the cash register and then move to the left to the pickup counter area which is on the other side of the dividing wall, moving away from the counter but usually standing near it until their drink is ready. After picking up their drink and fixing it with milk and sugar at a station to the side, customers turn around to face the main seating area. Whether they plan to stay or leave they need to then go into the main seating area, through a path down the middle that ideally is free of tables and chairs.

The teenagers, in order to meet under organic (rather than organized) conditions that allow fluidity and mobility were forced, if they wanted to be in Starbucks together, to be reject conventions of good behavior. If they were to be able to accommodate large and changing groups of people in a way that suggests authority over the space, they were

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from the start noncompliant. In determining their own social order they had to disrupt other patrons to find chairs and then again in blocking the path through the store with coats, backpacks and bodies sitting on the floor. Obviously, Starbucks has financial motives for moving customers in and out of the store to maximize sales, and this may play a part in the lack of areas wide enough to accommodate large groups who may linger without purchasing much. While I doubt that Starbucks as a corporate entity is concerned with managing gender norms in this way, I want to point out some consequences for spatiality of maintaining a floor plan under these conditions.

Prior to the shopping center renovations the tables and chairs in the seating area were seldom in the same places from day to day with the exception of two large armchairs near the ordering counter. At some point in the early 2000s, furniture placement became more consistent with employees policing the seating area throughout the day in order to return tables and chairs to their designated spots. Under the earlier seating placement system (or lack of system) several tables that had been pushed together to accommodate a group would remain that way even after the group had left, sometimes transferring over to another group but other times being deconstructed slowly as individuals and small groups sought seating. The more systematic seating arrangement that came later in the store's history seemed intended for individuals and smaller groups: the small tables were evenly spaced, each with two chairs, but were crowded enough that in seeking appropriate distance customers seldom would occupy a table directly next to someone if they do not have to. Larger groups coming in, even of four or five, then had a difficult time finding seating.

The teenagers' own (and persisting) rules for the Starbucks appear to be that groups of only boys not gather inside the store but can hang out in front of it. Boys inside the store should be with girls, and mixed boy-girl groups of more than two usually include more than one girl. Groups of girls do not gather outside the store unless waiting for rides, and then they stand closer to the curb than the entrance to Starbucks and always watch the parking lot while expectantly checking their cell phones (the latter in later years when cell phones became ubiquitous). Teenagers in pairs are most always two girls but sometimes a boyfriend-girlfriend pair; I have rarely seen a pair of boys stay in the store alone together and the few instances that I did observe appeared to be brothers awkwardly passing time waiting for a their mother, who generally would arrive and make the loop of the store to get a drink and then leave the store immediately with the boys.

Large groups of teenagers inside the store seldom all came in pre-formed units and so they colonized their space (in the sense of establishing and continuing to claim rights to it) in stages, and did so differently depending on the sex of group members. If there was no obvious place to sit, groups of only girls would find space in two ways, both of which suggest uncertainty over their right to the space without critical mass and not wanting to be seen as taking up space in excess of what she might be perceived as needing if alone. In one common scenario, the first girl to come in would order a drink and wait by the pickup counter for her friends to arrive, even after she had her drink. The other girls might or might not order drinks of their own. If no tables were free they continued to stand until one became available; given the traffic in and out of the store they usually did not need to wait more than five minutes. The other way is that the first

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girl to enter would stand by the front door and look into the seating areas for any free table, even one without enough chairs. When one came open, she quickly claimed it by placing her things on it, and then moved throughout the store in search of free chairs. When she had enough chairs for her expected group members, she would sit down and wait in a way that indicated she expected company and had a valid purpose for being there. When more girls arrived, one or more would get a drink while the others stayed at the table guarding their stuff and their table with the same purposefulness. The girl groups appeared organized and generally stayed at their table; often they appeared to be studying together or more frequently working on some extracurricular project such as student government or a volunteer drive while they socialized and gossiped.

Mixed boy/girl groups were more intrusive to the adult population in Starbucks, and it was possible to predict if a group would be mixed-sex even if the first one or two members arriving were girls. Any girls hanging out in front of the store with two or more boys appeared to be flirting, evident in their body language and conversation tone and subject matter: leaning in; tossing their hair; glancing down and then looking upward at the boys and laughing at their comments. Despite these flirting girls' presumed interest in a heterosexual relationship, they are positioned as suspect. When girls were out front, pairs and small groups of girls within Starbucks would look at them with suspicion and make comments about them, usually with lowered voices but in tone indicating disapproval; their eyes were never on the boys outside and they rarely said anything critical about them. Usually girls outside are in pairs; when a lone girl was outside flirting she earned disapproving glances from adults in the store as well as from the in-store

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teenage girls.

Mixed gender groups (excluding couples or the occasional trio of one couple plus a friend, which were distinct from a grouping of three friends without visible evidence of romantic connection like hand holding and gestures of intimacy), are always much louder and more irreverent than the all-girl groups. Girls in a group with boys had a different way of colonizing space than did the girls meeting only other girls: upon entering they would look for a table or an armchair (armchairs are known in the store as the "comfy" chairs and are coveted by girls). The girl (or girls) would then sit in whatever chair was free and if it was close to another customer she would move the chair away from them to an open area, which because of the layout of the tables meant moving it to the seating area center which also serves as the walkway from the counter to the door. She would place her stuff (a backpack, sometimes a purse or a jacket) on the floor nearby and wait, usually passing the time texting on her cell phone. As her boy and girl friends come in they scattered to look for chairs and if none were available sat on the floor, which was never done by anyone else I saw in the store, including small children. If they had an armchair, two girls or a girl and a boy would sit in it together. If a boy was the first to get to Starbucks that afternoon, upon not seeing his friends he would walk right back out and wait in the seating outside the store, or else go to another store in the strip to buy something to eat, often bringing it back in to the Starbucks once reinforcements arrived. Once assembled, the resulting configuration was a sprawling inexact circle of laughter and loud talking that obstructed passage through the store. Other teenagers did not appear to mind needing to go around them or stepping on their stuff: either they were friends

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with someone in the group and joke about it; or else they were not friendly with the group and then pass through pretending not to notice and making no eye contact. Adults however, walked carefully to avoid the stuff and even as they seemed annoyed by the inconvenience apologized as they made their way to the door, the apology standing in for an unstated request that the kids not occupy the space in this way. The kids rarely acknowledged these adults, even as they passed within inches of the teenagers and their stuff.

VISIBILITY AND BOUNDARIES

In the years immediately after the store opened, the kids would pour in, at once casual and purposeful, and spread out book bags and jackets as comfortably as though in a friend's living room. It was not always the same kids, although there was some consistency during any given school year. Small groups of two or three girls would come in for more intimate chats, greet the kids they knew and then move to the margins of the store to converse quietly, at times looking furtively around as though exchanging secrets or gossip and checking to see who was within earshot, indicating their awareness that they are mixing private issues with public space, and with the effect of making them seem interesting in holding secrets.

For the period after Starbucks opened but before the new supermarket was completed, in 2001 and 2002, Starbucks and the adjoining parking lot were meeting places for boys and girls in loud and vivacious mixed-sex groups, always in flux with movement among groups, around the store, and from car to car.[33] It was a place to be

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seen, to flirt, and to carry out the intense relationships that take place during adolescence in public but without the rules enforced by parents in the home and by other authorities at school. The shopping strip even before Starbucks had drawn teenagers, although far fewer and not as consistently as after: it is the closest outpost of commerce abutting a large residential neighborhood and is about a five-minute walk from a public high school.

Before the new grocery store opened the strip had a driving area immediately in front of the stores that separated the parking spaces from the store fronts. Immediately in front of the stores was a sidewalk wide enough for people to pass but too narrow to comfortably accommodate hanging out or stopping to have a conversation without being in the way of other patrons. Drivers could cruise past the Starbucks and see who was inside through the large glass front window; people within Starbucks could easily monitor cars going by and, because of the layout of the parking rows, also had a clear sightline of most cars and people in the parking lot.

As part of the renovations the sidewalk in front of the stores was widened significantly to make room for outdoor seating and displays in front of the stores, and shrubs were placed between the sidewalk and the parking lot. In place of the driving strip immediately in front of the store were front-end parking spaces, and the other parking rows were reconfigured from perpendicular to the shops to parallel. These changes effectively blocked teenagers' ability monitor a wide range of activities, including social interactions in and around cars as well as the approach of any authority figures. In addition, the increased popularity of the shopping center and the length of time cars were likely to occupy a parking spot because of the restaurants and classes for children (quick

utilitarian errands usually take a shorter amount of time), made the parking lot quite crowded so that at certain times of day it was difficult to find a spot at all.

This configuration, a *strategy* of obstruction in de Certeau's term (1984) as an institutional regulation of space, prohibited easy interaction between cars and customers inside and right outside the store meant that cars did not function as a teenage back region to the front region of the store's interior: It became impossible to see the cars in the parking lot from the store, and vice versa. This decreased the usefulness of having a car as a place for socializing and eliminated the possibility of driving by the store to see and be seen. While teenagers still drove to the store, the car was no longer an extension of the social realm of the store but separate space and a means of transit (Best 2006).

The Starbucks world was much smaller for the teenagers without the extensions into the parking lot and the social interactions in and near cars and decreased, albeit temporarily, the value of being there. For a period of six to eight months after the parking lot was changed, the groups of teenagers abandoned their afternoon takeover of Starbucks. Small groups of girls still came, as did teenage couples. Occasionally groups of two to four boys would hang out in the outdoor seating area smoking cigarettes and consuming sodas and other food purchased elsewhere, but they did not come in to the store. It was not the social center it had been. During this time the afternoon Starbucks was busy but not nearly as noisy and lively as when the teenagers dominated the space. The teenager groups eventually came back in full force after the period of absence, but by then Starbucks was a far more coveted place by an increasing number of populations.

Adult customers seemed to approach the situation with greater entitlement to the

space than in the past, and appeared less willing to decamp and leave Starbucks to the kids for a few hours in the afternoon. The increased use of portable, lightweight computers permitted people, primarily adults, to do more work in Starbucks; while teenagers also increasingly used notebook computers, they did not use them in the store except when a group of girls appeared to be working on a project. Exacerbating this changed desire for the space was regional anxiety over space ownership that fostered a land-grab mentality and reflected local conditions more broadly of rapidly decreasing available space due to a boom real estate market. The rapid disappearance in the county and the neighborhood of most unclaimed no-man's-land spaces beginning in the late 1990s, largely due to new housing construction, created a sense of urgency in locating and asserting ownership of space. Previously the claims to Starbucks had been based on identity determined by age/generation, and the after-school hours were set aside for teenagers with a seeming understanding that they would not dominate the space during other times. However, instead of this sort of time-share arrangement, the new social dynamics promised to be contentious and the terms of contestation less certain.

Subtle changes to the position and monitoring of the seating that coincided with the parking lot restructuring permitted a turnabout, in some ways, by the teenagers, who using similar *tactics* of obstruction – unofficial incursions in order to disrupt the system -- as had been exercised in the parking lot's redefinition. This was not true for all teenagers in Starbucks but rather specific to groups composed of both boys and girls in a way that points to a reassertion of sex roles under narrow definitions of male and female. I watched the unfolding of the changes in spatial relations over the period of renovation

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and saw this situation play out numerous times; two examples stand out that in comparison illustrate the function of strategies and tactics and the power of spatiality to shape gender norms, but while seeming to be a matter of choice.

TACTICS OF OBSTRUCTION

The first scene was in 2002 and involved a large group of boys and girls. The second was in 2006 among a group of girls. Both examples occurred in the time period between 3:15 and 4:30 p.m. on school days.

In one instance, a group of seven or eight young teens lounged on armchairs, the floor and tables in the center of the store, backpacks and jackets scattered everywhere, making passage through the store difficult for other patrons. The group engaged in the following conversation in voices loud enough that the conversation was audible even over the noise of many other teens, the music, and the regular hum of the store's machines, sometimes to the point of shouting:

Boy A to Boy B: Can I borrow some money?

Boy B: Well, you gave me money at lunch. So I'll buy you coffee. But you gave me two dollars so it has to be less than two dollars. You can't get that mocha latte shit. That stuff tastes like shit anyway.

Girl A: [*lounging against Boy B*] Who needs money? I've got allowance. I'm totally rich. I've got twenty bucks with me [*as she waves a twenty-dollar bill*].

Boy C: God, you always have money!"

Girl A:	[*laughing*] My parents love me."
Boy A:	You're so spoiled, princess."
Girl A:	[*laughing, but not protesting*] Shut up!
Girl B:	[*said to Boy A*; *she is sitting on the floor below Girl A*] Yeah – shut up. Now you don't get anything. You have to watch us eat."
Boy C:	I can always get money from her [*motioning to Girl A*]. She's a ho." [*Then, turning to Girl A]:* You love me baby, don't you.
Girl A:	[*laughing*] Fine. Whatever. Just shut up. I'll buy you coffee, but now you owe me. You owe me so big."

Their exaggerated voice levels and tones suggested these kids were performing for the entire store and not just within their circle. The performance itself was about consumption and power and assumptions about the situation of teenage girls in this equation with both family and peers. Their statements indicated comfort with conventional gender norms. The boys, disparaging sweet drinks as at once "shit" and out of their price range, suggested they relied on one another for resources. The girl who flaunted her parents' money seemed to enjoy the label of "spoiled" and "princess" as evidence of being cared for, and also recognized that this money gave her power over the boys, who seemed interested in earning her attention, and her girlfriend, who was ultimately dispatched to actually do the work of purchasing the drink.

Other teenagers in the store appeared to ignore this display by not looking toward the group – a feat of will considering how the group seemed to want to draw attention— while the kids sitting within this group looked on with bored amusement or engaged in

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other, quieter side conversations. After being asked by Girl A, Girl B and a third girl approached the ordering counter to order, waited for their order at the pickup counter, and after a few minutes returned with a few drinks in Starbuck cups and some bottled soft drinks, passing them out within the group. Meanwhile, several adults seated in the margins of the store or waiting to pick up drinks appeared annoyed by the noise and activity. Some adults pointedly stared at the loud kids, who looked only at one another and appeared not to notice they were the focal point for other patrons. This particular group continued to occupy a large space in the middle of the store with members coming and going until it dissolved rapidly between 4:30 and 4:35 p.m. By 4:40, the staff has cleaned up the area and redistributed tables and chairs more evenly throughout the seating area. The store was still busy but much quieter, and the only teens remaining were girls in twos or threes seated quietly in armchairs or at tables.

The position of this group in the middle of the seating area taking up a large portion of this space situated them as central to all social interaction in the store. The space they claimed was broad and ill-defined: bodies, bags and coats were haphazardly arrayed, blocking what during other times of the day would be a path for walking through the store. Some of the kids' stuff took up parts of tables near them, removing these tables from easy use by other patrons. These kids were loud and critical of Starbucks while at the same time apparently wanting to be there and desiring its products. What took place was a performance for those patrons outside of the group as well as those within it. While they were claiming standards and values outside local adult norms these teenagers were breaking no written rules and so no official form of control was merited: they were not

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kicked out of the store. The attitude among non-teenage customers and the smaller and quieter groups of teens was one of resignation: that this was just the way it was in the store in the afternoon, and that the kids would eventually leave, which they did.

The second interaction took place among a group of three teenage girls seated around a small table against the window at the front of the store. The girls had a barrier of coats and backpacks near their chairs, marking a zone of privacy but without intruding into other table spaces; school books and pens were on the table functioning as markers of adult-condoned activity and also helped the girls maintain their place at the table, while the girls talked about friends and gossiped. Their voices were at a conversational level so that they were audible only sometimes (and depending, I think, on what and whom they are discussing), from my seat about six feet away. One girl had a Starbucks cup, one had no obvious food or drink, and one girl was drinking bottled water that was not a brand carried at this Starbucks. When the first girl finished her Starbucks drink, the three leaned into one another and quietly but urgently discuss who should buy the next drink. The girl with nothing indicated she did not have enough money. All three stared intently all the way to the back of the store trying to make out drink prices on the wall above the ordering counter. One girl complained that she did not like plain coffee and wanted a more expensive drink. The three then looked around furtively, fished wallets and change purses out of their backpacks, and began counting money, mostly change, on the table. After more whispering, the girl with the water bottle gathered the money, went to the counter, and returned with a drink. Despite the pooled funds, they did not share the beverage, and instead it seemed to belong to the girl who physically made the purchase.

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The three girls remained at their table for at least another hour. While I doubt they would have been asked to leave without a Starbucks drink on the table, the desire to purchase something even when not enthusiastic about consuming it suggests they were not seeking permission, which implies subordinate status, to stay there as much as legitimacy, which suggests a sense of equality, in being there. They were asserting their right of presence framed as a consumer choice. They were quiet enough not to attract attention and discrete about money, in line with norms for middle-class White girls such that theirs was a different kind of performance: one of attempting to fit in with adults in the store. I doubt any other adults in the store even noticed these girls: they neither invited nor merited attention. In claiming the right to be visible they were also making themselves invisible.

In general, while the quieter – and usually smaller – girl groups did mark territory and create boundaries around "their" space exceeding that of adults, they never acted in a way that would be considered unruly, with the exception of tucking their feet on the chair if sitting in one of the large, soft armchairs. The girls mirrored pairs of adult women, drinking and eating (and only items from Starbucks), reading and studying, and quietly conversing: polite guests rather than wild children in their own play room. These teenagers – young women – would lounge on the furniture and create zones of privacy that were protective and not obstructing using their coats, bags and school supplies, yet still maintain middle-class standards of appropriate girl behavior in a public place. This recalls Thomas' (2005:591) assertion of "hanging out" for girls as encompassing, "navigation and creation of space by girls, their temporary inhabitation of different

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spaces for social activity, the simultaneous surveillance of their social practices by others."

Starbucks' image as a comfortable public space for teenage girls that offered more independence than the home but without the negative implications associated with girls in public unaccompanied by appropriate boys (boyfriends, brothers) or adults (Boys 1984; Young 1990; Spain 1992; Brumberg 1997) also has as a consequence its position as a conventional space of consumption. In the end, the seemingly chaotic teenage colony in the store is actually functioning quite comfortably to support conventions of gender and class, and it is not at all transformational in pushing the limits of options for how to be a girl or a boy.

THIRDSPACE/THIRD PLACE

Starbucks has from the start been tangled with issues of space and place: in corporate plans for global growth; in the tone of the stores' interiors; and in attention, both positive and negative, to individual stores' placement (Schultz and Yang 1997). Gottdiener has argued that signs of mass culture are globally and locally pervasive, and environments are now engineered to link commerce with social interaction so that the place itself becomes a symbol, leaving few places untouched by commercial and/or state interests (Gottdiener 1997:4).

The coffee houses that have proliferated since the early 1990s were spurred in large part by the success of the Starbucks chain. Starbucks as a business originated as a retail (rather than wholesale) coffee roaster to allow regular citizens top-notch coffee in

their homes. The company grew to become a major player in a certain sector of the public sphere and broadly publicized its concern for local and global public well-being. Bryant Simon, a prolific scholar of Starbucks worldwide, has asserted that it is exactly Starbucks' phenomenal growth which facilitated its need in 2008 to close hundreds of stores; by making itself common, he has argued, "it can't keep generating cool or envy or status" (2008).This echoes Gottdiener's assertion that a collapse in conceptions of the self alongside the meanings of production and consumption force us to link identity with what we choose to buy.

Most any Starbucks is a good place for casual meetings among friends or business associates while also doing something else: catching up on work; consuming food; reading; making a phone call. No time spent in Starbucks need be wasted by having nothing to do while waiting for someone, and it is a space that promotes simultaneous production and consumption. As representational space Starbucks suggests a global uniformity of spatial needs: that in any location or situation its stores present a best option for social interaction, better than home or work. This claim by Starbucks indicates both the primacy and inadequacy of home and work for presenting our best selves and implies that we need to escape them to find our more balanced authentic selves. Starbucks-as-thirdspace as a marketing strategy reconstitutes a public and private split with the understanding that these are fixed as home and work, that neither home nor work offer freedom alongside comfort, and that we need something outside of these two confinements.

Starbucks' promise of social connection commitment to local neighborhoods and

global well-being – all in a universally inviting and recognizable environment – fosters a provincialism without communities: an international sense that any Starbucks is both local and familiar regardless of where one lives, and in which there are communal norms for a community in which members are a set of geographically disperse consumers. For example, printed on some Starbucks paper cups in 2009 was the statement: "Buy our coffee, and good things happen," with a description of Starbucks' support of an international conservation organization. The statement went on: "It makes a difference. Just like you do," and in bold lettering: "Congratulations, you." Patrons are situated by the company as a global village of discerning and socially responsible coffee drinkers (and even though not all of Starbucks' practices and products are, for example, fair trade). There are complex rules and codes within any Starbucks understood by those in the know, like the sequence and route for drink procurement, the language of drink names and sizes, and how to access a wireless internet connection in a Starbucks. Anyone not versed in these things gums up the works and creates tension for other customers (Gottdiener 1997:128-133). While each Starbucks may have its own rhythm and peculiarities, there is sufficient standardization and marking of codes to ensure Starbucks community members' expectations are met.

Since our social interaction now occurs largely in spaces designed for commercial interests, we collapse our right to occupy a place – to be in public and to take up contested space – with our right to consume. In this sense, Starbucks falls under Habermas' critique of the late twentieth century public sphere in that it is not truly a location for public awareness and insistence on democratic rights, but rather: "a field for

the competition of interests" (Habermas 1974: 141) in which large organizations such as Starbucks pretend to vet ideas and policies in public, but ultimately seek organizational prestige as a way toward greater earnings. The result is the absence of a location for true public discourse and dissent, which leads to a less just and less free society.

For girls and women it seems unfair that equal access to the public sphere – a primary goal of second-wave feminism – should finally appear normalized just as this form of social agency is losing efficacy. What is left is a struggle over consumer-based rights and places. For girls in particular fosters a sense of buying things as self-expression and a consequent desire to fit in to spaces of consumption in order to remain visible and thus not be left out.

There are few locations that offer the public liminality girls seem to need, and coffee houses are one of them. The function of coffeehouses historically in the West suggests the possibility of a place that at least for a patron is neither home nor work and is without absolute regulation by government authority (Epstein 1999; Gaudio 2003; see also Habermas 1974). It makes sense, then, that Starbucks would appeal to populations who feel most restricted by these institutions, such as teenagers and women. At issue, though is the meaning of "third" here alongside space and place. Edward Soja (1996) has identified "thirdspace" as sites of resistance for marginal subjectivities, informed by Lefebvre's concept of social space. For Soja, thirdspace is a conceptual category rather a particular kind of place, and is fundamentally a space of exploration beyond the lived world of spatial practice (firstspace), and the symbolic (secondspace). Thirdspace promises exercise of agency for the marginalized. Soja's discussion of bell hooks' work

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on identity suggests benefits of claiming marginality, and the possibility for positioning the marginal as central to social concerns.[34]

This notion of a nuclear position of difference is relevant to current ideas of youth: as both desired and vilified; a source of both popular trends and anxieties; a powerful social force but lacking full citizenship *except* commercially, a situation of particular importance to girls and a key critique of popular notions of third-wave feminism. Soja has argued that thirdspace allows for possibility rather than demanding absolute definitions of identity or of place; it is unstable, but it is also safe – and in this instance safe does not mean comfortable or without risk, but rather a realm of "creative process of restructuring that draws selectively and strategically from the two opposing categories to open new alternatives" (Soja 1996:5). Thirdspace is not by definition oppositional but rather in addition to other categories of space founded in either/or choices, such as public/private or home/work and, in embodiment, male/female. It is by nature illusory and requires constant searching and action toward change, and in this way reflect authentic actions as transforming social structure (Beauvoir [1946] 2004).

Starbucks executive Howard Schultz's presentation of Starbucks as a "Third Place" promises in commercial terms to exemplify Soja's thirdspace. Shultz's notion of third place is of a best-of-all-possible merging of aspects of public and private spaces, girded by an assumed correlation between pleasure and liberty, enjoyment and agency (Epstein 1999). Soja has explained thirdspace as less materially grounded: "Ways of thinking and acting politically that respond to all binarisms, to any attempt to confine thought and political action to only two alternatives," (1996:5) i.e., spaces of

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consumerism and social consciousness, work and home, or youth and adulthood. While

both concepts are essentially utopian, Schultz's version is static rather than

transformational: Starbucks is based on meeting a specific set of needs with uniform

consistency while Soja's conception seeks a way outside of these conditions.

While Starbucks is an alternative to home or work, it is in another sense strictly

regulated and uniform presented in a friendly and casual package and, as my evidence

illustrates, an arena for conflict about difference in tandem with enforcement of dominant

social standards. (Although different local standards might dictate the appearance of

baristas; you would not expect to see similar people behind the counter in downtown

Seattle as in the exurbs of Phoenix, for example). Instead of inviting difference, the

Starbucks Utopia is one of consistency and regulation, and it is certainly not a space in

which anything is possible for anyone and everyone; Starbucks' spatial appeal rests on

conventional dualities in order for the brand to remain relevant and desired. The ubiquity

of Starbucks signifies "third" as not liminal or, as articulated by Soja, a fluid term for the

possibility of difference, but is instead a central component of modern life in America, at

least in neighborhoods where Starbucks chooses to open. This would be a world of

pleasure and consumption in which each individual gets to decide her status and

categories: whether space or information is public or private, whether behavior or

comportment is appropriate to a situation. [35]

THE BODY OF ABSTRACT AUTHORITY

In the spring of 2009 I witnessed an interaction that surprising to me but also

confirmed the impossibility of this Starbucks as a "thirdspace" and a situation for

transformation rooted in actions of authenticity. One afternoon I was watching the tension between the teenagers and other groups, which had increased in recent years: these other groups included politely socializing adults, not always quiet but not noisy either; mothers with young children, some quite noisy; and adults quietly working, most wearing ear-buds to create their own soundtrack over that of the rhythm of Starbucks. It had been about a month since I had last been in the store during the hours after school. A large group of teenagers had colonized the entire center of the seating area and had messily spread out their bodies and their stuff in chairs, on tables and on the floor, including any easy pathway to the door. Every chair and table inside and outside the store was occupied, with customers picking up drinks anxiously surveying the landscape for a free spot. Most of the adults working alone, including me, sat at the small tables at the edge of the store near the front window with laptops (and requisite earbuds); these tables had increased in value in recent years as more people worked using laptops and an outlet meant not relying on a battery. Other adults in pairs and trios were crowded at tables in the margins trying to talk above the loud chatter of the kids without actually yelling. While the teen group seemed relaxed, there also was constant motion: movement within the group, within the store to other teen groups and from inside and outside the store. As first formed, the group consisted of two girls and about seven boys.

A lone adult male who had been sitting in an armchair became literally surrounded by the kids, who appeared not to notice he was there even though it was likely they wanted his chair. One of the kids had politely asked him if he was using the adjacent armchair (the chairs were facing one another as though ready for a conversation)

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and he responded he was not. The teenagers did not recognize his personal space, and some were within less than a foot of him. The man was trapped and appeared agonized, but he waited for about fifteen minutes as though the kids might leave. He was a tall and big man, which made it complicated for him when he finally got up and had to step gingerly around the kids and then dodge other tables and chairs that had been pushed into potential walkways. While there were several other men in the store, this man in particular seemed out of place. By this time there were at least twenty teenagers in a seating area that is about eighteen by twenty-five feet, with more entering the store and another fifteen or so teenagers hanging out in small groups in front of the store.

I did a double-take when a security guard purposefully walked through the front door and instead of going to the counter to order went immediately to the large group in the center. He was a tall, slim black man appearing to be approximately age fifty. His race and his blue security company uniform enhanced by an orange safety vest, a sign of working-class status, marked him as outside the local community. In a friendly but authoritative voice, he told the kids to move. They barely registered his presence as he remained standing over them, looking down. He then literally herded them using hand motions up and out the front door; they did as he told, but continued not to register his presence. It was as if they were being guided by an unseen force rather than a flesh-and-blood person standing right there. While moving the kids out, the guard declared: "Get on out of here. People are working here." The teenagers in the large group and a few others who had been in small groups in the margins but who had been taking part in the general shuffling of people and places left the store en masse and without protest, not even

pausing in their conversations as they moved outside. A few stayed immediately outside of the store, but the rest dispersed along with many of the kids who had been outside. In a matter of about one minute, they were gone.

There were still a fair number of teenagers in Starbucks, but the only remaining boy was alone with his girlfriend. The rest were girls who had been sitting in an orderly fashion at tables and who seemed to know the guard was not talking to them. The guard worked for a private security company and was hired by the shopping center, not Starbucks, and had the authority to enter any of the above-ground stores.[36] In the following weeks, I observed the guard working only in the afternoon on weekdays and his workday ended at 4:30 p.m.; that there was no guard on duty after 4:30 suggests a reaction of businesses specifically to the after-school population of the strip. He carried with him a large incident book with the name of the private security company he worked for, a binder in which he catalogued, I assume, what he felt to be instances of undesirable behavior and actions not permitted along the sidewalk, such as skateboarding. Occasionally he would approach some of the boys outside of Starbucks and refer to something in the binder while talking to them quietly, as though cataloging for them their indiscretions.

In this case, though, the boys and the girls who went with them were told to leave specifically because in their manner of colonization they were appropriately performing according to dominant standards of gender, meeting expectations that boys will be boys, and that girls need to recognize what is at risk when playing along with the boys. This does not mean that girls have nothing to gain by affiliation with boys: there might be a

romantic interest, or social capital in having the attention of certain boys. And that the boys did not appear upset at being labeled disruptive and troublemakers -- even though they were really doing nothing identifiably wrong and that could not have been resolved in some way other than kicking them out – points to the fact that it is marker of masculinity to have a presence that disrupts: it is authority. The guard had never looked at or addressed the girls in the group or elsewhere in the store, speaking only and directly to boys.

This system indicates reward in the form of permission to remain in Starbucks for good "girl" behavior: stillness and not drawing attention: public invisibility. Girls behaving nicely, sitting at tables with books and pens or talking quietly are literally overlooked. This allows them a safe public space in which they have value as consumers and as potential mothers – hopefully good ones.

A few weeks after I first saw the guard, I was in the Starbucks at 3:00 p.m., but the usual crowd was missing. There were some quiet groups of high school girls sitting at tables and either studying together or socializing. Confused, I checked if school was in session that day, and it was. I searched for other reasons why the kids would have been missing but could find nothing. The next day and the following week, I checked again and they were still gone. I walked the strip looking into the other restaurants but did not find any large group of teenagers, but rather individual teens and a few small groups of two or three spread out among different restaurants. The guard was on duty and obviously bored. It was a nice day, and he sauntered slowly back and forth down the strip. Occasionally he would open the door to a store and look in – although most of the

stores have large plate glass windows and are visible from outside – and would exchange a few friendly words with whoever was inside, employees or customers. He returned a few stray grocery carts to the front of the grocery store, even though the grocery store has employees who do that. A woman appearing to be in her thirties with bleach-blonde hair, a variety of tattoos and piercings, and a hip vintage dress was sitting at a table outside the Starbucks smoking and writing in a journal; her style was not common in this neighborhood for a woman of her age and she invited second glances as people walked the strip of shops. But she was quiet and so aroused little more than a moment of interest for most people. The guard did not seem appear to know her, but with obvious attempts at appearing casual, wandered over to her and asked for a cigarette and engaged her in conversation. He introduced himself and leaned against a post as they chatted; the bits I could hear seemed to be about politics and the Obama Administration. After a little while, he looked around as if to see if anyone was watching and sat down in a chair across from the woman and leaned back. Everything was in order.

A few months later, this guard was charged with extorting some of the teens in the shopping center in the last days before school ended for the summer (WJLA 2009). The local police blotter said he had stopped a group of teens and confiscated items (undisclosed as to what they were) from some of them and then demanded payment or he would give their information (also unclear as to what kind of information) to the police. The kids paid him and then went home and told their parents, who then brought the matter to the police. One news report quoted a parent as horrified at the guard's intimidation of the kids, and another called it "disgusting" (ABC 7 News 2009). That

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guard was replaced by another, a younger man, also black and slim and wearing the same uniform. He had a more casual way about him and seemed less interested in visibly policing the kids, but school would not start for another two months and Starbucks on summer days had a different rhythm in which kids filtered in and out throughout the day and not all at once.

The nature of teenagers as a group is that they are a moving target. Even if this year's high school students had abandoned Starbucks, there would be four hundred new freshmen entering that school in the fall to discover Starbucks; they would know it to be a high-school hangout and would gather there. Whether fundamental structures of space and gender would be transformed by a new generation is much less certain.

Increasingly since the early part of the decade, more adults come in alone to work. Combined with changes to the interior design of this Starbucks, this has led to greater contestation of the space of the store, especially in the afternoon. It is common now at any time of day to see small tables occupied by a solitary person plugged in to a laptop and with earbuds, cell phone on the table next to the computer and a few scattered papers. Especially since around 2005, lone adults park themselves in the Starbucks for long periods of time during the day, seemingly conducting business, encouraged by the affordability of laptop computers and increase in wireless internet connectivity. This has increased markedly since 2008 when the company instituted a policy of "free" wireless access for habitual customers.[37]

This population exists comfortably alongside the other dominant population of the store: adult women who meet in pairs, sometimes with very young children but often on

their own. The women talk quietly enough, usually, that it does not seem to disturb other patrons. My observations, supported by my experience, indicate the subject matter of these conversations is often family life, issues with children at school, and frequently matters related to work: problems at the office, or whether or not to return to work after being out of the workforce in order to care for children, for example. Other pairs of women come in to have work-related meetings, taking out spreadsheets and other papers, sometimes using a computer or some form of hand-held electronic organizer. In all cases they appear productive, either in the paid labor force or in home economics.

The social interactions in Starbucks in which young people themselves determined the terms were, once the space in Starbucks became crowded enough to cause conflicts of use, found to be counter other populations' understanding of the store's spatial function. While the population had changed in some ways over the decade to include more lone adults and more men working, what had changed more was the nature of the context of the situation: different populations had different understandings of how Starbucks should be used. The dynamics illustrate the problems with always depending on context in order to claim space or identity: mutual understanding is never ensured, and it matters who makes the rules that determine the options. This issue of context matters greatly for girls, whose safety and agency depends on the context of the visible body and the ability to assert a cohesive self. Being in this Starbucks offered girls an opportunity to learn; and they were learning, perhaps more forcefully than in any supervised and structured activity, how to fit in to their surroundings.

Even the time labeled "after school" is seen as a valuable commodity open for

"work" for young people rather than as leisure, or free, time. First, the labeling of it as "after" school indicates both proximity to school and that school is the bulk of youth activity even though by an estimate from a research initiative of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, children and teens in the U.S. in general are in school for only 20 percent of their waking hours (Noam 2004).[38] Second, it suggests the suspicion with which we view youth activities when not under the watch of school or other authorities and that they will be up to no good, as Noam and Tillinger have suggested in encouraging structured after-school activities for the benefit of local communities, including people not involved with the school system. The multipurpose missions of such programs included crime prevention, both by and for young people, and allowing more time for academic and other skill development. Noam and Tillinger argue that children need "intermediary spaces" (81) defined as regulated, educational spaces that appear to be for play; in particular, "The adolescent requires a safe space for experimenting, forming an identity, solving crises, and making choices." Social forces, such as the police and community organizations often push for institutionalizing such spaces by suggesting they will allow a safer environment for everyone.

One analysis resulting from the Harvard initiative attributed teens being at risk in part to an increase in women having paid employment, and claimed that the ill effects of this lack of attention on young people by their families might be countered with organized non-school activities which would provide a "safe and supervised context for young persons while their parents are working" (Mahoney, Eccles and Larson 2004:117). Parents in this case suggests mothers more than fathers or other caretakers. Historian

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Elaine Tyler May (1999) has argued that women have always worked outside the home and that contending social ills are result of this only recently is to ignore history. Further, the positioning of American womanhood as a unified "everyone" ignores concerns of race and class in promoting women's domesticity.

Teenagers truly did rule the space of Starbucks for a few hours each weekday, prior to the complete restructuring. Even afterward they managed to carve out a way to be there – albeit with some complaints from other members of the community. However, the struggle over Starbucks created conditions under which gender norms were reaffirmed rather than expanded to include broader standards of what it means to be a good girl. These affirmations were centered on containing girls so that they were situated to practice good womanhood by being good girls. This learning of appropriate femininity was underscored by the value placed locally on a privileged form of middle-class motherhood in which working outside the home for pay is always an option but also a personal choice.

UNWRITTEN RULES OF GIRLHOOD

The performances and interactions I observed in and around this Starbucks reinforce conventional gender scripts. True teenage spaces of marginality are shut down when discovered or are co-opted and repackaged as cool for other populations. These places may still be inhabited by teens, but performing difference takes on a new meaning of performing *for* an audience rather than embodying difference. Starbucks illustrates how difference – other options – is defined as deviance particularly for girls in a way that

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deeply relies on conventional notions of the "good girl" and related expectations of boys. However in terms of subjectivity and authority, abstract representational space, which denies difference and removes historical and material contexts, a situation that is especially problematic for women and young people. Each of these identities carries stigma, in Goffman's sense of the term, as in many situations incongruously undesirable as public actors (Goffman 1963).[39] Because of this, women and adolescents are faced with constant scrutiny and an almost automatic implication of wrongdoing simply by occupying a space, much less claiming it, and consequently are faced with vulnerability of a material body regulated by abstract forces regardless of whether actually engaged in deviant behavior. Lefebvre explains this problem of regulation by abstract forces as socially unhealthy: healthy function requires coherence, but dominant social forces often rely on abstract forces – rule that appears natural but seems to come from nowhere -- in order to push out any difference that might challenge authority. This leads to dysfunction, as it is far more difficult to register protest against an unknown authority than a known one. If, for Lefebvre, abstraction is that which is removed from lived experience—a sign without a referent—it is impossible to challenge.

If sharing space in accord requires agreement by all parties on the conditions of habitation – and the particular conditions are likely to differ depending on an individual's identity or a group's social status – Starbucks, in claiming to satisfy a wide range of spatial and social needs, invites discord over whose needs come first. Conflict and contestation, though, can serve to make their object interesting. Starbucks for the boys appears to be desirable in part if there is a measure of transgression in being there, as well

as giving them the opportunity to perform for girls. For the girls, it ultimately seemed that enjoyment came in part from the ability to participate in a rite of adulthood that promised inclusion in the world of local women, most of whom had presumably made good choices. However, assuming different social standards of public behavior for boys and girl indicates an inconsistency in some claims about gender and space under the tent of third wave feminism. If we are supposed to be post-gender in the sense that equality has been achieved, why does our conception of representational space suggest otherwise? This either/or split of sex difference is not the intent of serious third-wave feminism and is a warping of postmodern claims about identity: instead of pointing to a post-gender world of free, multiple subjectivities, it suggests an escalated war between genders as well as sharp divisions among women and feminisms claiming to know the best strategies and tactics for women to achieve goals (social and individual).

These conditions permit rule by abstraction: There are laws prohibiting gender discrimination and at least some level of social norms that discourage overt objectification of girls and women. At the same time, there are images everywhere promoting conventional femininity while claiming it is something new as a form of femininity based on presentation of self *rather* than social norms instead of in relation to them. This is a problematic conception of authenticity in its privileging of what can be bought as signs of identity, equated with action, rather than recognition of social values and one's part in the social world, inaccurately equated with passivity. Teenagers and women especially stand to lose under this definition as their place in public life has come to be founded on issues of consumption; and a move from passive to active consumption

actually does not help with authenticity, it just changes the context.

As space is more complex than a unified text with an identifiable producer and consumer, attributing specific meaning to any space is inadequate: "Rather than signs, what one encounters here are directions—multifarious and overlapping instructions. ... That space signifies is incontestable. But what it signifies is dos and don'ts—and this brings us back to power." (Lefebvre 1990:142.)

Similarly, regulation of space rarely states proper feminine comportment as a requirement, while forces of abstraction ensure such comportment is standard. This is true not just in Starbucks but also in most other publics, where control of space is earned by simultaneously identifying as a consumer-citizen and conformity to conventions of gender. This is not authenticity in any sense of the term. Finally, here, the imposition of abstract regulation supports the importance of maintaining community standards, the narrowing of these standards, and that Starbucks is not for everyone actually a thirdspace, but only for specific populations engaged in specific activities condoned by the community as productive. Real thirdspaces are either shut down or co-opted by a notion of "third place" as advocated by Starbucks, thus removing their very reason for being and a consequent need for new spaces of difference. Often, now, these take the form of virtual spaces, a problem in the discounting of embodiment or, perhaps more problematic, thinking of embodiments as choices and as imaginary. The difficulty lies in balancing the flexibility required in the variable situations through which we structure our lives with maintaining a sense of having an authentic self: a self which is inherently valuable in being distinct and original and also autonomous.

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CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

During a discussion among a group of girls which was engineered for this project, one part of their conversation illustrated their desire for a public/private distinction and the trouble locating the line between public and private as they addressed sex, sexuality, space, and agency. The girls in the group had been complaining about their lockers being accessible to school administrators at will and without a specific reason, such as if a rumor was circulating that a student was storing contraband. They seemed to perceive school officials' access to their lockers as a violation of their private space despite the lockers being on school grounds and even though none of the girls suggested they had been worried about getting into trouble. At issue was the interpretation of boundaries defining what counts as public and what can be relied on as private. Without an apparent change of subject, the conversation flowed to the topic of public and private communications with a fluidity suggesting a natural and obvious connection among matters of privacy, space, media and gender. When one girl related a story about high school boys who had been jailed for putting smoke bombs in lockers, the conversation that followed pointed to the conflicted nature of public and private for these girls, the primacy of media and communication, and girls operating in structures of power:

Lynn: Do you guys lock things? In your locker?

Several girls
at once: People can break into them! The locks don't work. They break.

	People take stuff. People take parts of them.
Emma:	Did you hear about the cell phone? It's this high school, and these two sixteen-year-olds were in a compromising position *(the group laughs)*. So there's a topless picture of the girl, a couple of pictures, and it got sent to everyone's cell phone in this whole high school. People weren't deleting it. They kept sharing it. So now police are arresting everyone. They're going to check everyone's phone and anyone who has it is arrested for child pornography.
Lara:	That's stupid. I really don't care about girls who send naked pictures of themselves. Because if you send it it's going to get out. And if you go to a party, and you're like smoking weed or you're like drinking beer, and you have a picture of that, and your principal [finds out], you get expelled, I don't feel bad for these girls.

The girls then discussed an occurrence at a nearby high school where a boy had gotten in trouble because of voice mails he left at the home of a school administrator and the less than friendly response message left on the boy's phone by the administrator's wife. The wife had called the boy, "A snotty-nosed little brat" (Chandler 2008); the boy had posted a recording of this message on YouTube for anyone to hear. One girl said she thought, though, that the school said the boy's suspension was because he had used his phone during school in a way that was not officially sanctioned, and not because he had spread the message and embarrassed the woman. The conversation continued as Lara

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commented: "Our school can have a drug test on any student, whenever they want, without even a reason. Literally they can go through our stuff. They can go through our lockers. They can give us a drug test and you get expelled just like that." I then asked if they considered what they did in their homes to be private, which invited a response which highlights how gender and sexuality are crucial to determinations of public and private, and the relationship to mediated images, autonomy, and moral choices:

Emma: Well, it depends on what you're thinking of. If you're raised well,
                    there's a certain line of things you share and things you don't
                    share.

Jenna: Nothing's private anymore.

Lara: Some people are like, "Yay, she's my best friend! Let's all share
                    all our things, dirty secrets."

Emma: And then they're like not best friends anymore, and then they're no
                    longer secrets. And those messages get sent out to everyone:
                    private emails sent to the whole school.

Lynn (and others): That happens all the time! Sometimes it's just to a group, but not
                    everyone in the group is supposed to see it.

Julie: There's this group called the Whore 4 at our school, and they're all
                    kind of really pretty, except one of them is fat. There's this kid in
                    our grade, and he's kind of a friend I guess of theirs. And he's
                    good looking I guess. And he was talking to the Whore 4, and
                    they're like, we'll send you naked pictures of ourselves. So they

sent the pictures to him, and then he showed them to a friend, and

then the whole seventh and eighth grade found out about them.

Emma: And there was this friend, and he bought the pictures from [the boy

who originally received the image], and he showed them to

everyone.

When one girl who attended another school asked whether the Whore Four had this name before the incident, another who had responded: "No, it was the cause. But apparently now they embrace this name." This last comment in using the term "apparently" implied a mythology of sexuality around the four girls, and was said with a mixture of disapproval and awe seemingly because the girls whose pictures had reportedly circulated had not displayed shame. The girls who were discussing this story seemed to assume that because the Whore Four girls had not publicly expressed humiliation they felt none. This meant that they had not learned from their mistake and displayed appropriate remorse: they were making a choice to be bad girls, which seemed in the context of this discussion to be both liberating and risky. In this discussion the boys involved in receiving and transmitting the images were neither criticized nor even mentioned outside their roles as conduits for reproducing the images. The boys seemed to earn a "who could blame them?" response; they were, after all, boys in possession of risqué pictures of girls and their actions should have been expected.

Despite an understanding that boundaries of public and private are easily breached both for and by teenagers, they seem to insist on making a distinction between public and private to claim rights, as in the case of their lockers, and self-determination in

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the instance of control over representation and visibility. Complicating this perception of the sex roles of women and girls is an understanding of the body as a canvas upon which to create the best possible version of oneself and implies embodiment always involves choice in some capacity. However the distinctions between "girl" and "woman" complicate this discourse: there are cultural implications in using these terms in critiques of the body, and it means something different to criticize the body of a girl than it does to evaluate a woman. Holding the status of "girl" positions critiques of ones body as both inappropriate and unfair: girlhood, despite encompassing a range of ages and situations, carries with it a sense of being in development and with the possibility of transformation to some more ideal version in the future; this reflects the idea that adolescent (and so girls') values are in development – they are fluid and changeable – and so girls should not be held to the same standards of morality as an adult (Beauvoir [1946] 2004). Further, implying that a girl's body is both a child's body and a sexualized one carries a sense of impropriety, if not criminality: to turn the gaze on a girl/child body implies a sex object status which is taboo and, in fact, criminal. Regulation of bodies is fundamental to determining movement through and within space: which bodies are permitted to cross boundaries and enter and exit spaces, and which bodies required more stringent regulation. Claiming girlhood might be a tactic for eluding constraints applied to women's bodies.

One problem in defining feminism overall, and even feminist waves, is that even within each perceptible form and wave there are divisions and disagreements. Complications between and within feminist waves are, I believe, related to distinguishing

between fragmentation and multiplicity. This matters for girls' autonomy. Mistaking fragmented subjectivity for multiplicity of identity, or perhaps confusing the two with a purpose in mind, creates a sort of false-front autonomy: it looks promising but lacks substance. Then, authenticity and performance become important – what is authentically feminine, authentically feminist, or authentically beautiful, are example I discuss in this dissertation – in order to determine whether what is apparent is in fact true or false. Girl-power TV as a genre thrives on this mistaken feminist identity and confusions about femininity: that is the basis for *Alias*.

Even outside of the official research for this project, I have had innumerable conversations with friends and acquaintances who do not study these matters as a career about whether some or other girl character is a "good role model" or is "empowered," two characterizations I hear repeatedly. When I return the question back to them, their determinations often seem based on the character's adherence to moral standards ascribed to conventional femininity, and often alongside praise for the girl hero being active or tough or physically aggressive in the face of danger.

This promise of unbounded possibility which comes with very limiting instructions suggests to me someone drawing a map of the world and saying "look at all the places you can go," and then drawing a red line around a very small area and adding, "but if you step outside these boundaries you might be sorry." I had a train station worker do that exactly using a city map when I was in my early 20s and traveling in a foreign city; he also drew big X's through several areas to indicate where I absolutely should not venture. I remember being both grateful for and troubled by what he had done; it was at

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once a kind and patronizing act of regulation; I felt that I knew enough about the world to stay out of danger's way and would recognize dangerous territory and know enough about how to get out. This tactic of regulation by presenting multiple options but only a few socially viable choices is one of the functions of media, evident in *Alias*. That it remains an effective means of constraint is evident in the narratives of celebrities, bodies, beauty and media of the girls involved in the discussions that were part of my research.

The inclusion of inadvisable options among the possibilities for girls is apparent in the matter of choices and risks that the girls in the discussion groups articulated illustrates the false-front agency popularly affiliated with the third wave, despite that it does not reflect the scope and accomplishments of feminists who both value and have learned from the second wave and worked to expand upon second-wave gains, not eclipse them. These discussions also revealed the pull of conventional morality: in this case, if we accept a superficial form of agency, girls seemingly have an array of opportunities and so a girl's "bad" choices in matters of sexuality and appearance, for example, seem foolish and irresponsible because presumably she could have made good ones. The situation then becomes the girl's own fault and not a matter of social structure, the latter which would require social action in order to change – and is affiliated with the second wave.

Morality in any case is structured through space and performance and public and private – which also are distinctly gendered. And what I saw in Starbucks indicates conventional gender norms are alive and well. Refusing or opposing these norms is certainly an option, but not an option of expansion but rather of being in contrast to

conventional, moral culture and of being an outsider. As my reading of *Alias* points out, a girl can choose this, but she might be sorry. Media maps such as *Alias* might conscribe girls into conventional femininity even as they find it unchallenging. But perhaps because in the end Sydney seemed to the girls unremarkable, the girls' relationships to this and other TV programs and mass culture texts demonstrate that the stakes of inappropriate gender performance are high. At the same time, these narratives made claims of encouraging difference and broadening standards of femininity.

As illustrated through the discussions among girls analyzed here in chapter four, one result is that for the young women I listened to risks seem only to be valued only if they have a determinedly positive outcome: they are not valued as actions in themselves (for example, as illustrations of potential for improvement or, when risks result in bad outcomes, as learning experiences). This was evident when the girls talked about plastic surgery and about what counts as authentic performance.

The centrality of a feminine image or character does not mean she is necessarily active and empowered and, as Mulvey has argued (1989), in fact might substantially alter the narrative so that it becomes one of melodrama and reinscription into conventional sex/gender norms, with the breaking out of them simply a plot device requiring resolution. In identifying the gaze of the *flaneuse*, always female, as it is distinct from that of the male *flaneur*, Anne Friedberg points to women's positions as viewer/consumers and thus passive rather than viewer/producers, with a woman's sense of empowerment coming from her ability to buy what she sees as rooted in the nineteenth century but strongly held today. Alongside women's precarious situation if roaming the

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streets alone and making connections and critiques of public life, as would the *flaneur*, these restrictions indicate the limits of women's ability to experience the world on her own to spaces of consumption and, as Friedberg points out, the reliance on visual literacy to reproduce social structure:

> The flaneuse appeared in the public spaces – department stores – made possible by the new configurations of consumer culture. The flaneuse was empowered in a paradoxical sense: new freedoms of lifestyle and "choice" were available, but, as feminist theorists have amply illustrated, women were addressed as consumers in ways that played on deeply rooted cultural constructions of gender (1990:34).[40]

If femininity and adolescence are alike in turning to spaces of consumption to meet their needs for liminal spaces (Bettis and Adams 2005), as described in my analysis of gender and generational interaction in Starbucks, there is a crucial difference between these aspects of identity. Adolescence is, arguably, a temporary state, while the category of woman is far less so. For adolescents, the effects of abstraction might disappear once past this phase and no longer necessarily subject to regulation by abstract forces. This is what we mean when we tell someone to "grow up," that they need to fall in line with adult standards and diminish actions which appear childlike in their irrationality: to claim the right of autonomy. The extension of adolescence into one's twenties and thirties is situated as a choice rather than an imposed state of being; it carries an assumption that the state of adolescence can be left behind at will, and perhaps even taken up again depending on the situation. Any attempt to transition out of womanhood or to attempt to expand or even avoid it is far more difficult and carries substantial stigma.

A form of femininity which accepts visibility as a tactic of empowerment without consideration of the context or reception of the visible body is problematic. The desire to locate and identify authenticity of self and others alongside convincing performative ability and fluid identity creates confusions about the location and situation of this elusive authentic self. How we determine when and where there is no deception in a social interaction, in Goffman's sense, reveals snags at the intersection of gender, space and media in the form of confusion not just of what counts as appropriately gendered behavior, but, importantly, who determines whether female subjectivity is one of multiplicity and thus with agency, or instead is fragmented in a way that disallows any substantive empowerment for girls and women. Defining what it means to be a girl and a woman and what constitutes femininity is inevitably complicated and nuanced. One response to this problem has been to subscribe to a system of "it depends": it depends on the culture, the situation, the particular body in question, so we should judge only ourselves and not others for whom we can never know the complete circumstances. This mindset points to the value of being able to compartmentalize different aspects of identity: to manage different embodiments and behaviors required by a variety of everyday situations: student, worker, or mother, for example. It seems like this might diminish the likelihood of inappropriate behavior which could lead to embarrassment or even ostracism from one's community.

Appropriate respect of boundaries as limits promises us inclusion within a community or social world (Lamont and Fournier 1992). Boundaries between our world and others suggest either safety from outside threats or, alternately, restriction of our

ability to move beyond our world; it would depend on one's point of view. Determining which boundaries originate in and structure the natural world and which relate to the symbolic is problematic: human-made boundaries, physical or cultural, over time fuse with those deemed natural by virtue of affiliation with some form of science such as geology or biology. At stake in these determinations is what things we can change and what might be beyond our control.

In response to these problems of identification Lamont and Fournier call for a "typology of boundaries" that would catalog boundary determinations across disciplines. This strategy would allow us to question the criteria used in any boundary's creation and regulation and then map the foundations of all kinds of classification systems. This cultural cartography might suggest a map so large and detailed that it covers the size and scope of the original area, such as the one imagined by Jorge Luis Borges in the brief story *Of Exactitude in Science* (1975) as both misspent labor and, when forgotten, lost history.[41] In this case, drawing red lines through most of the map to signal these regions as dangerous, as happened to me in the train station, suggests not just an imaginary or suggested course, but rather the scope of real constraints that exist for people without the power to define femininity outside a narrow norm.

Borges' map might be useful, however, if seen as a means rather than an end. The function and structure of maps reflects a system's priorities as well as its geography, as Borges' story suggests, so that mapping and deciphering maps are political and ideological acts (Harvey 1989). We use mapping and navigation, knowing where to go and what to avoid, in all forms of social negotiation. If we constantly interrogate the

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bases for exclusionary rules and passages from one state to another, as in the case of the girl and her friends in Starbucks, we learn a great deal about sources of power and the means by which dominance reproduces itself. Then the "mapmaking" is not simply a reiteration of what we think we know about our world but instead a reflexive strategy for questioning power structures.

But the means and roles of mapping have changed to suggest a rethinking of the dimensions of social space. We appear less interested in defining space so that we understand its interiors (what lies in a country; where to locate the bad parts of a town, who lives on the outskirts and who in the center) and more concerned about the boundaries themselves for purposes of inclusion and exclusion and as absolute directions on how to get from one place to another. For example, why would we need to read a map when we have readily available authoritative guides which provide a single set of directions, such as global positioning systems and Google Maps? It is not that the other routes are forbidden, it is rather that they are not immediately apparent and must be specifically requested by the traveler in a way that diminishes the original plan. If we accept the initial driving directions without examining the broader landscape we may not be aware of the scope and diversity of options. We are given the best way to travel and while we can select different routes and travel methods, we are still presented with one way that is stated as the best: the ideal way to get somewhere

If space and social interactions are mutually constituted, the value of fluid identity in social relations suggests spatial boundaries are also readily changeable depending on context. However, how these are determined is not for everyone a matter of choice, and

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rarely is for subordinate individuals and groups, a problem in always equating plasticity with empowerment. If, as Victor Burgin argues, there is: "No space of representation without a subject, and no subject without a space it is not. No subject, therefore, without a boundary" (1996:52), it might follow that a self without clear definition – a one "true" self, in the girls' words—is more easily made incoherent. A second problem is whether the agency ascribed to an ideal self in any situation transfers to agency in any other presentation of self. All identities are regulated by norms, and changeable identity would thus mean adherence to a different set of standards, different boundaries of what is appropriate based on space and identity. This seems to require hypervigilance of the self, a constant checking and rechecking of our behavior, dress and other signs to assure a seamless – authentic – performance. This anxious self-regulation has a feminine ring to it, as John Berger wrote in the early 1970s:

> To be born a woman has been to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. The social presence of women has developed as a result of their ingenuity in living under such tutelage within such a limited space. But this has been at the cost of a woman's self being split into two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself (1977:45-46).

Men and boys increasingly face problems of split subjectivity in needing to inhabit a variety of selves and not always in situations in which they make the rules. Joss Whedon, whose career creating television girl heroes (including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and more recently in the show *Dollhouse*) has been defined by questions of girl power

and feminism, has stated that in creating strong female characters he seeks to address male identification with a conventionally feminine sense of self:

> I think there's something particular about a female protagonist that allows a man to identify with her, that opens up something … an aspect of himself he might be unable to express: hopes and desires he might be uncomfortable expressing through a male identification figure. So it really crosses across both, and I think it helps people in that way. (Whedon 2006).

Whedon's remarks here, made in a speech to the explicitly feminist organization Equality Now, articulate changes in perceptions of space and social relations such that interstices and points of connection are valued. John Berger describes images of advertising he calls "publicity," existing in the present but almost always never referring to it, instead, "Often they refer to the past and always they speak of the future" (130). This reference to other times without recognizing the effect of the present reflects the sense of community which can be formed through mediated communication, and particularly in the sharing of visual images over space as well as time. This has profound implications for visible bodies in terms of recognition and the public sphere (Fraser 1996).

One aspect of the public sphere as defined by Habermas (1974; 1986) is the location, whether physical or for media representational, of access to information and a venue in which to be heard. Public has the quality of visibility: the potential to be seen and known in the service of social maintenance or, possibly, readjustment. A view of private, then, might promise that an individual not be accountable for social problems, a

direct refusal of Beauvoir's formulation of authenticity. Privacy suggests a sense of being untouchable outside very specific and limited conditions and without permission by the regulating authority. In the home this would be the parents; in a retail space it is the manager, the business owner and the property owner. In this case, those with the most access to privacy (of information or of space) are least subject to regulation, a formula correlating ownership and autonomy.

Considering Lefebvre's warning about lack of agency when functioning under abstraction, it seems that the people who lose the most are those whose definitions of these terms hold little weight and who are left wondering what the difference is between public and private in any situation. Private can be safe but it can also be dangerous for people who have little voice in setting the rules of public and private, including women and children. As illustrated in the girls' discussions of media and bodies, it can be shameful to turn private issues into public ones. This shame results in part from concerns about modesty and propriety, but also from anxieties that such displays might lead to recognition of private injustices that force public discussion of issues of identity and power, never comfortable conversations. The space of the private as equated with personal and intimate, and as represented by notions of "home" has value in its function as a safe haven for some authentic, core self to be stored and brought out at will. If we can not be sure what is in public or kept private – what information, which images, for example, are safe from scrutiny – then we can not be confident in performance or there seems to be no place of rest from performance in which to locate an idealized self.

At issue here is less the presentation (of woman) and reception (by those who see her), and more about autonomy and expanding norms which might be accomplished through transgression. A transgression is a violation, but it also is a going beyond, a refusal to accept a restrictive boundary, and is fundamentally spatial (Bell and Binnie 1994). It is possible to consider transgression as a single momentary act that is the instant of a border crossing; I propose that transgression is also a situated state of being that can be sustained over time and further push beyond so that the boundaries themselves change.

Images in media (and art, and other places) establish female bodies as within the gaze and then carve up our bodies into separate zones, each with a distinct purpose and prescribed meaning (Mulvey 1975). Ascribing specific meanings of the feminine to breasts, eyes and lips, for example, each representing some different aspect of femininity, positions women as valuable in pieces: abstracted rather than coherent. This understanding of the body dictates that parts stand in for concepts and assumptions rather than an integral part of a subject. At the same time, collapsing the meanings of fragmentation (a dismembered subject) and multiplicity (a fluid subjectivity) suggests a problem between second wave and third wave feminisms which seems to be over lipstick and clothing but which in fact is more complicated. For girls, the choices affiliated with different feminisms become struggles over authenticity: in "becoming" in Beauvoir's term by taking action; and in self-definition through careful maintenance of context. This is also the basis for Benjamin's concerns about dissemination of images. It makes sense for a girl to seek resolution in consumption in a place such as Starbucks, where she has

already established citizenship and knows she is welcome with the condition of appropriate femininity.

Mass dissemination of our own images through digital culture provides opportunity for visibility and possible empowerment, but also decreases our ability to control those images so that we are distanced from our desired context or historical specificity and our intention misconstrued as immoral. Try as we might on Facebook and similar mediated communities, it is very difficult to go about the world explaining every personal contingency. Ultimately, we do not always get to choose the context in which we are understood. However, this form of social relationship deserves more exploration in spatial terms, as does the presentation of self to an international public on forums such as YouTube. Visibility does not necessarily lead to agency if the visible body lacks control of the context, specifically the space and place, in which she is visible. It also does not mean that her visible body will not be dismembered, representationally, so that all that is left are the different parts, standing in for concepts rather than personhood – Lefebvre pointed to this in terms of cohesion and abstraction and as it particularly applies to subordinate populations. This "taken out of context" seems to me to be instead a claim that conditions are not accurately represented: the time and place not enough qualified, in order that the "whole picture," meaning the true story, be available for consumption.

APPENDIX A: GIRL HERO TV

This list contains popular and notable television series featuring female heroes who in different capacities embody some form of girl power or *grrrl* power. I have not included the large body of anime featuring girl heroes. All shows listed here aired for at least three episodes and all were available at some point on network or cable television.

Notable Women and Girls with Power(s), 1960 – 1979
The Avengers (1961)
Bewitched (NW, 1964-1972)
Bionic Woman (1976-1978)
Charlie's Angels (1976-1981)
Honey West (1965-1966)
I Dream of Jeannie (1965-1970)
Police Woman (1974-1978)
Wonder Woman (1976-1979)

Notable Film Remakes of 1960s & 1970s Girl Hero Shows, 1990-2009
The Avengers (YR)
Charlie's Angels (2000 & 2003)
Bewitched (2005)
I Dream of Jeannie (in production, 2009)

Girl Hero Television Shows, **1990-2009**
These shows focused on one or more female action or supernaturally powered girls and women. These shows ran three or more episodes. This list does not include shows that went directly to DVD or were only available online. The + symbol indicates the show was still running new episodes at the time of publication.

Aeon Flux (1991-1995)
Atomic Betty (2004-2008)
Avenging Angel (1995)
Bionic Woman (remake, 2007)
Birds of Prey (2002-2003)
Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-2003)
Charmed (1998-2006)
Cleopatra 2525 (2000-2001)
Dark Angel (2000-2002)
Dollhouse (2009)
Kim Possible (2002-2007)
La Femme Nikita (1997-2001)

Powerpuff Girls (1998-2009)
Relic Hunter (1999-2002)
Sailor Moon (1995-2000)
The Sarah Connor Chronicles (2008+)
She Spies (2002-2004)
V.I.P. (1998-2002)
Witchblade (2001-2002)
Xena: Warrior Princess (1995-2001)

Changes in Place/Scene in Order of Appearance (64)
*chron. indicates the location follows the previous one chronologically.

1. Torture Room: Sydney held under water, being tortured (flash forward)
2. Classroom: taking exam (flash back)
3. Campus Lawn: marriage proposal (chron.)
4. Front porch of her house: Talking with Francie about being engaged (chron.)
5. Kitchen table: Next morning, talking with Francie (chron.)
6. Hospital payphone: Danny on the phone with Jack (flashback).
7. Los Angeles street outside Credit Dauphine building/SD6 office (chron. from 5).
8. SD 6 office lobby (chron.)
9. SD 6 office (chron.)
10. SD 6 office meeting room (chron.)
11. Running track at the university (chron.)
12. Sydney's apartment living room, with Danny (chron.)
13. Bathroom/shower with Danny (chron.)
14. Torture room, Taipei (flash forward)
15. Freshman year of college (flashback)
16. Outdoors with Danny, industrial area (chron. from 13)
17. SD6 training facility (flashback)
18. Industrial area (chron. from 16)
19. Airplane, on the way to Taipei (chron.)
20. Taipei street (chron.)
21. Formal reception/spy mission Taipei (chron.)
23. Danny's apartment (simultaneous with 21)
24. Reception building stairway/spy mission (chron. from 21)
25. Scene rapidly moves back and forth between Sydney's spy mission and Danny's apartment as he leaves the message (simultaneous events)
26. SD 6 surveillance room (simultaneous with 25)
27. SD 6 IT lab (chron. from 26)
28. Sloane's office at SD 6 (chron.)
29. Reception building as Sydney attempts to carry out her mission (simultaneous with 28)
30. Sloane's office, with Jack (simultaneous with 29)
31. Los Angeles airport reception area after Taipei mission (chron.)
32. Danny's apartment (chron.)
33. Hospital, Sydney takes Danny when she finds him dead (chron.)
34. Sydney's car, she is driving (chron.)
35. SD 6, Sloane's office when Sydney confronts him (chron.)
36. SD 6 interrogation room (chron.)
37. Torture room (flash forward)

38.   Cemetery (chron. from 36)
39.   Sydney's house after funeral (chron.)
40.   Sydney's bedroom (chron.)
41.   Classroom, graduate school (chron., several months later)
42.   Outside classroom building (chron.)
43.   Restaurant (chron.)
44.   Parking Garage (chron.)
45.   Jack's car (chron.)
46.   Rendezvous point with Jack (chron., but later)
47.   Outside, night, Sydney on foot (chron.)
48.   Torture room (flash forward)
49.   Will's newsroom (chron. from 47)
50.   Will's office roof (chron.)
51.   Gas station bathroom (chron.)
52.   Airport, ticket counter (chron.)
53.   Taipei public bathroom (chron.)
54.   Taipei alley (chron.)
55.   Outside Reception building from original mission (chron).
56.   Torture room, Taipei (chron.)
57.   Reception building outside torture room (chron.)
58.   Lab with mysterious device (chron.)
59.   Sloane's office, Los Angeles (chron.)
60.   Los Angeles city streets, daytime, Sydney on foot (chron.)
61.   CIA lobby (chron.)
62.   CIA briefing room (chron.)
63.   Vaughn's office, CIA (chron.)
64.   Cemetery (chron.; the last scene in the episode)

Discrete Locations (38)

1	College (undergraduate), outside
2	Hospital
3	SD6 training facility
4	Classroom, graduate school
5	Graduate school campus, outside
6-10	Sydney's home, including: outside, kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, living room)
11	Running track, university
12-18	SD6 office, including outside, lobby, elevator, entryway, "work" room, Sloane's office, interrogation room)
19	Hilltop industrial area, outside
20	Airplane
21	Danny's apartment

22-26	Reception Building, Taipei, including: outside, large ballroom, staircase, lab, torture room)
27	Cemetery
28	Restaurant
29	Parking Garage
30	Jack's car
31	LA streets, day
32	LA streets, night
33	Gas station bathroom
34	Will's newsroom
35	Will's office roof
36-38	CIA (includes lobby, briefing room, office)

Chronology of Events, *Alias* Pilot

1. Sydney as a college undergraduate, she is approached by a recruiter for the CIA, and subsequently agrees to go through training to work for the CIA.
2. Sydney goes through arduous physical training while still an undergraduate and after. She starts graduate school and continues to work for the CIA, which she does not know is SD6. Her cover is that she is working for an international bank but she is really an international spy involved in dangerous missions.
3. Seven years after first being recruited, Sydney's would-be fiancé Danny telephones her father Jack to say he is proposing to Sydney.
4. On the campus lawn of Sydney's graduate school, Danny proposes to Sydney. Soon after, Sydney tells her housemate and best friend Francie about her engagement. At breakfast the next day, they discuss Sydney's troubled relationship with her father.
5. That day, Sydney goes to the CIA/SD6 office and receives an assignment that will require her to travel to Taiwan.
6. Before leaving on her assignment, Sydney is in her apartment with Danny and decides to tell him about her real job as a spy. Danny gets angry and leaves.
7. After this but before the assignment, Sydney and Danny meet to discuss her work situation and their pending marriage, and they fight again.
8. Sydney travels to Taiwan. As she is carrying out her mission, Danny is drunk and leaves a voice mail on her home phone telling her that he can accept that she is a spy. The call is monitored by SD6, and Sydney's boss Sloane determines that Danny must be killed. Immediately, Sloane has Danny killed in his apartment under the orders of Sydney's father Jack, who is working for SD6.
9. Sydney returns from Taiwan and goes directly from the airport to Danny's apartment, where she finds him dead.
10. The next day, Sydney goes to the SD6 office and emotionally expresses her anger to her boss Sloane, having figured out that he had Danny killed. She is interrogated by an SD6 psychiatric evaluator.

11. Sydney attends Danny's funeral and takes a leave of absence from SD6.
12. A few months later, Sydney is still has not returned to SD6 and Sloane has sent her partner, Dixon, to tell her she needs to return. She does not want to.
13. A short time later (days or weeks), after eating alone at a café Sydney is attacked in the parking garage and rescued by her father Jack. She finds out he is working for SD6 and also that SD6 is not part of the CIA, but rather a rogue organization.
14. Sydney disappears and makes plans to return to Taipei as part of her own mission to avenge Danny's death by bringing down SD6 from the inside.
15. She returns to Taipei to the site of her original mission and is about to complete her own mission by capturing a mysterious device when she is captured and tortured (the first scene in the pilot).
16. Sydney escapes with the device and returns to SD6, bloody and dirty, presenting the device as proof of her loyalty. She leaves SD6 and immediately goes to the real CIA offices in Los Angeles to sign up as a double agent.
17. Sydney visits Danny's grave and is met by her father, also a double agent.

APPENDIX C: DISCUSSION-BASED RESEARCH

Overview
The discussion sessions were carried out in Virginia: Arlington County; Fairfax County; and the City of Fairfax. All but one of the participants (a college student) had attended or were currently attending middle school/high school in the region.

College students enrolled in schools in other parts of the state or other states all indicated they considered the broader DC-Metropolitan area as their home, even those who did not plan to reside there after college.

Total Number of Participants: 22

All participants and if minors their parents/guardians signed consent forms agreeing to take part in the discussions and to be audio-taped for this research. The consent forms adhered to standards of ethical and responsible research. All participants and if relevant their parents/guardians were informed of their ability to opt out of this project at any time.

Participants were recruited through word of mouth, through friends, neighbors and colleagues.

Location and Situation
Three of the sessions took place in private homes. In each of these instances, I offered the option of holding the discussion in a public room such as in a local community center or library; in all cases the participants preferred their own homes. For the session which took place in a college dormitory compound I had a point of contact in the university's housing office who obtained the room and publicized the discussion, which was open to all dorm residents.

Since these were open discussions and not presuming a specific agenda as might be expected in a more formal focus group, I went to each session with a set of general questions in order to get the conversation started or revive the discussion if it seemed to be at a standstill. These questions included:

Do you have time to watch TV at all?

Is there any show that you really can't miss?

When you are doing other things, like homework or talking on the phone, and you have the TV on, what kinds of things are on?

Who do you really admire on television?

In all sessions, I asked a specific question about Alias within the first 20 minutes of the discussion: *Did you ever watch the show Alias?*
This question was never received with much enthusiasm, although in some cases the girls did want to talk about Jennifer Garner.

In all sessions at the end of the session I asked: *What do you see yourself doing in 10 or 15 years? Do you know what kind of career you would like to have? Do you plan to marry or live with a partner, and do you think you will have children?*

While in three of the sessions the conversation flowed easily and stayed within a range of topics relevant to this project, I also developed questions as the conversation moved along based on what the discussants had already said, including but not limited to:

Why do you think you like to watch [name of show]?

Do your friends watch the same show?

Which women on TV do you think are beautiful?

Do you watch TV shows online? Which ones?

Age Distribution

13	2 participants
14	1 participant
15	2 participants
16	8 participants
17	0
18	0
19	1 participant
20	2 participants
21	6 participants

Attending college:	8
Some college but not currently enrolled:	1
Attending high school:	10
Attending middle school:	3

Race, Ethnicity and Cultural Affiliation
Cultural Affiliation (in the words of the participants)

African	1

Asian	3
Eurasian	1
Greek	1
Jewish	1
Latina	1
White	3
No stated affiliation	11

Stated Goals for Adulthood

In describing hoped and imagined careers/career areas, some girls stated more than one option; a few did not specify. Those in college, unsurprisingly, overall were more confident about their goals and what needed to be done to achieve them. A few of the high school girls had a clear plan for their future, and a few college students said they were considering two or three divergent directions.

All categories included girls spread out over all four groups rather than one career, including Visual and Performing Arts, being concentrated on one or two groups.

Visual and Performing Arts: 12
Acting 4
Photography 2
Film industry other than acting 2
Painting/illustration 1
Writing for theater1
Directing 1
Musician (classical) 1

Education: 6
Teaching 3
Education administration 1
Arts education 2

Social Services and Humanitarian Work: 6
Human rights 3
International Development, non-profit 1
Therapy/counseling 1
Social work 1

Fashion and Design: 3
Interior design 2
Fashion magazine 1

Media: 3
    Journalism 2
    News broadcasting 1

Literary: 2
    Children's book author/illustrator 1
    Writer 1

Medical: 2
    Nursing 1
    Veterinarian 1

Law: 2
    Attorney 1
    Law school but not be an attorney 1

Family Structure

Marriage/partnership and children: 9
Marriage/partnership, uncertain or did not specify about children: 2
Children, uncertain or did not specify about marriage/partnership: 10
Did not specify about marriage/partnership or children: 1
Stating they wanted neither marriage/partnership nor children: 0

Individual Group Demographic and Other Information

Group 1
8 participants
Ages: 13 (2); 14 (1); 16 (5).
1 identified as African
1 identified as Asian
3 identified as white
3 did not identify race/ethnicity.

Group 2
5 participants
Ages: 15 (2); 16 (3).
2 identified as Asian.
3 did not identify race/ethnicity.

Group 3

3 participants
Ages: 19 (1); 20 (1); 21 (1).
1 identified as Asian
1 identified as Latina
1 did not identify race/ethnicity.

Group 4
6 participants
Ages: 21 (6).
No participants identified race/ethnicity.

NOTES

[1] Many local service industry workers in this regional area are Latino, many of whom have immigrated from Central and South America as adults and whose primary language is Spanish. The barista had no trace accent of a native Spanish speaker in his speech which, given his apparent age of early 20s and that his speech patterns mirrored those of local young people, suggested all or most of his life had been spent in the region.

[2] Demographic data taken from the 2000 Census shows that within this Starbucks' zip code, 70 percent or more of people over age 25 have a bachelor's degree or above and 30 percent hold a graduate or professional degree (Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development 2009).

[3] See the 1997 special issue of *Hypatia*, 12(2), dedicated to third-wave feminism.

[4] This concern with intent and reception reflects Stuart Hall's discussion of representation and different practices of reading an image or representation regardless of dominant standards and producer intention (Hall 1997).

[5] This was supported in the discussion-based research I conducted; *Alias* also never earned high Nielsen ratings among any single demographic although its popularity level overall was fairly consistent.

[6] The crime procedurals, including the *CSI* franchise, *Without a Trace*, *Criminal Minds* and *NCIS*, have some of the more interesting female characters in post-millennial television: women affiliated with science and reason. In 2002, The National Organization for Women cited *CSI Miami* and *Without a Trace*, both still running new episodes as of 2009, as including "promising" representations of women (Bennett 2002). For further reading on this, see: Colatrella 2006.

[7] Bettis and Adams (2005) have discussed the heightened interest in girls beginning in the 1990s, including the numerous books about girls' development and social relations published (for example: Lees 1993; Pipher 1994; Orenstein 1994; and Sadker and Sadker, 1995). 1992 was labeled The Year of the Woman in politics and popular culture after more women than usual ran and were elected to Congress following Anita Hill's testimony involving charges of sexual harassment in the hearings on Clarence Thomas' nomination to the Supreme Court, and Hill's treatment by male Senators (U.S. House of Representatives, n.d.).

[8] Garner was at the time married to actor Scott Foley. They later divorced and in 2005 she and actor Ben Affleck were married.

[9] Examples of text from other promotional images featuring Garner as Sydney included, "Not just a secret agent. She's a secret weapon," and, "Expect the unexpected," the latter for the season in which Sydney was pregnant. For a more detailed analysis of *Alias* promotional material see David Roger Coon's article on marketing and action heroines (2005).

[10] Music and sound also are important to establishing spatial and identity differences in *Alias*. Both diegetic and non-diegetic music (the show has a score as well as integrating other songs) are used to elicit emotion and also indicate Sydney's situation in a given scene. When Sydney is having a "real" emotional moment, artists and songs signifying sentimentality and femininity are part of the narrative, for example Cat Stevens and Sinead O'Connor. When Sydney functions as a spy and engaged in stealth or adventure, the music is generally non-diegetic techno/house music with a heavy base line, some of it composed by series creator J.J. Abrams.

[11] Outdoor scenes were filmed at UCLA's campus in the Westwood section of Los Angeles.

[12] Garner was quoted as saying: "Shooting the garage scene was the best day of my life. … It was the most fun I've ever had, but I did go overboard and I did get really into it" (Walter 2001).

[13] While a traditional American soap opera functions around a web of characters of changing importance, *Alias* has a clear protagonist around whom all other action revolves, resembling in this way a classic telenovela. Other aspects Sydney also found in telenovela heroines are that Sydney is a motherless young woman in a situation over which she does not have complete control, and that she is surrounded by a series of men who in some way want her and/or want to protect her.

[14] It is interesting to me that the group that was most diverse in terms of race and ethnic identification seemed to be the most open in discussing race and ethnicity in reference to themselves and also celebrities, a relationship worth exploring in a future study. The girls in this group who were close friends were largely from different cultural backgrounds and some of their parents had immigrated to the United States. This group's comfort level might be attributed to the fact that several were friends who attended the same school and so saw one another daily; most of them seemed comfortable joking with one another without malice about both accepting and embodying cultural stereotypes.

[15] HBO programming over the last decade instigated a category of "quality" television positioned as a form of high popular culture with status similar to that of serious cinema.

[16] *Scrubs* is a situation comedy which aired for seven seasons on ABC and then moved to NBC. It follows a group of young doctors in the fictitious Sacred Heart Hospital. Its hallmarks include voice-overs by the lead character, hearing what characters are thinking but not stating aloud, silly dream-like sequences that might include song and dance, and brutally honest diatribes by the main characters.

[17] Not one participant admitted to being a fan of *Alias* at any time. While none indicated they had particular dislike for the show, this may be in part because I presented it as a point of reference at the beginning of each session and they may not have wanted to offend me in case I was a fan.

[18] Expectations for plot and character development for these two films would likely differ based on film genres. *13 Going on 30* was marketed as a mass-appeal romantic comedy, while *Juno* was marketed as an independent film thus holding the

promise that in some way the film would defy convention, regardless of the actual conditions and cost of production.

[19] The disempowerment suggested by these options has been addressed in film and television theory and criticism repeatedly and over many years as calls for more and better representations of identities not white and male from the producers of these images: network executives, show creators, directors and writers, for example.

[20] A reference to two trendy chain clothing stores catering to young people, Hollister and Abercrombie & Fitch, both owned by the same corporation.

[21] This last opportunity was been examined in numerous feature films, television and popular sociology books since the late 1980s which represented girlhood as either a treacherous navigation among cliques of "mean girls" or else girl protagonist's ambivalence about inclusion in such a clique, including *Heathers* (Lehmann 1988), TV shows like *Popular* (Murphy and Matthews 1999), and the self-help, or rather help-your-daughter, guidebook *Queen Bees and Wannabees: Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends, and Other Realities of Adolescence* (Wiseman 2002) which was the basis for the film *Mean Girls* (Waters 2004).

[22] Naomi Wolf (2009) in *Harper's Bazaar* women's fashion and lifestyle magazine has explored this generation of girls' fascination with Jolie and determined it is due to their perception of Jolie as having made all the right choices and done so despite what is perceived as a reckless youth.

[23] In all but one discussion session participants brought up these and similar unscripted ("reality") television shows without my prompting, and the only group that did not discuss these shows was one in which the host family clearly indicated they felt much popular culture, particularly television, was degrading to women, overly sexualized, and too violent to be appropriate for teenagers -- and for adults was simply a sign of poor taste. The group in which these did not specifically come up had some discussion of reality TV, but early in the session some participants suggested anything more risqué than *American Idol* was inappropriate for teenagers and children, which likely stopped further mention. The only other "reality" show specifically cited during this session was *The Hills*, which one girl described as illustrating "bad" values, and the others nodded in agreement; later in the session a few of the girls made comments which suggested they did watch and enjoy *The Hills*.

[24] The low value placed on this show did not reflect the level interest in it: while most claimed to barely watch it, and usually while doing something else, like sleeping, homework or talking on the phone, several participants had fairly deep knowledge of the show and were able to describe scenes and characters in great detail.

[25] *The Hills* episodes are aired months after filming ends, but celebrity gossip culture and the omnipresence of entertainment industry news mean that the public knows far before air date some of the plot outcomes and what cast members are doing.

[26] I have given them aliases here.

[27] All of the discussion sessions included as part of the conversation (without any prompt from me) the centrality of casual dining places to high school life, and the girls said they patronized these places far more frequently than shopping malls. The criteria for

choosing favorite places included being walking distance from school, even if driving there. They also complained about the cost of eating at these places, particularly as some of them went there almost every day.

[28] Gaudio's (2005) research indicates coffee houses were not, actually safe, and that crime and fighting took place in them. .

[29] I also observed other Starbucks and a few independent coffee houses in other local neighborhoods that were within a 10-minute walk of high schools and a middle school. These observations along with the discussion sessions indicate interesting areas for further research which I hope to undertake, including: differences in young people's consumption of space and leisure time in relation to regional planning and local values expressed in other parts of their lives, particularly the school system; and the comparative function of different coffee-oriented meeting places, including informal social groups and private homes, in meeting community needs.

[30] Neighborhood demographic estimates show a population within one mile of the shopping center of around 17,500: 86 percent White, 6 percent Latino and 5 percent Black or African American, 4 percent Asian. Eighty-five percent of the working population is listed as "White Collar;" 7 percent "Blue Collar" and 8 percent "Service and Farm." Average household income for 2007 was estimated at $144,000 (A.J. Dwoskin 2008). Total county population for 2008 was estimated to be 208,000 in 2008, with more than 7,000 people per square mile (Arlington County 2009).

[31] Set to each side of the strip but in stand-alone buildings are a Baskin Robbins ice cream store, a Thai restaurant that has been there for at least 30 years, and on the other side a bank branch which shares a building with a tanning salon.

[32] The square footage is based on management company promotional information which identifies the entire strip as having 114,200 square feet of retail and business space. The grocery store takes up approximately 49,000 square feet (Dwoskin 2009).

[33] Although I have no official confirmation, my observations indicate likely drug dealing in cars and surreptitious alcohol consumption both in cars and immediately outside the store; anecdotal evidence from community members who were teenagers at that time supports my suspicions.

[34] While Soja (1996) specifically cites feminist work on space as both rich and crucial to any consideration of space, he also discusses women's scholarship as marginal in both content and status.

[35] For a detailed discussion of thirdspace and the way Starbucks and Schultz position "third place" see Gaudio (2003).

[36] I heard him say this in a conversation with a customer outside the store; an employee in another store in the strip confirmed this but expressed concern about whether it was permitted to reveal this information. The management company did not respond to my attempts to speak with them via email and phone.

[37] "Free" is questionable because wireless access requires payment in some form to Starbucks. Access is through the Starbucks Reward program: the customer must have a Starbucks Card, basically a debit card, and have used it within the past thirty days either

to make a purchase or to load a balance on to the card. The internet connection is through Starbucks' partnership with AT&T.

[38] This figure comes from a research initiative of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and accounts for total waking hours, including when school is not in session The research of Juster, Ono & Stafford (2004) indicated students spend 32.5 hours per week in school when school is in session, which does not include the hours during summer and other holiday stretches when schools are closed. These estimates are not contradictory.

[39] Goffman's definition of stigmatized individual is as follows: "…an individual who might have been received easily in ordinary social intercourse possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he meets away from him, breaking the claim that other attributes have on us." Stigma as a social factor, then: "…will be used to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting, but it should be seen that a language of relationships, not attributes, is really needed" (1963:5).

[40] Friedberg positions the department store of the flaneuse as in contrast to Walter Benjamin's arcades (Benjamin 1999).

[41] In *Thirdspace* (1996), Edward Soja references Borges' story "El Aleph" (1974) which is about a point in space from which everything in the universe is visible at once; many of Borges' works address perceptions of space.

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