

Representations of Identity: Canadian Girls and Pop Culture

by
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Project Report
Film Title: *What Girls Are Made Of?*

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I. Project Description

A. Synopsis

At Memorial University of Newfoundland there are three options to fulfill thesis requirements for a Master's Degree in Women's Studies: a written thesis, an internship or a project. I chose the latter, which has taken the form of a documentary film that consists of interviews with four girls from across Canada. These girls share ways that they construct, reproduce, and challenge identity categories represented in dominant forms of media. They explore themes such as body image, race and gender.

For this project, I traveled over the course of four months from St. John's to Vancouver and back, stopping in major cities along the way. Many of the cities I visited had been my home at one point or another. I anticipated that the journey was going to be as much about my own struggles with concepts of 'home' and 'identity' as it would be about the thesis topic itself. By including excerpts from a blog I kept during my travels I invite the audience to share this personal odyssey¹.

I chose to include myself in the film project because I believe that the way a researcher comes to choose her topic, conduct her studies and finally produce a body of work cannot be entirely separate from her personal experience. Yet the self is often written out of research creating what Donna Haraway refers to as the

¹ I am referring to a diary that is published on the Internet. My entire blog is available in Appendix A and was originally published at: <http://pinkpom.diaryland.com>.

“god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere” (192). Writing from nowhere also assumes a particular type of reader - an assumed audience. In *Troubling Women's Studies*, Susan Heald says:

That my students could not understand these articles, which again were in relatively plain language with little high theory, showed me that the education system had done them the disservice of teaching them only to read what was addressed to them. This, in turn, helped me to see how many of the autobiographic writings I was assigning were also not addressed to that middle-of-the-road white girl. She, like all of us who are in any way positioned within the dominant norm, needs to expand her capacities to read if she is to engage with the many writers who speak from multiple and often marginalized locations (Braithwaite et al. 70).

It is difficult to write to an audience other than the “middle-of-the-road white girl” (Braithwaite et al. 70) when the researcher fits within this assumed norm. Perhaps by addressing our position and being self-reflexive we can work towards a more honest approach in creating bodies of work.

B. Why A Film

I wanted my thesis to take the form of an alternative text and creating a film allowed me to add a layer of meaning through imagery, body language and facial expressions visual clues otherwise missing in a written project. A film is

also accessible to non-academics and could increase the amount of people who might engage with the work. Screening the video in a classroom or youth group or even at a film festival might inspire discussion among viewers and therefore disseminate and perpetuate this research in non-traditional ways.

Exploring identities that are constantly in flux is challenging for a film; the camera records and fixes only a small slice of time and the girls represent themselves as they are in their adolescent moment. It is hoped that these captured moments will reveal that identity categories are never completely fixed and that contradictory identities often exist simultaneously.

C. Initial Goals

When I began this project, my goals were to:

- Learn about ways girls construct, reproduce, and challenge identity
- Encourage discussion about ways in which marketing images affect Canadian adolescent girls
- Provide a forum for the girls I'm interviewing to discuss issues they may not have an opportunity to voice in their every-day lives
- Discover and explore influences on girls' behaviour

II. Relevance

Canada has increasingly become a media-saturated country with mass produced images being marketed from coast to coast, particularly targeting young girls regardless of their ethnicity, culture or socio-economic status. Adolescents between the ages of eight and fourteen are often referred to as

tweens and this is the age group that I chose to film². Girls' self-esteem drops rapidly during the tween years, the age group that advertisers are directly targeting. As Marnina Gonick points out in *Reading Selves, Refashioning Identity: Teen Magazines and Their Readers*, this is a time when girls "are negotiating consciously, perhaps for the first time who it is they are told they are and who it is they would like to be" (72). Catherine Driscoll also states, "girls' magazines, films, fashion and dance cultures, and pop music all produce modes of self-production in relation to groups... girls buy the Spice Girls as selves who might identify as 'girls' (named as the Spice Girls' audience). Not all girls will so identify, but what that identification means thus becomes the question for analysis..." (284). A large amount of money goes into commodities targeted to adolescents. According to *Sex Sells: Marketing and 'age compression'* "they spend \$1.7 billion of their own cash, and marketers know it..." (Sproule). Using a strategy coined 'age compression', marketers push "adult products and attitude on younger kids" (Sproule). Catherine Driscoll also explains that "by constructing certain consumer groups as innately, naturally, interested in specific products it is possible to sell an idea of belonging to groups, such as girls" (282). Gender stereotypes are often played up in popular media such as music videos, movies and advertising, reinforcing and prioritizing concepts of what is considered feminine and masculine. Having seen the diversity of Canada's landscape as well as its people first hand has led me to wonder how different

² See: *Sex Sells: Marketing and 'age compression'* produced by Tessa Sproule.

girls relate themselves to mass produced images and what choices they have in fashioning their identities.

III. Theoretical and Methodological Influences

A. Theoretical Framework

Judith Butler's theories about how sex and gender are constructed and perpetually imitated are particularly relevant to my film project. Butler famously states that "identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 25). Performing the gender "female" then re-constructs the characteristics that are said to be natural to the female sex. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler argues that sex is not a biological fact of the body and that it is also performed: "'sex' is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static condition of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize 'sex' and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms" (367). Norms are enforced through "ostracism, punishment, and violence" ("Imitation and Gender Insubordination" 24), making the performance mandatory. Gonick reveals in her article, "Reading Selves, Refashioning Identity: Teen Magazines and Their Readers", that adolescent girls are attracted to performing gender in a way that reproduces and reinforces "power relationships, stereotypes and the objectification of women" (70), which suggests that some of the norms girls strive for are misogynistic.

There are ways to subvert these norms, according to Butler: "That there is

a need for repetition at all is a sign that identity is not self-identical. It requires to be instituted again and again, which is to say that it runs the risk of becoming de-instituted at every interval" (24). Feminists have been working for years to redress the imbalance of the power relations between the genders, though the path to equity might be better traveled by seizing the loophole and eliminating gender categories altogether. Like Marnina Gonick, I am interested in exploring how "gender can be done differently" (71).

B. Feminist Approaches To Interviewing

Exploring ever-changing identities has many challenges and requires the research design to be just as flexible and mutable. My initial methodological plans were created with Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack's three ways of listening in mind in conjunction with multiple in-depth interviews. I will describe my initial plans in this section and then follow up with how it changed as my journey progressed.

C. Open-ended Interviews

I wanted to be able to encourage the girls to open up and discuss sensitive or personal issues, which would require them to have trust in me. Procuring confidence can be achieved through reciprocity and the sharing of information and I take up Ann Oakley's notion that the role of the interviewer should change from that of a "data-collecting instrument for researchers to being a data-collecting instrument for those whose lives are being researched" (49). If I define myself as merely a data collector I might alienate myself from the interviewee

and lessen her interest in sharing her information. Oakley argues that the traditional relationship of an interviewer and interviewee is hierarchical: "the person doing the interviewing must actively and continually construct the 'respondent' (a telling name) as passive" (35). Oakley suggests that when an unstructured exchange is allowed to occur this hierarchy is undone. I hoped that keeping the discussions open-ended would help me build rapport and trust with the girls, as well as allow the film to be shaped by the girls' voices.

D. Ways of Listening

In order to foster discussion about complex issues such as identity and gender performance I wanted to pay attention to three ways of listening that Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack recommend. The first suggestion for learning to listen offered by Anderson and Jack is to pay attention to moral language (Anderson and Jack 19). Moral language is the way in which people describe concepts of self and cultural norms: "attending to the moral standards used to judge the self allows the researcher to honor the individuality of each woman through observing what values she is striving to attain" (20). By listening to this language and asking interviewees to describe their values, the interviewer might learn something new. Anderson and Jack suggest, "when the woman, and not the existing theory, is considered the expert on her own psychological experience, one can begin to hear the muted channel of women's experience come through" (20). Perhaps by listening for the use of moral language I might obtain a broader perspective of the girls' experiences.

Another way to learn about circumstances in an interviewee's life is to pay attention to meta-statements. These are the comments that the interviewees make in reference to their previous thoughts or responses. Anderson and Jack refer to an example where a woman is asked a question and at the end of her response she adds, "so – do I sound much like a litigator?" (22). Anderson and Jack explain: "meta-statements alert us to the individual's awareness of a discrepancy within the self -- or between what is expected and what is being said" (22). Attention to this type of language might illuminate a perspective that conventional methodology would miss.

The third type of listening Anderson and Jack describe is logic of the narrative. Anderson and Jack define it as "noticing the internal consistency or contradictions in the person's statements about recurring themes and the way these themes relate to each other" (22). By combining the ways of listening that Anderson and Jack propose, I wanted to enable the girls to explore their personal experiences more critically.

E. Self Disclosure

I was hoping to evoke honest and open communication with the girls by sharing information about myself with them and as a part of the film. I was willing to answer any of their questions and be candid while I learned and grew with the project. As Reinharz states, "researchers who self-disclose are reformulating the researcher's role in a way that maximizes engagement of the self but also increases the researcher's vulnerability to criticism, both for what is

revealed and for the very act of self-disclosure. Receiving feedback from the interviewees, on the other hand, enables the self-disclosing researcher to continuously correct the interview procedure" (34). Self-disclosure might help to build reciprocity with the girls, involve the girls in self-reflection, and perhaps offer new perspectives for all people involved.

IV. Initial Research Design Summary

I wanted to interview 13-year-old girls from a variety of economic and social classes, as well as from varied ethnic backgrounds. In order to solicit participants I planned on sending out information about my project (Appendix B) to friends and family across Canada and relied on the snowball effect in order to find potential participants. I was also going to contact women's resource centres and youth groups to help in the search process. Girls who expressed interest would be asked to contact me with their parent(s)/guardian(s)' contact information so that I could pursue consent. I intended to be sensitive to individual needs whenever possible and planned to encourage the girls to divulge only as much information as they felt comfortable.

I was going to conduct two main interviews: the first would involve examining items from popular culture and the second would include a viewing and analysis of the initial interview footage. Reinharz says, "Multiple interviews are likely to be more accurate than single interviews because of the opportunity to ask additional questions and to get corrective feedback on previously obtained information" (37). The second interview would be a good opportunity for the

participant to make further comments, ask to be unidentified, or possibly back out of the project. It might have also provided a forum through which the girls could express their opinions and reflections.

At the end of each interview I was going to set the camera on a tripod with low-lighting and leave the room so that the participant could speak anonymously about issues she might not feel comfortable discussing directly with me or her parents. I was going to explain to the girls that they do not have to say anything, but if they chose to speak I would disguise their faces and voices, as well as any other identifying features.

V. Reflections & Film Analysis

The most influential factors affecting the outcome of this project were time, money and resources. The Women's Studies Master's degree at Memorial University is meant to be a two-year program where course work is completed in the first year and thesis work in the next. The project option requires one additional course to that of the thesis option, which added to my time constraint. I decided to film over the course of four months, which took place during the fall semester of my second year. I spent approximately four weeks in each location and found that the first few weeks were consumed by searching for interview subjects and setting up interview dates. Upon returning to Newfoundland I began work as a Teaching Assistant and enrolled in my final course while working on the post-production of my film.

I financed this film mainly through student loans and graduate assistance,

staying with friends and family along the way to make the traveling economical. I used equipment provided by the Digital Centre for Qualitative Fieldwork at Memorial University of Newfoundland as well as equipment borrowed from peers. I also sought advice from professional filmmakers, journalists and editors in order to make well thought out decisions.

In order to achieve my goals for this project I had to be a one-person film crew and post-production artist, which ultimately affected the quality of the product. There are some technical problems that arose from not having ever created a documentary video before, which I had to accept in order to finish the project. One example is that I did not edit my film with a television monitor so the text is too small and in some cases too close to the edge of the screen. I had also forgotten to “de-interlace” some of the still images within photo editing software so some images appear to vibrate. Overall I felt that the film was achieving my goals so accepting a few editorial glitches for the sake of learning was a worthy choice. Having had more time, money and resources would have increased the quality of the final product as well as allowed me to connect the multiple threads in a more sophisticated manner.

I was inspired to keep track of my project through creating a blog when several peers suggested that the making of the film might be equally compelling as the film itself. This blog evolved to incorporate personal aspects of my journey along side of the progression of the project. My quest for “home” emerged in my blog as another story happening simultaneously with the academic work. This

quest was tied to events in my life, which were having direct and indirect effects on the project. For example, my personal history affected the choice of cities I traveled to and therefore where I recruited and interviewed. This, of course, had an impact on who could participate. A less tangible bridge between my search for a home and the girls' interviews is that both "girl" and "home" are identities constantly in flux. I felt it was unnecessary to push a discussion about "home" with the girls since that was my story, not theirs. Pop culture is far more engaging for the girls and though my quest for home inevitably affected the way their stories would be revealed, the focus of this project was to inspire the girls to talk about identity in relation to gender and pop culture.

When editing the film I began to weave both the subtle and obvious connections together by inserting academic quotations, my blog entries, self-interview footage as well as definitions. These inserts were like punctuation marks, which served several purposes. One purpose was to draw parallels between the two main themes or stories that are happening at the same time: my personal journey and interviews with girls about gender and pop culture. I also wanted to portray a time-line for the film reminding the audience that filming took place at a specific point in time. Film and video does not fix time but instead captures fragments of moments lost. My blog entries, combined with my self-interview describing my several homes over the years, illustrate this continuous flux.

The blog entries are written in a diary format to personalize the project.

The first entry referenced in the film describes my anticipation for the beginning of my interviews. This entry is used to segue into the girls' interviews starting in chronological order. To introduce the girls I asked: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" My blog entries also talk about aspects of the project that are often invisible in a film or thesis such as approval procedures, participant recruiting and researcher's concerns.

My blog also provided a space where I could talk about the project in ways that the girls' interviews wouldn't allow. For example I wrote in my blog how I would have preferred a more ethnically diverse group but time constraints forced me to take who was available. By inserting this blog entry into the film I was able to communicate that.

Another reason for using my blog excerpts and self-interviews was to give the audience an opportunity to position me in relation to my interviewees. By including myself in the film both within footage and through personal texts exposed my vulnerability and helped level the power dynamics inherently present between filmmaker and interviewee. The film begins with a quotation that explains how a researcher's personal experience is inextricably linked to their research:

The way a researcher comes to choose her topic, conduct her studies and finally produce a body of work cannot be entirely separate from her personal experience. Yet the self is often written out of research creating what Donna Haraway refers to as the "god-trick of seeing

everything from nowhere" (192). In being self-reflexive perhaps we can work towards a more honest approach to creating bodies of work from research (What Girls Are Made Of?).

The largest obstacle to obliterating the power relations was the mere fact that I was the filter through which the end film was produced. I selected the footage that was used, added text overlays and filled the film with my perceptions. By admitting to bias early in the film I encourage the viewers engage with a critical mind and potentially inspire self-reflexivity in others.

Through interviewing adolescents I was successful at highlighting fluctuating identities within the film. The girls discussed celebrities, musical interests and other aspects of Pop Culture, which inferred the speed at which identification can change. An example is when Meghan says:

Like Hilary Duff, I don't mean to be mean to her, but I hate her with a passion. I will never touch a piece of her clothing line – that's gross, my lil' sister loves her clothes, I'm supposed to shop for her for Christmas and she ain't getting Hilary Duff. I won't touch it. That's gross. And she influences little girls to be exactly like her, like the Hilary Duff bubble, you know, that they wear on their head. I did that for awhile (What Girls Are Made Of?).

Meghan's rant includes an admission of her own previous identification with Hilary Duff though at the time of filming clearly preferred to be seen as anti-Hilary.

My project needed to be somewhat malleable if I was going to achieve my goals within the allotted time. Originally I had wanted to interview girls who were exactly 13 years old but I had to expand my age range to 12 – 14 years old. I also ended up with not as much ethnic diversity as I had initially hoped for. With time and resource constraints I was only able to interview four girls and I had to accept whoever was available for the period of time I was in each city. The Boys & Girls clubs of Toronto and Calgary were extremely helpful and recruited two of my four participants. The mission of the Boys and Girls club, according to the Calgary Boys and Girls Club website, is to “provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life” (“About”). My final participants came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds however only one was non-Caucasian. If I had spent more time in each city perhaps there would have been opportunities to interview a more diverse range of girls. A longer duration in each location would have also provide space to build rapport and let the interviewee become comfortable with being in front of a camera, encouraging further troubling of concepts previously explored. If I could have interviewed girls in remote regions of Canada to examine the ways in which their relation to Pop Culture is similar or dissimilar to that of girls from urban areas it would have added to the project. Being able to adapt to changing circumstances enabled me to continuously progress with the film development even when obstacles were encountered.

There were many other unforeseen challenges that required me to have a flexible attitude. One of these challenges was that none of my participants had selected media examples ahead of time to discuss, as I had requested. This may have had to do with the lack of direct contact I had with the girls. The adults who set up the interviews with me may not have passed along the request since it was a written request rather than verbal. It may also have had to do with the lack of incentive provided by me. I solved this by bringing in selected magazine ads, as well as asking the girls to tell me about their favourite aspects of Pop Culture (music videos, movies, video games, celebrities).

By keeping my project flexible I was able to cut out aspects of my methodology that became unnecessary. One of these changes was that the girls were not interested in the anonymous camera idea. Personal issues were not broached to the extent that I had planned for, and so this became an irrelevant piece of the methodology. Perhaps if I had spent more time with each girl there might have been more revelation of personal details where anonymity would have been requested. Kimberly, Megan, Mikkaela and Amy shared only as much information as they were comfortable with, thereby requiring no anonymity. I also dropped the part of my research design where I was going to show the interviewee some of her clips from her first interview. When I had interviewed Kimberly for the second time I had attempted to follow my original methodology by showing her specific interview clips to encourage her to elaborate. She appeared to be uninterested and her reactions were no more revealing than if I

had simply described the footage to her. Cutting this aspect of the methodology saved time with both planning and conducting the second interviews making the work more efficient yet still achieving the goal of generating further discussion. Adjusting my methodology when encountering challenges allowed me to achieve my project goals in a relatively timely manner.

Within the film I attempted to break down the power relations between filmmaker and interviewee by including self-interviews. I chose to incorporate footage that provided background for aspects of my own identity in order to tie in my quest for home. This set me up as more than a data collector but as an interviewee as well. Unfortunately the girls I interviewed did not see this footage during the filming. To them I remained a strange adult woman behind a camera asking questions, which automatically creates a hierarchy. I tried to encourage the girls to share their own stories by using examples from my own life when asking questions. Self-disclosure techniques and multiple in-depth interviews had a desired effect of enticing the girls to reveal personal stories, although not to the extent that I had hoped. That I was asking the questions and was out of the camera's range of vision put me in a less vulnerable position than the interviewee therefore continuously re-instating a hierarchical power dynamic. Perhaps it would have been more honest to situate myself on-screen as an interviewer thereby making the hierarchy obvious. There are several reasons I was not on-camera during the girls' interviews: I was a one person filming crew and needed to pay attention to the cameras and audio while also asking

questions; I was new to interviewing and therefore would have required more footage in order to obtain good quality interviews; and initially I felt it was more important to display the girls voices independent of an interviewer to be more like a conversation rather than an interview. Having conducted multiple interviews did alleviate the power relations slightly, and I believe if I had interviewed each girl more than twice there might have been less psychic distance between them and me. My affable personality and approachable demeanor helped garner the girls' trust and ease their tension though a hierarchical relationship remained.

Using Anderson and Jack's three ways of listening combined with multiple in-depth interviews enabled me to provide a space where my interviewees could explore their identities. Because I was the videographer, sound technician, lighting technician and interviewer, it was difficult to notice meta-statements, logic of the narrative and use of moral language as often as I would have liked. Most effective use of these tools was evident when I watched the footage from the first interview, allowing me to come up with better questions for the second interview.

While attempting to employ Anderson and Jack's three ways of listening, I found moral language the most challenging. I was afraid to impose my own moral judgments and was constantly aware of how the girls' morals may be judged by viewers of the film. Because I feared being seen as a self-determined moral authority I avoided addressing moral language instead of using it as an

opportunity to trouble perplexing concepts. Paying attention to meta-statements was a very useful way of interviewing and I can see how this would become a stronger tool the more often one meets with their interviewee. Meta-statements were great for revealing contradictory beliefs and the paradoxes of identity. The third type of listening, logic of the narrative, was useful when revisiting topics from the initial interviews. Because the techniques described by Anderson and Jack were helpful to deepening the discussion as well as providing learning opportunities for both the interviewee and myself, I will use them again in the future.

The location of the interviews and the particular camera set up was determined based on each girls' specific circumstances. I always had two cameras, one lavalier (clip-on) microphone, and I used whatever room lighting was available. With many of the interviews I tilted the camera to try to make the scene more visually interesting, as talking heads can become static quickly. By tilting the camera I tried to grab the audience's attention as well as mimic music video camera angles. I positioned the cameras so that there was a medium close up as well as an aesthetically interesting long shot. Being conscious of the psychological impact that camera angles can create I attempted to set up shots where the camera was looking upwards. Unfortunately this was rarely attractive and the more appealing shots were set high looking downwards. The high angle can make the interviewee appear helpless and vulnerable which is something that I was trying to avoid. I hoped that using similar angles on my own

interviews would provide balance by putting me, the filmmaker, in the same position. Some of my camera positions were away from the line of sight creating a surveillance effect. This could cause the audience to feel like they are eaves dropping, which is a perspective I prefer to an authoritative viewpoint. Each of the interviewee's camera set-ups will be explored next.

Kimberly was my first interviewee and she was recruited from the St. Alban's Boys and Girls Club of Toronto. I arranged the interview through one of the clubs coordinators, Anna, and she recommended using the club as a filming venue. The club is constantly busy so we were limited to filming in whichever room was available at the time. The first interview took place in a room that was a lounge with a couch and Foosball table. Kimberly chose where to sit on the couch and I determined the camera placement based on the criteria I previously mentioned. Kimberly's second interview was in the club's arts and crafts room. I liked the paint splatters and creative atmosphere but it was also quite utilitarian. I wanted to show how Kimberly was watching her previous interview so I needed to set up a camera that would show both her and the lap top screen. The room's configuration restricted the camera positioning and I ended up filming over Kimberly's shoulder, which may have unintentionally created an authoritative stance for the film viewer.

The Calgary Boys and Girls club provided me with my next interviewee, Meghan. The club is affiliated with a program called Starburst, which works in conjunction with Calgary Family Services. This program mentors adolescent and

teen girls to develop tools to achieve success and improve self-esteem. Once again I was in communication with a counselor, Merry, who set up an interview with Meghan to take place at her school. The day of the interview I arrived at the school to find out that Meghan was suspended. Merry managed to get in touch with Meghan's mother who agreed to let me interview Meghan in her home. When Merry and I arrived at Meghan's I asked Meghan where she would like to be interviewed. She walked me through a few rooms in the house and mentioned that she spent most of her time in her sister's bedroom. I decided that even though the lighting was dark it was a place where she would feel comfortable and perhaps would inspire her to show her personality. Unfortunately one of my cameras failed during this shoot so I only had footage from the long shot for this interview, which looked a little like surveillance. This puts the audience in a more voyeuristic space rather than authoritative.

Meghan's second interview took place in the school in a small room off Merry's office. This room had a half-size chalkboard, tables, and chairs. There was very little space to set-up and I had to be quick because I was keeping Meghan from her class. I wanted the audience to see that we were filming in a school so I used the chalkboard as the background. In order to get the cameras in place Meghan had to sit in the corner. Like Kimberly's over-the-shoulder shot, positioning Meghan in a corner may have implied an unintentional judgment or placement of authority.

In British Columbia I was having difficulty recruiting as it was nearing

Christmas time. Through word of mouth I recruited a busy young lady named Mikkaela. Mikkaela's mother decided that it would be more convenient if they were to come to me. I was staying with my mother in Abbotsford, BC and the best place to set up the interview was in my mother's home office. Both interviews were conducted in this room, however I changed the camera angels in an attempt to differentiate the interviews.

In each location I was racing the clock to try to recruit participants, however, I had my Newfoundland participant lined up at the same time as my Toronto interview was being scheduled. Through word of mouth Amy's father received my recruiting information and called me to arrange an interview. He even followed up with me when I returned to Newfoundland. We set the interviews up at his house, as this was convenient for Amy. When I arrived I asked her where she wanted me to film and she showed me the living room and kitchen. The living room had a cozy atmosphere so we set up in there. She chose her position on the couch, which worked for both interviews.

Creating a film rather than writing a thesis allowed me to draw upon my artistic background to visually express complex ideas in an interesting and engaging fashion. By combining imagery and text I further emphasized points and created a commentary to progress the story line. Through media rich layers, I conveyed messages without always relying on text or voice over, which can be a powerful communication tool. Body language, vocal intonations and facial expressions successfully added depth to the meaning of the words spoken

throughout the film. These visual cues provided another opportunity for the audience to formulate their own perceptions about what the girls' words mean. Having a film as an academic product has widened the reach and understanding of my academic work.

The first instance of my multi-layered editing style appeared when I was speaking about my past. Displaying my childhood school photos as well as landscape shots from across Canada over my self-interview was how I chose to reflect my memories. An important concept that is suggested with this portion of my film is the notion of loss. Moments are lost as soon as they occur and any record of this is only a fragment. I come back to this at the end of the film when I quote Carol Mavor from "Collecting Loss": "every photograph is a record of a moment forever lost" (11). These pieces can never add up to a whole and point indexically to the constant fluctuation of memory, ideas and time.

By layering imagery I created a visual metaphor that describes how we are unable to completely separate ourselves from our environment. Showing photos from my past along with landscape and text overlaying my face are a way of showing that those are all parts of my identity. In some areas I used layering to create a more dramatic effect like when the girls spoke about body image and anorexia. To do this I inverted the image to a negative image while overlaying it with other images. When the girls are speaking about pop culture and influences I felt they needed to be shown as the landscape upon which this culture is being played out. This is not happening only to girls, but it is these girls who are

expressing these ideas within the film.

Repetition was another important element to my film for several reasons. With the intentional inundation of information I wanted important concepts to be remembered so I repeated quotations or imagery to emphasize points. I also wanted difficult citations from academics such as Judith Butler to become more accessible so I overlaid these with relevant interview footage and revisited the quotes many times. I included a self-interview discussing Butler's notion of imitating an imitation in order to clarify aspects of her theory. I also repeated definitions of words like "normalize" and "influence" to emphasize the complex negotiations we make in a world so inundated with repetitive constructs. The girls illustrate this as well, for example Amy says, "I guess I never noticed it cuz I'm so used to seeing it" (What Girls Are Made Of?) in reference to an image of an infant doll carrying a purse that is dressed in a midriff revealing top and tight bell bottomed pants. By repeating text, imagery and editing techniques I ensured that key concepts were relayed.

I wanted to convey a message about how overwhelming media can be. Film viewing is often a passive event but by layering the information I attempted to keep viewers actively engaging in the film. Being entrenched in a particular way of viewing video may make some audience members feel frustrated or jolted by these editing choices but this is a desired effect. In today's world multiple forms of communication happening at one time is quite common so by layering media types I am attempting to convey several messages at one time.

For example, I inserted a blog post over the audio of my interviewees so that the viewer may absorb both stories or they may be forced to choose one set of information over the other. They may even be overwhelmed and tune out the information. All of these outcomes are messages I want to impart. By overwhelming the audience, I point to the deluge of information on all of our senses everyday in Canada. If the viewer feels that they have to select reading over listening, or visa versa, this also points to being inundated by information. Important information was repeated elsewhere in the film to ensure it was clearly communicated. A possible negative outcome might be losing some viewers who feel overwhelmed, however there is a growing number of people who are able to absorb and understand multiple messages at one time.

VI. Outcomes

The most consistent concept I discovered throughout this project is that identities are surrounded by paradox. Throughout my film I repeat a quotation from Judith Butler that sums up this idea:

...if I have any agency, it is opened up by the fact that I am constituted by a social world I never chose. That my agency is riven with paradox does not mean it is impossible. It means only that paradox is the condition of its possibility (Butler, "Undoing Gender" 3).

In order to negotiate identity constructs, whether built myself or adopted from external influences, I must accept certain paradoxes and those around me must

accept them as well. For example, there is a message in Pop culture to “not be influenced” yet it is impossible since the influencer is influencing us to not to be influenced. To take this further, all of the girls I interviewed admired certain celebrities as well as people in their personal lives and the common reason for their admiration was that these idols do not appear to be under anyone’s influence. More specifically, during our interviews Kimberly mentioned that she looked up to Jules Santana because he “doesn’t care what other people think” (What Girls Are Made Of?) but because his record sales rely on the approval of his fans seems to suggest otherwise. These sorts of paradoxes make our lives possible within the constructs we set up for ourselves.

Through music videos, lyrics, movies, advertising etc. we are constantly flooded with identity models that influence what we wear, what we eat, how we look as well as what gender we perform. Free will asserts itself but what chance does it have in a society that is determined to reinforce “norms”? When I asked my interviewees “what is a girl?” all of them had specific answers, illustrating that they are consciously aware of female stereotypes. They could talk at length about what a girl looks like but had little to say about what guys look like. They mentioned that girls care more about how they look than guys do but had not thought about what the reasons for why that might be. The girls seemed to be aware of their contradictions while simultaneously perpetuating them, which I have witnessed in myself, and others around me as well. To add to these complex identity constructs, the lyrics to the music that was listed on

Billboard.com's top 20 lists during the time of the filming revealed that almost every song was about a sexualized female body, whether it was performed by a male or a female artist. Turning back to the girls, I asked if they fit any of these stereotypes and their answers were varied and unique, suggesting to me that there are limited references to help girls negotiate who she is or who she might become. Perhaps through continued discussions about these contradictions we will gain more acceptance and tolerance of those of us who live outside the "norms".

I am grateful to the Women's Studies program at Memorial University for offering a project option and allowing me to create a film, an alternative form of academic product. After this long project and all the work involved I believe quite strongly that a film or radio documentary or other such alternative texts can stand alone without an elaborate written component and without the extra course work required. Companion pieces will always add value to a project whether the initial work was written, filmed or recorded. I have also included an educational guide in this report as way of adding value. I hope that eventually there will be criteria developed for non-text based theses where requirements for theory, methodology and content can be worked into the project without having to add a course and additional text piece.

When I began this project, my goals were to:

- Learn about ways girls construct, reproduce, and challenge identity
- Encourage discussion about ways in which marketing images affect

Canadian adolescent girls

- Provide a forum for the girls I'm interviewing to discuss issues they may not have an opportunity to voice in their every-day lives
- Discover and explore influences on girls' behaviour

Within this report I have shown that these goals were met and I hope that whenever the film is screened that the above goals continue to be achieved. The film has also become an example of creative academic research that is disseminated in alternative ways. My on-going aspiration for this film is to encourage an exploration of how "gender can be done differently" (Gonick 71).

VII. Impact

At the time of writing this report I have already had two screenings and the film has been used in a classroom context. My first screening was an initial draft version that I presented at the *Canadian Association of Women in Education's* biannual conference at York University. The second was here at Memorial University as a debut screening of my final draft. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and I have had several requests for copies of my film to be shown in educational contexts. Having this film used as an educational tool to encourage gender and media awareness is the best impact this project could make.

VIII. Educational Guide

The following guide is meant to serve as an educational resource to accompany the film: "What Girls Are Made Of?" by Christina Adams. Feel free to modify the activities or suggested discussion topics to suit your goals, class size, age group or time frame. The activities and some of the discussion topics provided may also be used independent of the film.

Students may range in age from early adolescence upwards, though adaptations should be made to accommodate students who may need help understanding some of the more difficult theoretical concepts.

Facilitator's Preparation:

- Watch the video at least one time before bringing it into a learning environment.
- Familiarize yourself with this educational guide. Consider this report as an additional resource.
- Engage with the work of Judith Butler and Queer Theory. There is an excellent on-line introduction to Judith Butler's theories called "Modules on Butler" at:
<<http://www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/engl/theory/genderandsex/modules/butlergendersex.html>>

Synopsis:

In this film four girls from across Canada share ways that they construct,

reproduce, and challenge identity categories in their lives. By turning a critical eye to dominant forms of media they share ways in which they are affected by and/or resisting stereotypes and constructs that are available to them. They explore themes such as body image, race and gender.

For this project, Christina (the filmmaker) traveled over the course of four months from St. John's, NL to Vancouver, BC and back. Many of the cities she stopped in had been her home at one point or another and the journey came to be as much about her own struggles with concepts of 'home' as it was about the girls' interviews. By inserting excerpts from a blog she kept the audience is invited to share this personal odyssey.

Student Learning Goals:

- To learn about ways girls construct, reproduce and challenge identity constructs.
- To practice deconstructing media messages.
- To consider ways to effect positive change.
- To critically explore gender.

Potential Discussion Topics & Questions:

Research:

- At the beginning of the film Christina tells us that her journey is about more than the film, more than the thesis. While she is talking there is a quotation on-screen that reads:

The way a researcher comes to choose her topic, conduct her studies, and, finally, produce a body of work cannot be separated from her personal experience. (What Girls Are Made Of?)

- Do you think that researchers and/or interviewers can be unbiased? In what ways (if any) could a researcher's personal experiences affect the outcome of her/his research?
- The film is edited in such a way that there are two main themes or stories that are happening at the same time – Christina's personal journey and past experiences as well as interviews with girls about gender and pop culture.
 - In what ways are these themes connected? In what ways do they seem disconnected?

Gender:

- In the film, the girls being interviewed were asked to define what a girl is and what a guy is.
 - How would you describe a girl? Compare your definition of girl with your description of a guy.
- Within the film, Judith Butler is quoted several times and referred to by Christina's dialogue. One of the more prevalent concepts is explained by the following quote:

Gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the imitation itself (Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" 21).

- Do you agree with the filmmaker and Butler?

What evidence is there to support Butler's theory and what evidence is there to refute it?

Perception:

- Throughout the film there is a quote repeated:

...if I have any agency, it is opened up by the fact that I am constituted by a social world I never chose. That my agency is riven with paradox does not mean it is impossible. It means only that paradox is the condition of its possibility (Butler, "Undoing Gender" 3).

- What do you think this quote means? Why is it relevant to the film? Do you agree with what Butler is theorizing?

- Do you think there are identity constructs that are normalized in Western society? If so, what are they?

Pop culture (music videos, magazines, television, movies etc):

- Do you think that Pop culture influences your opinions, attitudes or beliefs? If not what are your reasons? If so, what ways can we use Pop culture to encourage tolerance and acceptance?
- How is gender portrayed in Pop culture? Are there generalizations about what it means to be female or male? If so, what are they?

Editing:

- Why do you think the filmmaker layered visuals over the interviews at times?
- How were her blog excerpts used?
- Why did she use text throughout the film the way she did?

Suggested Activity: Gender “Think, Pair, Share”**Time Allotted: 120 min**

- Give the class 10 – 15 min to quietly ponder the question: “What is a girl?” Suggest that they may make notes if they like but it is not necessary.
- When the time is up, divide the group into pairs and ask them to discuss their thoughts about the question. They may make notes but it is not necessary. (10 – 15 min)
- After the time has passed ask them to write down one sentence that sums up their answer. Explain that these will be randomly read aloud by others in order to offer a bit of anonymity. (10 - 15 min)
- Collect the sentences and redistribute them randomly. One by one ask

the class or group to read aloud the sentence they were provided. (15 min or depending on group size)

- Watch the video: "What Girls Are Made Of?" (24 min).
- Ask the students to re-think the initial question "What is a girl?" and compare to "What is a guy?". At this point you could have them write a new summary sentence to be randomly read aloud or you could ask students to share in a discussion format. (remaining time)

Suggested Activity: De-gendering Popular Music

Preparation:

2. Research the top 20 music being listened to by adolescents. (see: billboard.com)
3. Google the lyrics for some (or all) of the songs and print them out.
4. If possible obtain copies of some of the top music videos to play in the classroom.

Time Allotted: 90 min

1. View the DVD "What Girls Are Made Of?" (24 min)
2. With the popular song lyrics provided (and/or the music videos), ask the students to re-write the words (or describe the video) by changing or eliminating references to gender. While working on this ask them to think about the experience of writing in this way. Also ask them to keep in mind ways that

language changes when swapping genders – what is being communicated? (15 min)

3. Provide each student an opportunity to talk about her or his experience. Offer them the option to read aloud what they wrote. (20 min)
4. Encourage a class discussion referring to discussion topics listed above. (Remaining time)

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Appendix A

Please note that some formatting, hyperlinks and photos are not available in this format. There may also be spelling and grammatical errors as these are as they appeared.

Blog

2005-08-25 - 1:53 a.m.

Hello,

My name is Christina Adams and I am working on a Master's Degree in Women's Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Me during mid-June 2005

To fulfill my thesis requirements I am creating a film which explores ways that girls construct, reproduce, and challenge identity in a media saturated world.

[Click here](#) to read the Project Proposal that I have submitted to the Women's Studies Graduate Committee.

I will be using this blog to document my journey on a weekly basis and I hope that it will be informative for anyone who wishes to read it :)

Project Description:

Through filming discussions with a diverse group of Canadian adolescent girls I hope to learn about ways girls construct, reproduce, and challenge identity. By

engaging these girls in activities that might unpack some of the contradictions portrayed within dominant forms of media, I hope they will share some of their experiences negotiating identity influences in their every-day lives. Do they feel affected by pervasive marketing images? Are there ways in which they feel oppressed or powerful? Are they reacting to and possibly resisting stereotypes and identity constructs? I predict that my interviews with the girls will reveal that identity categories are never completely fixed and that contradictory identities often exist simultaneously.

Location is an important part of the film as I would like to explore the similarities and differences amongst the responses of girls from various regions in Canada.

Keeping the project within Canada will help me complete my degree requirements within a timely manner, minimizing expenses while also enabling me to trouble some of the identity constructs that are region specific.

Through this project I hope to:

**** Encourage discussion among me, the participants, and the audience about ways in which marketing images affect people.**

**** Provide a forum for the participants to discuss issues they may not have an opportunity to voice in their every-day lives.**

**** Reveal cultural influences of identity formation.**

Check back again soon!

C.

2005-09-08 - 12:42 a.m.

Hello!

I have 6 days left until I arrive in Montreal!!

The scary thing is that I haven't received Ethics approval yet, but that will hopefully come in the next week or so. I HAVE received approval/support from the Women's Studies Graduate Committee, which is a huge stepping stone!

:)

So, the way things are going... I should arrive in Toronto just after the Thanksgiving holiday, then head on to Winnipeg, Calgary and Vancouver. I might skip out on Winnipeg due to time constraints... but we'll see. I will be laying down the plans while I wait for Ethics in Montreal.

I would love to do some Rocky Mountain skiing this year :)

Today I met with my supervisor, Dr. Noreen Golfman for the last time until my return to St. John's in January. She is the organizer of the MUN Cinema Series, as well as a founding member of the St. John's International Women's Film Festival

among many other endeavours.

I have conducted a few "rehearsal" interviews with friends and hope to log/transcribe/edit a few clips and re-interview the same friends... as I plan to do with the girls. My St. John's subject(s) is/are waiting patiently until I return in January for her/their film debut!

Gotta keep at it!

Cheers,

Chrissie

2005-09-14 - 4:44 a.m.

Here I am waiting at the airport to go to Montréal!!! I am very excited and nervous. I received an e-mail from Ethics today but they sent their response as a Word Perfect file which I cannot open. I have requested a word doc or a rich text file but haven't received a reply yet. I am waiting with bated breath... hoping it is good news :}

Unfortunately I have developed a small cold but hopefully that will be cleared up very soon.

I feel less prepared than I would like to be for this film but now that I am on my way out of St. John's I hope to find my focus and really nail down a detailed plan.

I met Wairima (hope I spelled that right!) who will be my St. John's interviewee when I return in January. She came to Karaoke night with her mother, Wanjiru. Her mom is also in Women's Studies and they are both fantastic people! Wairima is a very confident gal so I think she will have no problems being in front of the camera. She sang a beautiful song in Swahili for us at Karaoke night... great voice :) She has an advantage over my other interviewees since she has a few months to get ready for her big debut. Since we already met she will have more information ahead of time than the other girls I end up interviewing.

Depending on how the plans unfold, I may interview more than one gal in each location. If so, I would like to pick girls who are different from each other... for example: one from the city and one from the country... something like that.

Ok... now I am going to work on my web site a little bit to see if I can use it to help make this blog prettier :) That probably doesn't mean much to you but I know what I'm doing! hee hee

ciao,

Christina

2005-09-16 - 3:59 p.m.

Montréal is fantastic :)

Everyday I come to a Starbucks around the corner from where I am staying in order to get on the internet... it is lap-top heaven here!

So I received my ethics response... I have to re-submit with revisions, but they did say it was an exciting project with merit but due to its complex subject matter they want to be sure I am clear about a few ethical issues.

One of the big changes is that I am not supposed to recruit participants through friends and family... so instead I am going to contact youth groups, clubs and other organizations that cater to adolescent girls (maybe even schools). This is to keep the options open for the girls to remain anonymous.

This means that my previous mention of using Wairima has to be stricken from the record. I may or may not be filming her... any girls that I use in the film will have the opportunity to remain anonymous if they like or not so the gals I film in St. John's will not be decided on for a few months yet.

Having said that, I have decided to film two girls in each region. This will also

help with anonymity.

Well, that is the latest!

Au Revoir!

C.

2005-09-20 - 3:34 p.m.

Just sent my revised ethics application! Hope it goes well. I have changed my consent process considerably to allow the participants to give consent on each individual clip and opt for disguising clips at any point up until the final edit.

So, now I wait. I have been having a great time in Montréal so far, met with Danielle yesterday (she is a MUN Women's Studies Graduate and has started a PhD at Concordia doing Communications Studies, a program I am interested in). Met up with my other great friends Gen & Gil the day before... its so nice to see good friends :)

Can't believe its been a week already!

Last weekend my host, Tony, took me up to his family's maison de la campagne in the Laurentians. It was raining but that didn't make it any less magnificent! I shot some footage of the beautiful lake and forest and made sure to record the

sound of the rain in the trees and the birds twittering away.

Being around all this français intensifies my interest in doing an immersion in the Spring. I have always wanted to be bilingual, so my goal will be realized by the summer!

Then, perhaps, I will move to Montréal... it is a great city and seems to really suit me.

Well, the sun is blaring into my eyes, so I am going to leave this starbucks before the big black cloud hits.

Over and out!

Christina

2005-09-26 - 9:13 p.m.

Shots from Newfoundland (stills)

New Toys

I am exhausted!

I walked all over Montreal in the rain today. I bought a 250gb external hard drive from a place called itechnique. I also wanted 1gb of RAM but apple shipped the

wrong product so I have to go back tomorrow to pick that up. Then my lappy is going to be smokin'!

The store itechnique just opened very recently and the guys there were very helpful. If you ever need mac service in Montreal, itechnique is the place to go!

The best toy I bought today is a new SLR camera!

I was originally going to purchase another Minolta so that I could try to fit my favourite lens onto it... but the fellow at the store pointed out that my lens has been damaged in my travels... oops!

So I treated myself to a brand new camera! I was debating between the Nikon and the Canon and I ended up chosing the Canon Rebel T2. Eventually I will treat myself to a nice wide angle lens to make up for the loss of my fave lens.

I spent about \$1000 today, but I did manage to get some student discounts in there :)

Great Input

I have met a great guy named Peter who has just finished putting together a rough cut of a documentary. I don't know how much I should say about it since it hasn't been completed or anything... but it ended up broaching some of the same topics that I hope to hit upon. I gave him my opinions of his rough cut and he gave me some suggestions for my film. It was fantastic being around someone else who I can talk about film stuff with, as I would like to eat-sleep-drink-breathe my film project. I am finding it so easy to slip out of it when there is no one to bounce ideas off and lots of un-related things to do!

Another film person who had a tonne of advice/suggestions is Marnie, a gal I recently met. Some of it was a bit overwhelming, but it is all good for me!

I am kicking into over-drive. Though ethics say they won't get back to me for another week, and there is no guarantee that they will approve... I have decided that I will start filming MY story. Who I am, why I want to do this film... and once I start filming, I can work into the story any of the obstacles that I come across... like delays in ethics approval, for example!

Life Lessons

So I have been in Montreal for close to two weeks now. Its starting to hit me that

I am doing this alone. I have friends all along the way, but I am really beginning to miss my friends in St. John's.

It is great seeing good friends here... and will be like this all along the way... but they all have their own lives and I am just a visitor. Where as in St. John's I am a fixture in people's lives... as they are a fixture in mine.

Having removed myself from a fixed address has thrown me into a new way of looking at the world. I am learning a lot about myself. In a lot of ways it is like when I went to Europe by myself. Stripping away the expectations of others...

Not to say that others expect anything of me... but I put that in my own head... constantly seeking to please others.

It leaves me with the questions: What do I really want? When I remove my own desire to make others happy, what else is fulfilling for me? Hmmm... how should I work this part of the journey into my film? This project is about so much more than the film and even more than my Master's degree.

2005-10-03 - 8:02 p.m.

Waiting, waiting, waiting...

Did I mention that its been really hot and sunny here?! There were two days of cool, autumn weather, but now it feels like July! I LOVE it!

Here's a fun photo of Gen and I in a pub called Mckibbins

Still nothing from the ethics committee :(

I finally feel like a filmmaker, though!

I have logged and captured some of the scenery shots (see: Shots from Newfoundland (stills)) and have filmed myself talking about some of the issues that I want to address with the girls I will be interviewing. I have even scripted out the interviews as much as possible... most of it will be ad-lib, but it is good to have a script to keep myself on some sort of track. It is quite strange talking to an imaginary interviewer. I could get someone else to interview me, I s'pose, but everyone is so busy with their own projects/lives that I think it would be difficult to organize that. Maybe somewhere along the way I'll get someone to shoot me, but so far it is me interviewing myself! hee hee

Upcoming Week

This week I am going to film more of myself... more of Montreal... catch up with the logging, capturing and transcribing of my footage that I have taken up 'til now. I want to get to the tamtams on Sunday... get to Shwartz, PatatiPatata, Wilensky's, and a few other good eatin' places.

My great friend Gil is playing on Saturday at Clyde's on the West Island, so I am going to see his gig: gilkafka.com.

I will hopefully hear from the ethics committee and begin recruiting girls across the country. I am not sure what to do about Montreal... I only have a week left which won't give me time to both recruit and interview a girl or two in the Montreal region. I need to meet each interviewee three separate times, so I need at least three days just for one girl... let alone recruitment time.

Meanwhile, there is fun to be had!

Pop Montreal is going on (or just finished) while I am here, so I saw a few bands and took in the Puces Pop (puces = fleas en francais). Lots of cool and interesting things to see at that flea market... I didn't buy anything but I took a bunch of biz cards and am going to check out the stores that sell some of the products that I liked the most and check out some of the websites.

The big band I got to see thanks to my gracious host, Tony, was Interpol at the Metropolis... they were fn fantastic!

Interpol Banner

Also, Tony's friend Lisa was performing so we went to see them on Saturday night. I LOVED their act! They are called Ratsicule and like the Kremlin in St. John's have an entire schtick that is quite hilarious... Their schtick is that they are karaoke queens from France and Belgium who do interpretive dance and sing songs like, "I'm Too Slutty To Go To Your Party" and "Big Pink Volvo".

Funny small world story:

Lisa and Christy's Ratsicule wardrobe is quite cool and looks almost 80's so I said to Lisa, "Your outfits remind me of Stephanie K from Degrassi Jr. High... when she used to change into slutty 80's clothes in the school washroom..." She responded, "OH MY GOD, your never going to believe this but she is my cousin! The woman who played Stephanie K is my cousin and we are really good friends!"

(Not only do I LOVE small world stories, but I particularly LOVE Degrassi small world stories!!!)

More Music

Not sure if I already mentioned that I also saw Nouvelle Vague whom I love on CD but I expected more from their live act. The band was great and one of the female vocalists was very sensual, but they had technical issues with their sound and their encore was a repeat of a song they had already performed... other than that, they were great. In The Pink opened for them and they were excellent... the lead guy has fantastic vocals and great charisma! Also, the opener for Interpol was Boom-Bip who came in with the fervor of a head-liner... no vocals, a wall of sound that reaches out and pulls you in. Wicked stuff!

2005-10-10 - 11:01 p.m.

All Engines Go!

On Friday I received an e-mail from the office of the ethics committee saying that I have been approved! Yippee :)

I can go ahead and recruit my interview subjects, finally! Unfortunately it came at the end of my time in Montreal.

The night I received my approval, I contemplated what to do about my missing Montreal interviews. I could either extend my stay, return at a later date, or nix Montreal as a location altogether.

I decided that the best decision would be to sacrifice my Montreal interviews because time is ticking and to return would cost more money.

I am disappointed that I won't have a perspective from Quebec in my film, however having made the decision I feel excited about moving forward with my film.

This led me to the decision to head to Toronto a few days early. Might as well get started right away.

Early Arrival

Oh, Toronto.... a home you were for three years. Some of it was great, some of it was not.

My patrons in Toronto are Kendra and Pete. Back in November 2002 Kendra and I moved into a posh building downtown Toronto (The Jefferson).

Me and Kendra in the rooftop hot tub at the Jefferson

Kendra has lived there ever since and her and Pete have recently moved on up to a bigger apartment with a better view!

So, I am staying in my old apartment building with my old roommate... its a bit like coming home in a way.

As many of you already know, my reunion with Toronto is an emotional one. I left on a good note, however things have changed since I moved away. When I left I had been living with my partner for almost a year and after 10 months of a long distance relationship, things fell apart. Now that I am back in Toronto I need to remove my things from the condo we shared and face up to the memories that dwell in our old 'hood. It has been a few months since the break-up, and I have progressed quite nicely, however it is still difficult.

I am, however looking forward to visiting my babies, Snuggly & Gadget.

Snuggly

Gadget

I also have some great friends whom I am looking forward to catching up with.

Kendra, Petey and I have been having a good time already :)

Well, tomorrow I finally get to begin recruiting so I better get to bed!

2005-10-18 - 7:08 p.m.

Its All Coming Together!

I began recruiting last week and by Friday I had received many responses. The Boys and Girls Club of Toronto has expressed interest in helping me in any way... so now I am waiting on confirmation for a few interview set ups :)

I also received a few phone calls from parents who have interested daughters... from Toronto and St. John's. Hoping a few of those will work out.

A Few Concerns

I am worried that all the paperwork for the consent process will discourage participation. I think I may have went overboard when I re-wrote my ethics proposal. Not much I can do now except hope for the best and be prepared for the extra work my new consent process entails.

I am also concerned that girls won't want to participate because of the time it will take. Each interview will only be about an hour or so but there are two separate interviews. I also have to meet them for a third time to go through all the clips that I might use so they can give consent for each one. I probably shouldn't have proposed that in my ethics review... oops. I could re-propose but I don't want to have to wait for the committee to review it again... so I am stuck with it now.

Life In Toronto

In Montreal I drank a Chai Latte every single day when I went to Starbucks to use their internet... so now I am hooked. It is an expensive habit, I am trying to cut back :}

I have packed up all of my stuff at the condo now. Just some small details to take

care of over there, now. The fuzzies remembered me and purr as soon as I walk in the door... they are the best cats EVER. I took a bunch of photos which I will share once developed.

Having a good time with Kendra, Pete, Roxy and Remy (dog and cat... photos to come)!

Until next time...

C.

2005-10-25 - 3:49 p.m.

My First Interview!!

Last night I had my first interview with a 13 year old gal from Toronto. She was very interesting and I'm really looking forward to interviewing her again later this week :)

I was quite shocked at how mature she seemed and how old she looked. I was expecting someone more child-like... I wonder if that is because I am in my 30's or if kids appear older these days or maybe its just her. It will be interesting to

see how the other girls I will be interviewing will be like.

It almost didn't work out because of an incident that happened over the weekend. She had gone out on Friday without her mother knowing (or perhaps against her wishes... this was unclear) and didn't return all weekend. There was some uncertainty that she would show up for the interview so I almost re-scheduled... but at the last minute I got a call that she had shown up, so I rushed up there and we had our first interview :)

Stuff I Learned

I am really glad that I have decided to do two interviews. Its good to come up with questions based on things she's involved in or things she has said rather than having pre-prepared questions. Being able to ask questions on the fly is a difficult task sometimes... I can see more and more what makes someone a good journalist... definitely lots of practice!

I am just about to begin going through the footage, but overall it went very smoothly.

Things She Said

I found that she didn't seem interested in talking about media or pop culture much. She talked a lot about her peers and segregation at her school. Different cliques form based on race as well as musical interests and appearances...

She also wasn't interested in doing an anonymous interview. She said she felt comfortable talking about anything in front of me... but it didn't quite feel like she was opening up as much as she could have. I hope that the next interview will challenge her to rethink some of her opinions or go further into them... we'll see!

My Challenges

I am finding it difficult to work more than 3 or 4 hours a day! What is up with that?! I get exhausted so quickly these days, but I have to pick up the pace now that I am doing the interviews! I have much to do before I leave Toronto and the clock is ticking!

Besides the film, I have to put together my PhD applications, look for post-production funding, finalize the packing of the condo, keep eyes open for

conferences I'd like to present at and work on my Graduate Assist. hours.

Phew!

On A Personal Note

I have been seeing many of my good friends, which makes me miss them more!

It gives me another reason to chose Montreal over Vancouver... much closer to these great friends :)

That's all for now,

C.

2005-10-31 - 9:32 p.m.

I AM 1/2 WAY THROUGH MY JOURNEY!!! I will be back in St. John's in 2 months! I can't believe it...

Be sure to check out my photos at flickr!

Like Sands Through The Hourglass... so are the days of our lives hee hee

For those of you who are reading my blog ... I try to update it on Tuesdays, tho sometimes I get delayed or sometimes I get excited and do it earlier... but most importantly THANKS FOR COMING TO MY BLOG!!!!

I am leaving Toronto for Calgary on Monday and am freaking out! I have sooooooooooooo much to do before I go and soooooo many people I want to see! Where does the time go???

I have decided to keep it down to just one interview in each place, but I might change my mind later again. I have one interview subject wrapped up here in Toronto and I am considering a web-cam interview with a second Toronto girl, but she hasn't responded yet about whether that interests her. I think that would be a great addition to my film and really place it in the present day :)

Things Left To Do in TO

- * B-roll to go with my Toronto interview(s).
- * Filming of the intro to my film and any other commentary I want to add in at this point.
- * Log, capture and transcribe the rest of the clips from my Toronto interviewee, burn them to DVD, print off consent forms and deliver them to the gal's mom to have them both finalize their consent (up to this point, anyway).

- * Applications for scholarships/grants/etc.

- * Applications for PhD and SSHRC (which are already getting to be too late...
ahhhh!

- * Log, capture and transcribe the rest of the footage I have taken up til now.

- * Line up interviews in Alberta.

So much to do, so little time.... sheesh, this is a lot of work and I have been slacking off! Hopefully I will be less distracted in Calgary AND Vancouver!

OH, extra great news... I met a wonderful person who has offered to colour correct my film for free when its finished!!!! I am so lucky to have such great, helpful people in my life. My list of credits is going to be very long... but necessary so I am going to have to make them interesting to keep people attentive while they scroll.

My next entry will be from either an airport or from Airdrie, Alberta!!

xx

Christina

2005-11-08 - 10:50 p.m.

Snow and Sunshine

The entire time I was in Toronto the sun shone maybe 4 days (out of 4 weeks) and of course one of those beautiful sunny, warm days was the day I left :(

I saw the sun set twice as I flew westward to Calgary. As the plane was landing it took a course that led it directly over the town I spent my adolescence in and am currently passing the time... Airdrie, Alberta. It was very cool to see the roof of my old house and the familiar roads as we were making our descent.

When we landed it was dark but I could see snow on the ground and my breath in the air. It was that lovely dry crisp cold air... very different from the damp cold air elsewhere in the country. When I awoke today, the sun was a glorious Prairie sun! Makes the snow so much more tolerable.

Key note: Snow on the ground in Airdrie means snow in the Mountains... just in time for some skiing!!!

Toronto Departure

As usual, the plane was late departing from Toronto. There had been some cancellation and the gate was changed from one end of Terminal 1 to the other...

and the plane was totally full. I managed to watch two and a 1/2 episodes of Buffy the Vampire Slayer (thanks for lending them to me, Pete!) before my battery conked out... then I slept for a bit.

Of All the Bars in All the Cities...

On Thursday night I went out for dinner with two friends from Newfoundland who happened to be in Toronto at the same time as me. After dinner we went to a pub called, "C'est What?" and guess who walks in?

My Academic Advisor, Dr. Noreen Golfman!

What a small world, I couldn't believe my eyes! So that was a fun coincidence :)

Another to add to my small world story collection!

Home Sickness

For so long I have said that I have no home and that it is something I'd like to build somewhere. I am starting to recognize that I actually have several homes and am home sick for all of them.

While in Toronto I felt at home... felt a longing for the old days when I used to walk around my 'hood and enjoy the lifestyle that I led there. Now I am in

Airdrie, a very small city that I spent my youth... Junior High and High School... many strong memories here. I am staying with my great friend Amy whom I have known since I was in grade 6. It strengthens my yearning to stay in one spot so that I can build history with people that are all sticking around... yet it also comforts me knowing that I will always have the Airdrie of my memories... and Calgary and Toronto and St. John's... all places that have become imprinted for life.

Oh, and About the Film

The Airdrie Boys and Girls Club have said they are not interested in helping... but the executive director for all Alberta chapters had said she would try to hook me up with some Calgary clubs... so I'm waiting for her response. Meanwhile I have also asked Amy's sister-in-law if she can mention it to her Church's Youth Group, so I am also waiting to hear back. Ideally I would like to interview a gal from Airdrie since this is where I grew up, but I may have to go with Calgary since the resources are limited here.

Meanwhile I still need to send a DVD to my Toronto gal so that her and her mother can sign the consent forms for each clip.

OH AND... my internet access isn't as available as it was elsewhere, so please

hang in there if you don't hear from me soon :)

xx

Christina

2005-11-15 - 12:24 p.m.

Chinook!

Within a few days of my arrival, the snow-eater came and gobbled up the snow! The ski hills have opened though and I am looking forward to getting out there to the mountains!

I had forgotten what a Chinook headache feels like but I certainly remember now. Warm winds and a Chinook arch (clouds forming an arch over the foothills) are unique to Alberta. Not even all of Alberta, just the foothills which encompasses Airdrie, Calgary and other parts of Southern Alberta.

I've managed to visit a few old friends and some family already. I contacted an old pal, Dan, who I used to hang with in High School and we got together for drinks last Saturday with another HS friend, Allain. Thanks, Allain for buying

the drinks and Nachos!! :) Dan is heading up to the oil patch to make some \$\$ and Allain is moving to Ontario with his love, Carrie.

While on a walk with Amy, Brooklyn and Tyson, we ran into another friend we went to high-school with. It was really neat seeing Denice since the last time we saw her was 3 years ago at our 10 year HS reunion!

Finding Participants Takes Time

The wheels are turning slowly in Alberta. The Airdrie Boys and Girls Club said they weren't interested, unfortunately. I have had interest from a Calgary Boys and Girls Club as well as from a Science school in Calgary. I also heard from a mother who heard about the project by word of mouth, but so far none have confirmed. I am half way through my trip, so I need to start harrassing :)

There was also interest from a girl who lives on a ranch a few hours south of Calgary which would have been great, but the logistics are too complicated at this point in time. I decided to stick with Calgary since it is close and more convenient. I'm hoping she has a web-cam, though, cuz that would be an interesting addition to the film!

Technology

I managed to find a teeny bit of a wireless signal out here at Amy's! It isn't all that reliable and I can only access it from the corner of her kitchen. Counter-top internet isn't as comfortable as sitting down with a chai latte in hand ;)

This means that my internet time is fairly limited, thus no pictures or links on today's blog... and not much work getting done on the Women's Studies website (which is my job for my Graduate Assistanceship). Basically only e-mail checking is going on at this point.

The Film

I have finally finished compiling the clips from my Toronto interview so I can send off the DVD for the interviewee and her mother to look over. Consent forms and more information are being sent along with the DVD, so hopefully they will still agree to be a part of the project! I'm a little worried that I will never hear from them... but I have their phone number so I can call and check up in a few days :)

It was really good to go through all the footage from her interviews! It helps me to better myself in the next interviews and there were things said in the interviews that I didn't catch at the time. Also, watching the clips has given me a sense of the direction the story is going and that will help me with the questions I ask the rest of the girls. For example, the Toronto girl spoke about her peers a lot and the way people dress. I will make sure I ask the rest of the girls that I interview about their peers and the way people dress so that there will be some continuity. If those things aren't important to the girl I'm interviewing, that will be interesting in itself.

Going through the interviews, logging and transcribing them has helped me develop a system, too. The transcripts aren't all detailed, word-for-word, but they will help when it comes time to sort through the footage and put together a story. I was looking for an easy way to transcribe where I wouldn't have to listen to all the clips, but I am glad that I haven't come up with that easy way... it is good for me to listen to the footage again because it has gotten me thinking about how the film will be put together as well as ideas of what B-roll I need to get.

Quest for a Home

I was shocked at how home-sick I was the week I arrived. I cried everyday for

the first few days I was here. I was feeling home-sick for here! It makes me question my leanings toward Montreal as the next place to move. Montreal seems so far away from here. It has been two years since I had been here, though, so perhaps if I made the effort to come once a year it would be better.

The Calgary area (including Airdrie) had been a home to me during my Junious High and High School years, as well as my University years... so this is the place where I have spent most of my life. My family moved to Airdrie, AB from Manitoba in February 1985. 20 years ago!!!! I graduated High School in 1992 and moved out of Airdrie to go to college. I moved all over Alberta until 2000 when I graduated from University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (I had spent a few summers living with my mom in BC, tho). That year I moved to Ontario to continue my education. That means I lived in Southern Alberta for 15 years. That is almost half of my life.

I've also been thinking about this idea my mom and I had to open a Bed & Breakfast in the Vancouver area. It would pay off to start it now and then have it all ready for when the Olympics arrive. I worry about giving up my summers and weekends, though. Also, I would want to live in a separate space from my mom so that I can have *boys* over and parties whenever I want ;)hee hee

Anyway, I am sure it will all figure itself out. I just have to think about what I

really want out of a place to live. The people are important, but I have people everywhere so that isn't much of a determining factor!

C'est tout!

Chrissie

2005-11-28 - 5:03 p.m.

Bittersweet Departures

Right now I am at the Calgary Airport picking up on a wireless hotspot that is meant for vip guests at the Maple Leaf Lounge... but somehow the signal is making it to my gate... which they keep moving around.

oops, changed again... better go for now... more shortly!

C.

I'm back! But this time I'm paying for it with my Roger's cell phone... there are a few hotspots here but they are all spots that I have to pay for. :(

Calgary Filming

I finally lined up an interview in Calgary through a program called the Starburst Program. It is affiliated with the Boys and Girls Club of Calgary and is targeted at adolescent girls with the intent to boost self-esteem and prevent teen pregnancy. Or something like that...

The gal was great, the interviews were shorter... one was at her house because she was suspended the day of the first interview and the second interview was at her school. The school is a tricky environment to interview in because bells ring, people come and go... plenty of distractions.

Regrets

In every city there has been something I regretted...

- * Montreal: not being able to interview anyone because of slow ethics approval
- * Toronto: sketchy interview skills because it was my first one, and not getting much capturing etc. done
- * Calgary: I should have stayed longer... I didn't make the time to film myself and shot barely any B-roll, I'll pay for that later

Learning As I Go

I think my interview skills have improved and I realize that I don't need to do a long interview.

Neither girls wanted to do an anonymous interview which I think is because I didn't spend much time with them. If I had the time and resources, I would have interviewed the gals more than twice and perhaps would have followed them around a bit with the camera. I think this would have made them feel more comfortable with me and perhaps talk about more personal issues.

I also decided that showing them their footage at the second interview isn't any better than simply reminding them what they said. So instead of bringing the lap-top with clips to show them during the second interview, I will simply describe what they said and ask them to elaborate.

Gotta get on the plane... more later!

Cheers, Christina

2005-12-06 - 1:37 p.m.

Back to the Bittersweet...

When I was writing in my blog from the airport, what I was trying to say was... what a strange feeling it is to be sad to leave yet excited to go. Sad to leave the comforts of my latest temporary home. Sad to leave Amy, Tyson, Brooklyn, Vern, Larry and Diane: my second family... but excited to get to my mom and my cousin and the other relatives out here in BC: my kin.

I've been missing my family and old, close friends here in the West (both BC and AB) more than I realized which was a real kick-in-the-gut when I arrived in Calgary. Now I'm at mom's and we have slipped right into annoying each other so quickly... love can be funny that way. It certainly is a factor in my quest for the place I'll set down roots.

Setting Those Roots

In the past 3 months I have been in St. John's, Montreal, Toronto, Calgary and now Vancouver. It probably shouldn't be a surprise that I am no nearer to knowing where I want to set up shop. Being in each place has reminded me that home isn't just a place... its about the people, the memories.

I think its interesting that the two places I am the most interested in moving to

when I'm finished in St. John's are places that I haven't ever lived before and have few memories associated with them. Vancouver has family nearby... Montreal has great friends close. Vancouver has majestic scenery all around... Montreal has a vibrant metropolitan culture that I crave. Maybe I'll move to Banff instead.

Maybe I can find a job based in Montreal that involves travelling across Canada, particularly spending time in Vancouver. For convenience it would be nice if Canada was a bit smaller ;)

Planning the Future

When I embarked on this great journey, my great plan was to: do the interviews until January; head back to St. John's to take my final course, be a TA while doing the Graduate Program in Teaching class, edit the film, write my report and do all that other stuff that needs to be done in order to graduate; in May I would head to a French Immersion program whether I was finished the film/report/degree or not; move to my next destination (which I would chose based on a criteria of what I want out of a place to live) where I would stay put and make a home where I would finish my degree if needed and/or begin a job-hunt or begin a PhD.

Right now I am still holding to the first part of the plan... except in January I will still have my St. John's interviews to film... and I have given up the idea of doing a PhD right away... and now the idea of choosing a destination is very daunting! (I realize how lucky I am that this is my big dilemma in life... could be far worse!) Never-the-less it is difficult making decisions that can affect the outcome of your entire life (or so it seems). A lot of "what-ifs" go through your mind. And not having a partner anymore means that this decision is entirely based on what I want out of life... and for the first time ever I have no idea. I used to have my life planned in such great detail... I am a planner, after all. I was always flexible if things didn't work out the way I planned... but just having a plan always gave me a sort of peace of mind.

My current plan only entails 6 months into the future, and that is very uncomfortable for me. Where will I live in 6 months time? How will I get money to pay for a place to live in 6 months time? Once again, I know that I am lucky because things always seem to work themselves out in my life. I am less worried about this than I would have been a few years ago... but it still causes me some stress. The world will keep turning whether I make a decision or not, there is an odd bit of comfort in that.

Yes of course... the Film!

Right... currently I am waiting on confirmation of a BC participant. I have a few possibilities I'm exploring and I hope to confirm some interview times very soon.

I still have yet to make a dvd of my Calgary gal's clips... hoping to do that this week.

Being here with mom, knowing that I have more time and less people to see has taken some pressure off... which has allowed some inspiration for the story to creep through. Hopefully I can foster and nourish the ideas that have been building up. Its great to feel motivated again. I didn't realize that I was unmotivated until suddenly it was the middle of the night and I had a million ideas running through my head keeping me awake... getting excited about the project which hasn't happened in a long time. Speaking of which... its 4:21 am as I type this... will upload it tomorrow when I arise!

btw... I began watching Buffy the Vampire Slayer series just before I left for this trip and now I am at Season 5. I have an addiction now and I can't stop watching episode after episode until its like 3 am and I'm going googly-eyed like now!

Anyway, I better go to sleep now!

night night,

C.

2005-12-15 - 3:29 p.m.

Whistler/Blackcomb Skiing!

My friend James came in from Toronto to go skiing with me... we went to Whistler/Blackcomb which is apparantly the top rated ski resort in the world! We had a blast = see the photos by clicking on the flickr link to the right :)

The weather was incredible and the snow was pretty good. The staff there are amazingly friendly and the food/wine was a perfect way to end our evening. The hotel we stayed at was the Sundial Boutique Hotel. I took photos of the room because it was sooo nice!

2005 - What A Year!

I have travelled extensively this year! It all started with my trip to Cuba in February... then to Toronto in May... then I began this film project which has

taken me to Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver. Plus all the side trips: The Laurentians, Kirkland, Keswick, Milton, Airdrie, Ft. MacLeod, Sunshine Village (Banff), Abbotsford, Maple Ridge and Whistler!

By far the highlights have been Cuba and Whistler!!

Of course there have been low points too... the big break-up in the summer :(Stressful work for the Master's program... and stressful finances because of being a student.

Struggles with issues of what 'home' is to me and what I want it to be.

What a rollercoaster year, certainly full of transformation.

Home

I haven't gotten any closer to making a decision about where I want to build my next home after leaving St. John's. It is a tough choice since there are so many places I feel attached to already. Maybe I should move back to a place that I already have attachments to... or maybe I should start from scratch somewhere new. West or East? Family or Friends? Nature or Culture?

I guess time will tell!

The Film

I am tentatively scheduled to begin interviewing my BC gal on Saturday... I hope it works out!

I have also contacted someone in Montreal who may know a gal who would be interested in doing a web-cam interview... that would be sooo interesting! And then I'd get my Quebec girl!

I am also seeing that I am going to be so busy in the Winter semester... I am not sure how I will get everything done, but I am certainly going to try!

Over and Out!

Chrissie

2006-01-06 - 2:58 a.m.

Back in Town

Wow, four months passed so quickly! Jet lag has set in big time... my own fault because I didn't prepare myself as I usually do. I had been up to my usual bad

habits of staying up until 4am every night back in BC so here it is 3am in St. John's and I'm not even tired. My sleep has been really messed up. It didn't help that my flight arrived at 4am.

The journey from BC was quite smooth and not as excruciating as it could have been. I left from the Abbotsford airport at 6pm NL time (1:30 BC time), switched planes in Calgary where I only waited about 15 minutes, then switched planes again in Toronto. The wait in TO was only about 40 minutes. I managed to sleep a lot during the flights which helped pass the time but also contributed to the ensuing jet lag.

Film Stuff

On the day I returned to NL I received a phone call from my interviewee's father. Perfect timing. I am going to meet them on Monday to give them a better idea of what my project is about and what the interviews will be like. Classes begin on Thursday for me so it will be good if I can get the interviews done as soon as possible.

I was able to complete my interviews in BC after a little fretting. I had to interview her in my mom's house because that was preferable to the girl and her

mother. They wanted to be able to just drop in and then leave, so that changed the dynamic a little bit. They weren't able to commit to a specific time, so I needed to make myself available at their call.

It is amazing what differences there are between the girls I interviewed. So far there has been a 12 year old, 13 year old and a 14 year old. For a variety of reasons I am going to end up with mostly caucasian girls. Their socio-economic situations are different, at least. I was hoping for a more ethnically diverse group of girls, but with the time constraints I was limited to taking whomever was available. When I film more of my parts I will point that out.

There is still soooo much work to be done! I am looking forward to piecing it all together, though. Now that I am in a semi-permanent location I can set up a work space that is functional and comfortable and just go for it. I also won't have the pressures of squeezing in visits with people. I would like to set aside two days a week of working only on the film project.

Hopefully I can get a routine going. I've historically been unable to stick to routines, but I'm going to try a new approach. Instead of having a daily routine, I will have more like a flexible routine... for example setting the goal of working 2 days a week on the film, 2 days for classes and assignments, one day for relaxing and one day for whatever else needs to get done. That way I can decide from

week to week which days are the film days and which days are the relaxing days etc. The only thing I don't have a choice in is that I have classes on Thursdays and Fridays. But I can always cut the days in half... doing the 2 film days over 4 half days or whatever. blah blah blah

Getting outside once everyday is a good idea, too. Oh my, there just isn't enough time to do everything!

A New Beginning

So I have returned to the same house that I left but it is a slightly different household. One roommate is leaving and the one who took my place is remaining. I have taken over the bedroom of the one who is leaving since that made the most sense. She left me her furniture to use, which is very helpful to me :) I love my new room! I even have house-plants!

I can't wait to see my friends again... hoping to catch up with them on Saturday at the grad pub "Bitters". So much has happened and yet so much is the same. It is a very strange feeling.

Camera Excitement!

I was looking at my old Minolta:

which I had broken a few years ago and miraculously it appears to be working again! AND it has film in it already... probably really old film.

I discovered that it was working again after all this time when I was investigating the alleged damage on my favourite lens. When I purchased my newest Canon Rebel, I had intended on buying a Minolta because I have several manual focus lenses for my old Minolta... one of which is a nice wide angle which I adore. The guy at the store told me that Minolta was a bad idea as they no longer had any service centres in Canada and when I showed him my favourite lens he told me that it was damaged. I wasn't totally sure if he was correct or not but I was happy to buy the Canon either way. (It was a great purchase, thankfully)

Anyway, just tonight I came across the lens in question and thought that I should unpack the camera body and see if the lens really was broken or not. That was my first bit of excitement... the lens still fit onto the body! The only thing I couldn't be sure of yet was whether the shutter would open and close. Forgetting for a moment that my camera was supposedly still broken, I turned it on and

snapped a picture. The shutter went off AND out of habit I had hit the winding mechanism which worked without a problem too! It was a triple pack of excitement!!! The lens worked, the shutter worked, the film advanced with the winding mechanism! Realization began to take hold... my camera was working! I took a deep breath and tried it again paying more attention to what I was doing. It totally worked! I thought, maybe it was because there is no film inside... so I opened it up and SURPRISE there WAS film in it! So then I thought perhaps it will stop working when the film is finished... so I rewound the film leaving a lead so I could re-thread it... took it out and then put it back in and tried the camera again. It worked! Everything was working!!!

So here's the story of how I broke it and why I think it is working again:

A few years ago I was in Calgary staying with my brother. The Minolta needed a new battery which is supposed to be inserted into a slot on the bottom of the camera. This slot opens and closes by using a coin as a screwdriver. I was a bit zoned out when I was trying to open the slot and was having serious difficulty. I passed the camera to my brother and said, "can you open this for me, I can't seem to get the battery slot open..." I showed him what I had been doing and he gave it a shot. He was having difficulty too, so he took the camera into another room to open it with a real screwdriver rather than a coin. He came back into the room and said, "Uh-Oh, Chrissie... I don't think that was the right spot. As I was turning the screw, the camera started to come apart and seemed seriously

wrong... so I screwed it back together again. I think that wasn't the battery slot! I hope we didn't break your camera!"

I looked again at the spot we were attempting to open and realized that indeed it was a screw and not the battery slot! The camera looked ok, and when I located the actual battery slot it came open very easily (argh). So I attempted a shot and the camera seemed to work so I felt stupid but relieved.

Once I reached the end of that film and tried to insert a new roll, I could not get the camera to advance :(I tried it over and over again and finally gave up and accepted that we messed up the winding mechanism when we were trying to open the wrong screw.

When I returned to Toronto I took it to Black's and asked them to give me an estimate... after sending the camera away for assessment, they said that it would cost about \$250 to repair and that it would be economically smarter to buy a new camera body than to repair the old one.

My boyfriend at the time said that I could use his Canon Rebel that he barely ever used. That kept me occupied for a year or so until some thieves robbed it from my house in St. John's last October!

I am certain that when I retrieved my Minolta from Black's that I didn't bother to try it again. This leads me to my theory about why it is working.

My theory is that when they took apart the camera to assess the damage they unintentionally fixed the problem. I think it was a problem with how tight or loose that screw was supposed to be rather than the winding mechanism.

Now it looks like I have two SLR cameras! I told my ex that I would give him one of them if he wanted in place of the one that was stolen while in my possession.

Luckily he said no :) hee hee

Well, that's my latest update!

Sorry I was slow on the uptake over the holidays! I had a great Christmas with the old gang I grew up with :)

Cheers,

Christina

2006-01-15 - 11:10 p.m.

School Is In

This is going to be an intense semester! I have applied for Spring Convocation... which means that I have to meet all the requirements by May 10th. If I don't meet the requirements there is no penalty but if I do meet the requirements then I will be the first Women's Studies student to graduate early! (well, as far as I know)

I work well with deadlines, so I am certain I will get it done! If I don't get it done, I won't sweat it too much. It is good to have a goal... and an end in sight.

My semester is filled with interesting stuff... a course called "Women and Communications" which is a combination of Postmodern Feminism and the study of Pop Culture (Cultural Theory, Media Studies, Cultural Studies). I am really excited about that course... the assignments are all about using creative and non-traditional methods of performing academia. I'm not sure I'm expressing this well... but it is right up my alley!

I am a Teaching Assistant (TA) for a class called "Writing and Gender" which is also very interesting! The class is small and allows for a lot of great discussion time. My teaching supervisor is Jean Guthrie who founded the Graduate Program in Teaching which I am also going to be taking part in this semester. I am very excited to work with Ms. Guthrie as she has received many awards for her commitment to quality teaching. Lucky me!

The biggest problem with my semester is that I have to be at school at 9am three times a week! Ugh... for a night owl this is not a good thing. I am going to do my best to be consistent and get up at the same time on the days I don't have to be at school, as well. There is a morning Yoga class that I can attend to give me a reason to get out of bed on the days I don't have to.

Making the Film :)

I have my final interview this coming Wednesday! I am still holding out hope that I will get to do a web-cam interview with a gal from Montreal, too. I am going to treat that like an add-in, though... so once my St. John's interview is finished then I am going to dive right into the material.

I spent this evening setting up a schedule for piecing my film together and it is totally doable. As long as I stick to my schedule. I know that there will be obstacles along the way, but I am the queen of obstacle dodging... so bring it on, I say!

The part I am looking forward to the most is when I can go through all the footage and decide which story line will be the most compelling. At this point

there are so many ways I can take the film...

I am going to be at that point very soon, I think. My own journey of making the film is probably going to be a big part of the final product. I can't wait to see how it all turns out! hee hee hee

More Thoughts About Home

Now that the dust has settled at my house here in St. John's, I have had new thoughts about what "home" means. I was so happy to be back in a familiar setting where I have lived freely and independently. Even though the bedroom is different and even the roommate configuration is not the same... I have been feeling something like serenity.

When I was traveling I felt comfortable and independent everywhere I stayed, but there was always a sense of impermanence hanging over my head. Even though I know that St. John's is also temporary for me, having a space to call my own is very soothing. This is an important part of "home". The actual space that I live in.

I have also been contemplating Toronto a lot more. I have realized that Toronto was the first place I ever lived where I had a life that didn't involve school. I did

move to Ontario to go to school, but when I was finished I stayed on and began a career and built a social circle... all far away from my family and high-school friends. I had built a life for myself where I could be free of old patterns and identity constructs leftover from childhood. I think that is why I have a fear of moving to the West... I'm afraid that the old constructs will constrain me to acting in ways that I hope to have moved away from.

Well, I will have to make a decision soon enough... I will be leaving St. John's at the beginning of May!

Until next time...

Christina

2006-02-12 - 12:46 a.m.

Back to the Filmmaking!

The length of time between blogs is a good indication as to how much work I've been doing on the film... the more I work on it the more I want to write in my blog... and visa versa.

If you look on the "older entries" page, you'll see how I made several entries in both September and October but fewer in subsequent months... well, I hope that I am back on track.

So right now I am wading through all the footage trying to log, capture and transcribe everything. Starting, of course, with the interview footage. I have already completed my Toronto gal's footage and am waiting for her final approval (I have to send all the girls a dvd of the clips I might use and the transcripts for them to sign off on). I feel I can't harrass her too much about sending them to me when I haven't even gotten close to sending dvds to the rest of the girls.

Well, now that I have gotten back to it, it feels great. A little daunting about how long it is going to take to get through this tedious process, but I am enjoying it at the same time!

Tonight I have captured most of my Calgary gal's clips (all that I need to send her, anyway) but I still have to string them together to make a dvd as well as transcribe them. I am going to have to lock myself in more often, as I did this weekend.

Having taken a bit of a break from the filmmaking process has its pluses. One of the benefits is that the footage is fresh to me again, which makes this tedious part of the job more interesting!

There are several things I dislike about watching the interviews. One of the big things is that my own failings are very noticable. Don't get me wrong, I am happy with the footage that I have... am proud of accomplishing what I have done up until this point... AND I am certainly learning a lot from watching/hearing myself asking the girls questions. But I catch myself leading the interview, I notice how unclear my questions are and uncertain I am about asking them. There is a lack of confidence in my demeanor that I really dislike. Through watching the video I can see so many instances where I didn't follow up on meta-statements or moral language... two "feminist" interview techniques that I intended to adhere to better. Well, it has been a great learning experience in so many ways... and continues to be.

Another thing that occurred to me while working tonight is how solitary this work is. I keep forgetting that others haven't seen my footage and no one really has any idea what this film will look like. I mean, I don't really know how it will look yet, but I at least have a pretty good idea of what footage I have.

Anyway, tonight was a reminder of how much fun this filmmaking is... and that

I really need to put the hours in for both my sanity and enjoyment :)

Other Stuff

When I procrastinate, I do it productively, at least! Before I got to work today I made a batch of Butternut Squash Soup, Chili (which I turned into chili burritos), and Tabouli.

Yesterday I worked on my academic CV and updated my portfolio website. There is still so much work I can do on my website but I had to call it quits at some point. The reason I started on that was because I have been keeping my eyes open for jobs and I happened across a job that looks like it was created specifically for me! Anyway, I will apply and see what happens. I am impressed with how many jobs I have seen that look interesting AND I would be qualified for... that is a good sign. I have applied for several jobs already, some have been in Toronto, one was in Vancouver and the one I am about to apply for is in Lethbridge, AB of all places. Which leads me to my next blab.

Brokeback Mountain

Oh my goodness did I cry in that film! The story was touching, but the scenery got me. You see, it was filmed around Alberta... and many of the locations they chose had specific emotional meaning for me.

The strongest tie was that about 10 years ago I was hanging out with a bunch of cowboys who worked jobs like the two guys in the movie did with the sheep (tho usually with cows). I dated one fella who was such a cowboy and he was from the area where they filmed many of the town scenes. The bar that they filmed in was a bar I frequented during this time period (The Ranchman's) and it looks exactly the same. Nostalgia! Oh boy!

There is one emotional scene where the main characters are having a "lover's quarrel" in front of a lake. This is Upper Lake Kananaskis where I used to camp as a teenager. I still contend that it is one of the most amazing places on the planet. I witnessed my first rock avalanche on the mountain peak that you can see in this scene... thunder on a clear blue day. I hiked the circumference of this lake several times, particularly to a waterfall where I used to sit and daydream with my closest friends. The point of land that juts out into the water was a place I used to hike or paddle a dingy out to... there is the remnants of an old cabin there, only the chimney and a stone foundation remain. Ahhhh... the Rocky Mountains, oh how I miss thee.

2006-03-13 - 10:41 p.m.

Ohmygosh

It is the middle of March!! Where did the time go?? I am freaking out.

Progression

In some ways it feels as if I haven't gotten anywhere on my film project... but I have been making progress. It is never as much as I want to have done... but I knew this semester was going to be incredibly busy! I am still working on getting the interviews logged, captured and transcribed... I have applied for some grant money through the Graduate Student Union so that I could hire someone to help me with the transcriptions but I haven't heard anything back yet. I only applied last week so I am going to follow up tomorrow. I have offered to present my work on April 7th at 2pm in the Sally Davis room (SN 4083) at MUN as part of my graduate requirements, but I am beginning to doubt that my film will be ready by then. I will be able to present about my work and probably show clips or something, but I am going to keep trying to get the film made by then.

Conference Acceptance!

I have been accepted to present at the Canadian Association for the Study of Women and Education conference at York University at the end of May! Check out their site for more information: CASWE. I have also recently presented at the Aldrich Conference here at MUN, you can see my paper and slideshow at: Aldrich Presentation.

Life's (happy) Twists

On my birthday I was asked out on a date :) I went out with Greg and we had such a great time... and have been together ever since! This makes my upcoming decisions way more difficult... isn't that the way life goes?! I have to be out of my current household by the end of April which is rapidly approaching... and after that, who knows?! I will hopefully be accepted to the French immersion program I applied to (will find out at the beginning of April) which takes place in May for 5 weeks and then..... ?

I have been applying for jobs already and found a few that are well-suited for me. If I get offered a fabulous job, that will help make my decision for me... but if I don't find a job then I am going to have to decide on a place to move to in order to focus my job search. Now that I have a beau here in St. John's, I have been reconsidering what it would be like to stay here... but three things keep holding me back:

1. Great employment options are hard to come by.
2. Newfoundland is far away from EVERYWHERE (particularly my family).
3. The weather is only great for 2.5 months.

I am exploring a few job options right now and if I can find something then I might stay for awhile longer... but I just don't see it being a permanent relocation for me. The next month and a half will be interesting, that is for certain!

Christina

2006-05-19 - 1:48 p.m.

What's Been Going On

So it has been a long while since I updated my blog... and certainly there has been a lot going on over the past few months!

Right now I am attending a french immersion course in Trois-Rivieres with a bursary from the "My Explore" program that the Canadian government offers to any Canadian citizen who is currently enrolled in full-time studies. I apologize in advance if my english sounds strange or I have extra bad grammer or spelling... it seems that in order to learn a new language you have to lose some of your first

language (hopefully only temporarily). It is like I have two dictionaries in my head... one in English one in French and because I am supposed to be immersed in french, whenever I go to look for a word in my mental dictionary, I tend to look in the French one first (which doesn't contain all that much).

I will be returning to St. John's on June 14th (26 days) where I will be happy to relax and take a big break for the summer!

On the Academic front, I created a short film about my experiences throughout my film project which I have presented three times: for my final presentation in WSTD 6500; the Women's Studies Speakers' Series; and at a conference at Windsor University for the Feminist Research Group. (The Windsor conference was really well organized and the food was excellent... great options for vegans and meat-eaters alike!)

Most recently I have been awarded the title "Fellow of the School of Graduate Studies"!

Next, I will be attending the CASWE conference at York University to debut my film on June 1st at 1pm!

I am still working on the film but am almost finished... what I will show at York

will be a rough cut since I know that I will want to continue tweaking and adding to it after the conference ends. I am actually progressing quite nicely on it, though it is tough to do while living in "le prison Francais" (as I have taken to calling it).

I have received consent from my Toronto gal and have heard from my Calgary and BC gals that their consent is on the way. My NL gal hasn't been in touch since I dropped off her consent package a few days before I left for le prison F, but I am not worried about that just yet. I will give them a call this weekend to remind them.

For fun, I created a short film about The Kremlin, a Newfoundland band of which I am a huge fan. This film made its debut at a Kremlin event entitled "The Kremlin Dance Party of Canada's 1st Annual Women's Solidarity Night" which was hosted by Carolyn Shimmin and myself alongside the KDPC's latest incarnation: The Proletariat Marching Band. Proceeds were donated to Iris Kirby House, a local women's shelter.

One more move to add to my long list... my roommates and I have moved out of my big red house in St. John's and currently I am storing my stuff at Greg's place for the summer where I will be living temporarily.

Almost A Master

I am very close to the end! All I have left to do is:

- * finalize the film
- * write a report
- * have the project examined by two examiners (or is it three?)
- * convocate

Le prison Français

Ok, so I call it le prison Francais because they have all these rules and regulations. The description of the Trois-Rivieres program on the web is misleading because it makes it seem like only the courses are mandatory. The courses are every weekday from 8:30 - 12:00. However there are also workshops that are mandatory every afternoon except Fridays. That I can also accept as that is just like going to school full-time. The thing I have the most trouble with is that on Saturdays it is mandatory to sign up for an "excursion". They are interesting things but I was really hoping I could spend a weekend in Quebec or in Montreal or Toronto... mais non!!! If you want to leave the campus overnight you have to get permission. I have already had to get special permission to go to my conferences (luckily the director of the school is a feminist researcher) so I don't

want to go ask them for any more favours. I'm just not used to anyone controlling my life so much. Three meals a day in the cafeteria is controlling enough!

This Saturday we are going to Quebec which will only cost me a few dollars, so that is a very good thing, but I would rather spend the extra money to stay for two days rather than one. Also the idea of being with 400 other people on a "tour" really bothers me. They have broken them up into smaller groups, but still... I would prefer to go with a few friends... which I think would give me more opportunity to speak with francophones. As it is we are a bunch of Anglophones all stuck together trying to speak another language and it is so easy to revert to English (even though we can get kicked out for that too).

The up side is that I am definitely improving my french. I realize now that I was kidding myself if I thought I'd be bilingual by the end of this program... so my new goal is to gain the confidence to speak more in french and to be comfortable saying things like, "I'm still learning, can you speak slower" or "can you repeat a little bit more clearly please?" and also, "I don't understand that word "insert word here", could you explain it for me?"

I am doing really well in my course work, but because I am missing so many classes (I have already received a 0 on a few tests and assignments) I will

probably just barely pass. I am not here for marks, though... I am here to learn.

I also realize that in order to keep up the french I learn here, I will most definitely have to continue to use it... the more frequently the better, and with true francaphones would help. Good thing one of my close friends is francaphone... I told her that from now on she should speak to me in French only. I would also love to live somewhere French... another reason Montreal looks good to me :)

Oh, and one more thing before I let you go... I have purchased a simple Tarot book in french to help me learn! I am going to attempt to read people's cards in French... even if I just do simple readings. Maybe I can make a few extra bucks ;)

Ok, I think that covers most of it for now...

salut!

Christina

2006-07-04 - 2:57 p.m.

The Update

Wow, time marches on, that is for sure!

Since I wrote last, I have:

- * received official consent from all my interviewees
- * created a first draft of my film
- * showed the first draft at the CASWE conference on June 1st at York

University

- * finished my french immersion program
- * entered my first film festival with my first draft
- * returned to St. John's to finish editing, write a report and plan the next adventure

There were about 40 people at my first screening and I had provided feedback forms for them to fill out if they wanted. I received about 4 in return and the verbal response was very positive. A few excellent suggestions which have given me inspiration to continue with the editing.

I would like to be finished my final draft in two weeks and then start the report. I just have to call it quits at some point.

That is the latest news about the film!

Cheers,

Christina

2006-08-12 - 12:00 p.m.

Finishing Up

Well a second almost final draft of the film is ready. I just have a few final tweaks and have already begun writing my report. In case I haven't already mentioned, it is titled: What Girls Are Made Of?

Then it has to be handed off to the examiners and then I'm basically finished.

I unfortunately cannot afford to pay the rest of my tuition so that means no graduation until May 2007 officially.

MUN has a 3 year payment option which I had signed up for when I began my program. It was cheaper than the two year payment plan and it also meant no continuance fees if my thesis dragged on longer than two years.

Anyway, it was a good plan but now it leaves me with three more semesters of tuition to pay (plus the previous Spring semester payment that is now overdue). I have applied for one more (and hopefully final) student loan and will remain a graduate student for another semester (maybe even another year) even though I will be finished my requirements.

There are benefits to being a student (like health benefits for example) and not having to pay my student loan back for another year and a half.

This marks the end of my film project blog! I don't know if anyone is reading it anymore anyway... but I felt I had to write one last entry before I start a new blog about my next adventure:

MOVING TO VANCOUVER.

Yes, I have decided that Vancouver is the next adventure.

Thanks for reading!

Hope you enjoy the film :)

Christina

Appendix B

Information For Participants & Her Parent(s)/guardian(s):

Who I am:

My name is Christina Adams, and I am a candidate for a Master's Degree in Women's Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Christina Adams

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Project Description:

Through filming discussions with a diverse group of Canadian adolescent girls I hope to learn about ways girls construct, reproduce, and challenge identity. By engaging these girls in activities that might unpack some of the contradictions portrayed within dominant forms of media, I hope they will share some of their experiences negotiating identity influences in their every-day lives. Do they feel affected by pervasive marketing images? Are there ways in which they feel oppressed or powerful? Are they reacting to and possibly resisting stereotypes and identity constructs? I predict that my interviews with the girls will reveal that identity categories are never completely fixed and that contradictory identities often exist simultaneously.

Location is an important part of the film as I would like to explore the similarities and differences amongst the responses of girls from various regions in Canada. Keeping the project within Canada will help me complete my degree requirements within a timely manner, minimizing expenses while also enabling me to trouble some of the identity constructs that are region specific.

Through this project I hope to:

- Encourage discussion among me, the participants, and the audience about ways in which marketing images affect people.
- Provide a forum for the participants to discuss issues they may not have an opportunity to voice in their every-day lives.
- Reveal cultural influences of identity formation.

Preparation:

In order to prepare for the interviews it would be helpful if you could:

1. Select a piece of media (for example: a music video, magazine, cartoon, movie, video game, advertisement, celebrity, or something similar) that you really like. I'll ask you to show it to me and describe what you like about it during the interview.
2. Select a piece of media (for example: a music video, magazine, cartoon, movie, video game, advertisement, celebrity, or something similar) that you don't like. I'll ask you to show it to me and describe what you dislike about it during the interview.
3. Think about a location where you would like to be interviewed

(your bedroom, your school, a club your involved in, etc.).

4. If you wish you may bring other things to the interview, such as your journal/diary or artwork or anything else that you think will help me get to know you better.

Interview Scheduling:

You will receive a follow-up phone call from me to further discuss the project and determine your availability. When we reach a point where you are ready to give initial consent, we will arrange interview times. Filming will take place from August – November, beginning in St. John's and ending in Vancouver. Because of the scope of the filming, interviews will be scheduled for specific dates according to location. The interview times can be worked around the participant's schedule within the allotted time period.

The Interview Process:

There will be two interviews, each of which will take about 2 hours. My preference is to interview you in a familiar environment (i.e. at home or at a club where you spend a lot of time). We can determine this together when I call to set up the interviews. I will require a few hours before and after the interview to set up and take down the equipment; however you may not need to be present at that time.

We will negotiate privacy and confidentiality and sign consent before the first interview and confirm consent at the end of the final interview. I will begin the interview by asking you to show me the media pieces you have chosen and

what you like or dislike about them. Based on this discussion I will ask open-ended questions that will help me learn about your experiences with media. I will also want to learn about you and your life.

There will be time set aside at the end of each interview for you to be alone with the camera. I will disguise the video footage from these private sessions so that your identity will be hidden. This will give you an opportunity to discuss things you may not feel comfortable talking about in front of people. Except in extreme circumstances, I will be the only one to see this footage.

The second interview will take place on a separate day. I will begin the second interview by showing you the tape of your previous interview (except the private one). This will give you an idea of how you will appear in the film, and allow you to add further comments. At the end of this last interview, I will finalize consent.

Questions or Concerns:

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. If you have any concerns or questions that may not be resolved by me (Christina Adams), you may direct them to my academic supervisor:

Dr. Noreen Golfman
t: 709-737-2478
ngolfman@mun.ca



