

CULTIVATING GENDERED 'UNDERDEVELOPED' SUBJECTIVITIES:
TRACING THE CONSTITUTION OF 'GIRLHOODS' WITHIN MAINSTREAM
DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

By

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ABSTRACT

A shifting and increasingly complex, or shall I say, contradictory story is being told about girls who reside in 'third world' countries. It is one that certainly cannot account for the complexity of her lived experience, but one that, nonetheless, finds its rationalization and indeed its fortitude in mainstream development discourse. This thesis explores the constitution of the subjectivities of girls, associated with the recent shift from a 'needs based' discourse to a 'rights based' discourse in child-centered development policy and programming. This discourse has extended new gendered subjectivities to girls in the form of their autonomy and their capacity to participate in their own development. These subjectivities have been grafted upon historical images of inherent vulnerability, dependence and exploitation. With their newly afforded development status as legal subjects, girls are directed down a path that leads them towards a 'proper' social development, in their present as well as in their futures, and in so doing promises to bring them out of spaces of social 'underdevelopment.'

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Preface: a progression of interests and ideas

The journey that has resulted in this thesis has been one marked by shifts both conceptual and methodological. When I began my research and the writing of my proposal in September of 2005, my stated interests revolved around the ‘girl-child’ in developing countries, specifically Bangladesh, and her perceived invisibility as a domestic and informal labourer within the context of her immediate family. It has been widely acknowledged in academic and policy circles that domestic and informal labour in both developed and developing countries are invisible, devalued and overwhelmingly performed by women (Beneria, 2001; Carr & Chen, 2001; Delaney, 2004; Kabeer, 1998; Mills, 2003). It is only recently that this analysis has extended further within the context of the household, particularly in developing countries, to include the role of young girls in this imperceptible nexus of labour (Blanchet, 1996; Burra, 1995; Dodson & Dickret, 2004; Ray, 2004; Sohoni, 1995). The available literature on girl-child labour in developing countries revealed that girls faced a number of barriers with regards to their visibility and the specific circumstances that shape their experiences, both inside and outside of the home. Much of the time only that work performed by children which is ‘economically active’ has been classified under the category of child-labour. Despite the lack of attention given to domestic and informal child labour, many academics and development practitioners recognized the gendered differences within and across cultures with respect to the functional role of girls in the home. However, due to a number of barriers, including gender-neutral indicators used in research in child labour reports, and the overwhelming amount of attention and resources being funneled into the ‘worst forms of child labour’ as outlined by convention 182 by the International Labour Organization

(ILO), the domestic labour tasks performed by the girl child remain hidden, and therefore, unaccounted for in international as well as domestic labour statistics (Nieuwenhuys, 1994; Satz, 2003)¹.

I became interested in how the invisible labour of girls was potentially acting as a bridging resource for families in times of neo-liberal economic re-adjustment strategies that resulted in the requirement of both parents (specifically) having to work outside of the home. My specified interest with Bangladesh in relation to this phenomenon was based on an inclination (to be confirmed later by development specialists within Bangladesh) that, with the end of the multi-fiber agreement (MFA)² in 2005 and the need for Bangladesh to remain competitive in the garment sector with India and China, women would be working in larger numbers outside the home or working in higher numbers as informal labourers within the home. In either case, girls would potentially be expected to take on more of the domestic labour and to aid their mothers in informal labour tasks; a practice that subcontractors actually account for in adjusting wage rates. Women are effectively paid less because of the ‘help’ they are expected to receive from daughters or

¹ Satz calls for more substantive work to be done in this area: “Very few studies provide data on girls working at home who do not attend school. Indeed the ILO does not include such girls in its statistics on child labor. This limitation on who counts as a working child may be behind the category of nowhere children, children who are neither at work nor at school. Although it may be extremely difficult to obtain survey data on girls working at home, those data are important for assessing the effectiveness and the normative adequacy of different policies” (Satz, 2003: 307).

² The international Multi-Fiber Agreement (MFA), instituted approximately 30 years ago, essentially provided duty-free and tariff privileges and quantity quotas for garments and textiles to certain developing countries in their exports to developed countries (Ward et. al. 2004). As a result, international trade in textiles and clothing between developed and developing countries has been regulated in part by the MFA, the MFA was created in 1974 in part as an attempt for developed countries to protect their domestic clothing and textile industries from the high rates of exports from developing countries and consists of a whole series of bilateral agreements that are negotiated on a country-by-country basis to set quotas on the importation of textiles and clothing from developing to developed countries (Delahanty, 1999). The MFA was originally designed not only for the benefit of developed countries, but also to give exporting countries orderly access to developed-country markets and was intended to provide ‘temporary’ protection for domestic producers in developed countries while at the same time progressively reducing trade barriers and increasingly liberalizing world trade in textiles and clothing products (Delahanty, 1999).

other young women within the home (Burra, 1989; 1995). This practice then ensures that girls aid their mothers because their additional labour becomes required to produce higher rates of output for wages.

Subsequent to these issues, I was also interested in the invisibility of girls in terms of mainstream development discourse and strategies for intervention with regards to ‘girl-child’ domestic and informal labour. My preliminary research found that, while these issues were mentioned within policy text and programming documents, and were part of the collective consciousness of development practitioners more generally, actual development interventions were geared towards promoting education and health care programming, with increasing emphasis on the ‘worst forms of child labour’ as outlined by ILO Convention 182. Within this discourse, children who worked for other families of domestic servants were highlighted but no mention of the gendered dynamic of girls within the context of their own homes was made. Given their contribution to domestic as well as international economies, I felt that this particular form of the labour of girls in the ‘third world’ required greater attention, as they were performing as active economic agents within the context of their families; a role that was going unnoticed by the mainstream development community, as well as by scholars who worked in the area of children and girls in ‘third world’ countries. I found that, while many development and academic studies have assessed the causes and constraints that keep girls from the classroom, such as poverty or customary restrictions, they nevertheless stopped short of an analysis that situates girls as important economic contributors to both their families and the wider domestic and global economies within which they operate. Further, no analysis was being done regarding how expectations placed on such contributions could

potentially increase as neo-liberal policies continue to restructure the need for more informal labour patterns.

My theoretical framework for this project was based heavily in feminist political economy although I did find the post-development framework as articulated by Escobar to be highly useful in conceptualizing how development operated at the level of both discourse and intervention. His use of Foucaudian concepts, as applied to the 'development regime' were applicable to how programming strategies were rationalized and executed under a discourse of enabling development subjects to improve their status in the context of a complex and 'globalizing world.' Methodologically speaking, I began to learn and employ Institutional Ethnography as outlined by Dorothy Smith (1987; 1996)³ and enacted within the context of development discourse and intervention by Mueller (1995)⁴. I define Institutional Ethnography as a methodological framework that aims to interrogate overarching ruling relations (Smith, 1987, 1995) that dictate both discourse and the everyday local applications of people's activities within the context of this discourse. Further, this approach traces the linkages at the translocal level of administration and systems of governance to uncover those processes that have generalizing and therefore, neutralizing effects (DeVault & McCoy, 2002). As part of my methodological endeavor, I consulted development policy texts and set out to interview development practitioners to uncover how they situated the labour of girls within policy and programming initiatives. It would not be long before I would come up against my

³ For more on how to conduct an Institutional Ethnography see: Smith, D. (1987) *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*, Boston: Northeastern University Press.; Smith, D. (1996) "The Relations of Ruling: A Feminist Inquiry," *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies*, 2(2), 171-190.;

⁴ For more on how to conduct an Institutional Ethnography in the context of mainstream development see: Mueller, A. (1995) "Beginning in the Standpoint of Women: An Investigation of the Gap Between Cholas and 'Women of Peru'," In M. a. A. M. Campbell (Eds.), *Knowledge, Experience, and Ruling Relations*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 96-107.

first barrier; no one was addressing these issues. Further, within the context of interviewing development practitioners within Bangladesh, no one would know what the impacts of the end of the multi-fiber agreement would be ‘on the ground’ for at least another year.

Within this initial conceptualization of my project, I also began to have difficulty methodologically. I felt that the conceptual framework of Institutional Ethnography was not conducive to the way that I wanted to talk about mainstream development discourse. Themes of power were too confining and lacked the complexity that I felt was operationalized through development discourse and intervention strategies. The materialist methodology of Institutional Ethnography could not fully account for the enabling strategies of power relations that legitimize development discourse and intervention, nor could it speak fully to the formation of political rationalities that underpin them. Further, Institutional Ethnography required a starting point of the *everyday lives*⁵ of social subjects. As I could not go to Bangladesh myself, I felt that this methodological framework could only be applied to one aspect of my research and indeed the least prominent aspect at that. Starting from the lives of development practitioners in terms of their perceptions of girls was not fully in line with Smith’s intent of outlining a sociology that takes the everyday practices of social subjects as the starting point of social research. Yet another issue stemmed from the increasing anxiety that I could no longer answer my research questions and that my project would have to be situated in terms of ‘potentials’ as I simply could not ‘know’ if and how girls were being

⁵ In *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*, Smith outlines a sociology that takes the everyday practices of women as the starting point of social research. She contends that, historically, women have only been the objects of sociological research and must be moved into the sociological discourse as embodied subject of inquiry.

affected by the economic restructuring initiatives that were occurring in Bangladesh. I also did not want to become ‘the kind’ of ‘Western feminist’ that imposed assumptions about how women and girls were living their everyday lives in the ‘third world’ from secondary sourced literature alone.

Further, upon the examination of development policy that targeted children and girls, there was a definite shift in the discourse that centered on children’s rights and their capacity for agency and participation within the development process. It occurred to me that my central argument around making girls visible as active economic agents could be used within a discourse that framed girls in ways that rendered their economic contributions as instrumental to the development process. This was, indeed, a notion that I found problematic and unsettling. I became critical of own initial argument, not so much in terms of its validity as in terms of how it could become utilized within mainstream development discourse to make girls visible in ways that could become potentially exploitative. I did not want to become part of a development stream of consciousness that made girls visible so as to be able to manage and harness their position in international economies.

What became increasingly interesting to me was this new shift within development discourse centered around ‘rights’ with reference to children that was framing them as *agents* and *participants* within the development process. I wondered: why this discourse based on rights? Why now? And how did it fit with the longstanding argument regarding girls and notions of extreme vulnerability? These were the questions that sparked the beginning of a new direction in my research and one that I felt I could answer because its central focus was based on Western discourse about the developing world and not one

attempting to situate the realities of the everyday lives of girls in Bangladesh that I could not possibly 'know' (at least to the extent that 'knowing' is ever possible). Upon shifting the direction of my project, I also shifted my theoretical and methodological approaches. Both would be heavily influenced by post-structuralist accounts of development policy through the lens of post-development and post-colonial theories, who borrow conceptually from the work of Michel Foucault. I also immersed myself in post-structuralist and Foucauldian accounts of discourse analysis; a method I felt could help unpack the complex dynamics of productive forms of power and knowledge generation within mainstream development discourse.

Therefore, I devoted myself to exploring these new theoretical and methodological frameworks in the context of attempting to disrupt and unpack complex questions about the ways in which girls within 'third world' countries were being positioned, cultivated and perhaps even *imagined* historically through mainstream development discourse. The following pages are the product of my interests and research regarding these new questions and concerns about naming and claiming to know, so as to actively govern the social development of, girls in the 'third world.'

chapter one: introduction and project summary

1 Introduction

I wish to problematize the story that is being told about girls who live in ‘third world’⁶ countries; specifically the ways in which these narratives about girls and ‘girlhoods’ have been used to legitimize development policy, their corresponding strategies of intervention and the political rationalities that underpin them. Therefore, this thesis contributes to the sociology of childhood by taking a critical look at the past and current trajectory of a mainstream development discourse on girls who reside in the ‘third world.’ In this vein, I unpack the formalized processes that act to constitute the subjectivities of girls based upon the shifting political rationalities associated with international development consensus. As part of this task, I examine how mainstream development discourse has constituted girls within the ‘third world’ as gendered ‘underdeveloped’ subjects in need of the expertise, rationalities and knowledges outlined by international development bodies. The relatively recent entry of girls into development discourse, along with their associated development subject status, has rendered girls worthy categories of inquiry for purposes of developmental investigation and intervention.

Until the 1990s, the primary focus of development programming that had targeted girls had focused almost exclusively on addressing their needs as addressed through a

⁶ I would like to acknowledge the problematic nature of using the term ‘third world’ as somewhat outdated, as it incorrectly positions certain countries on a developmental hierarchy without acknowledging the variations of development (socially, politically and culturally) that exist within all nations. However, Mohanty makes an interesting claim for the use of this term as she argues that term ‘third world’ highlights the “heuristic value and the explanatory specificity in relation to the inheritance of colonialism and contemporary neocolonial economic and geopolitical process that the other formations lack” (Mohanty, 2003: 7). To use more politically correct terminology would act to de-politicize the processes of material and discursive colonization that still have shape and force within the ‘third world.’

welfarist discourse of ‘basic human needs’ in terms of nutrition, education and health regulations, that served to help to ensure their progression into productive adulthoods. Practiced more pervasively in the 1970s and 1980s, the ‘basic needs approach’ was grounded in functionalist views of development processes focused on alleviating poverty in developing countries. The ‘basic needs’ discourse was framed around the perceived needs of individual development subjects as opposed to the macro-economic and social indicators (Jones & Coleman, 2005) that pervaded development thinking of the time. Rights-based frameworks, grounded in neo-liberal development ideology would begin to emerge in child-centered programming in the mid 1990s. These enabling strategies, which inform specific relations of power between ‘first’ and ‘third’ world countries, as expressed through education and health based development initiatives, have been, and continue to be, the processes by which development discourse and intervention has garnered a substantially legitimized moral high-ground. Under these productive initiatives, development is perhaps more suitably conceived of as processes where people are governed “...not by right, but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control” (Foucault, 1978: 89).

2 Background and context

Considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity.

-Convention on the Rights of the Child, Preamble, (1991) [1989]

This thesis unpacks the progression of a shifting discourse specific to poor girls in the ‘third world’ within mainstream development policy and programming.⁷ This discourse is one currently centered on children’s rights, and is both old and new. That is to say that its basic principles have permeated development consciousness for some time and found voice through alternative avenues of development thinking in recent decades. These avenues include gender-centered discourses around protection measures for women and girls and those development streams associated with peripheral children’s rights movements. However, it has not been until relatively recently that this particular rights centered discourse, regarding children and by extension girls, has established itself via various development fora and found expression through the design of specific strategies of development intervention. Despite the clear shift in discourse from needs to rights, the rhetoric of the basic needs approach has certainly not been abandoned conceptually or practically. Much of the justification associated with development intervention is still framed around the need for basic resources for children, but is also now couched in terms of the ‘need’ for their rights to be ‘realized’ so that children might be enabled to actively participate as newly defined development subjects. As the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) argues, “poverty reduction must begin with the *protection* and *realization* of the human rights of children. Investments in children are the best guarantee for achieving equitable and sustainable human development” (cited in CIDA’s Action Plan on Child Protection, 2001: 6, emphasis added).

⁷ Miller and Rose (1990) state “...it is through language that government fields are composed, rendered thinkable and manageable...[and] involves inscribing reality into the calculations of government through a range of material and rather mundane techniques” (7). Development discourse is both a formal practice and a forum for the production and consumption of ideas. Therefore, despite uniform criteria and consensus of issues, disruptions occur that spark new trajectories of development thought. At times ideas will surface and disappear only to resurface again, making the task of establishing timelines somewhat difficult.

The decisive discursive shift to a focus on ‘rights’, ‘autonomy’, ‘participation’ and ‘responsibility’ within mainstream development discourse concerning children came about after the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in November of 1989. The Convention attempts to bring together two political viewpoints of children and childhood: the extension of a host of human rights that affords them freedoms and civil liberties on the one hand while also accounting for their specific vulnerabilities on the other (Boyden 1990; White, 2002a). Over the next decade, mainstream international development bodies such as Unicef, and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) have sought to undertake this contemporary ‘rights based’ framework as the central theme of their mandate on child protection initiatives, as articulated throughout major policy documents and development management text. These discursive systems of knowledge production reflect a new discourse on children and girls that is becoming increasingly complex. It is a discourse that signifies more generally the ways in which the hand of the ‘development regime’ has extended its search beyond constructing development subjects, to one intent on shaping their very subjectivities. In this way, the ‘development regime’ as disseminated through discursive projects about the ‘third world’ takes over the terrain of the social production of subject-centered spaces in fundamentally intimate ways.

3 The objective

In this thesis, I explore the constitution of the subjectivities of girls within development discourse. More specifically, I deconstruct the ways in which girls are constructed as ‘neo-liberal development subjects’ under the current rhetoric of ‘rights based’ strategies. I do this through a systemic unpacking of mainstream development

policy documents concerning child welfare and how these texts inform the development discourse centered on girls who reside within the ‘third world.’ I also examine some of the more prominent UN Women’s Conventions. Upon completion of such an analysis I problematize the production of development rationalities specific to girls that attempt to frame a preferred path to her social development. A further emphasis is therefore placed on unpacking the techniques of power/knowledge regimes embedded in these processes of identity construction and representation that are (re) produced through mainstream development discourse and then reflected within development policy and programming.

The discourse on the subjectivities of girls is an exercise in power through the production of specific gendered ‘truth claims.’ Such processes of power/knowledge become most evident upon the examination of the programming within Canadian and international development organizations that flows from the current discourse on girls as a category of gendered ‘underdeveloped’ subjects. This discourse is legitimized through its investment in enabling and productive ‘techniques of power’ that are enacted through ‘common sense’ development interventions such as those outlined through the ‘rights based’ framework that encompass education, health management and protectionist initiatives. These initiatives focus squarely on managing the capacity of girls to participate as development subjects in the present, as well as framing their futures to act in accordance with neo-liberal conceptions of social development. Whether they are framed as ‘girls of the third world’ or as ‘girls becoming women’, both strategies serve to direct girls towards an instrumental existence within the context of the ‘development regime.’

The primary theoretical perspectives which inform this thesis stem from post-development and post-colonial (including southern feminists) theorists who are critical of the 'development regime.' These schools of thought tend to draw on the work of Michel Foucault in terms of his conceptions of power, knowledge and systems of governance. These conceptual tools highlight the ways in which development discourse fosters the very subjectivities of third world peoples who then "come to realize themselves as developed or underdeveloped" (Escobar, 1995: 10, also see Mohanty, 1997b; and Rankin, 2001). Such a perspective problematizes the ways that a particular development discourse comes to be internalized by development subjects, as a form of self-governance, who are then enabled to act in accordance with development intervention strategies. By this, I mean to consider the practices of governance through conduct shaping strategies that foster the production of specific subjectivities 'on the ground' within the sites of development intervention. These subjectivities are then argued to be consumed by development recipients as targets of the development process. In addition to this perspective of subjectivity constitution through discourse, I am also interested in the ways in which the subjectivities of girls in the 'third world' are constituted, cultivated and even *imagined* through mainstream development discourse as represented through development policy and programming text. I explore the terrain of imagined subjectivities in order to examine how girls are "being named, positioned, desired and described and in which languages, texts and terms of reference" (Luke, 1995: 6).

In unpacking these complex procedures in terms of development discourse and strategies for intervention I employ a post-structuralist approach to the methodological framework of discourse analysis as inspired by the work of Michel Foucault. Through

this analysis I focus on the domains within which the discourse on ‘third world’ girls is located and then unearth the political rationalities that underpin their functioning. Here, my methodological practice will serve to unpack specific ‘regimes of representation’ that chart a particular terrain of a narrative associated with girls who reside in developing countries, who are rendered fundamentally ‘Other.’

These representations are the sum of official development knowledges that are associated with people who reside in the ‘third world.’ The interlocking mixture of elements within this discursive practice are many but I argue the central tenants consist of (1) homogenized notions of ‘third world childhoods’ (based in relation to Western conceptions of childhood), (2) what it means to be constituted as a gendered ‘underdeveloped’ subject which includes within its frame of reference, issues of class, race and ethnicity; and (3) the more a contemporary engagement with neo-liberal ideology in relation to child-centered programming. Through the realization of their rights, children are increasingly framed as ‘autonomous’ and ‘responsible’ development subjects in their own right. In this new discursive configuration, the onus for development, both personal and otherwise, falls on the shoulders of the development subject who participate in their own development through the free exercise of their individual choice (Lemke, 2001; Miller and Rose 1990: 24). From this vantage point, I will be engaging with this ‘rights based’ discourse in terms of how notions of childhood, the gendered ‘underdeveloped’ subject and the potential for the realization of a neo-liberal subject status are employed to cultivate a somewhat *imagined* ‘girlhood’ within development discourse.

Extending the ideals of classic liberalism and neo-liberalism to the discourse on children within the West is not a novel era of research. What is new, however, is the exporting of these same ideals to the children of the South as a strategy for development. Previously configured as important only within educational initiatives, a shift to an analysis of poor girls in the ‘third world’ signifies a crucial shift in child-centered development discourse (Boyden, 1990; Stephens, 1995). Placing at the forefront a critical examination of the political strategies that motivate official development discourses, including their more subtle practices and applications (such as the production of subjectivities), potentially highlights the pervasiveness of the logics and rationalities associated with the development of the gendered ‘underdeveloped’ subject. By paying specific attention to the constitution of the subjectivities of girls within development discourse, it is possible to make both a theoretical and practical contribution that makes explicit these strategies of power and ‘regimes of practice’ and representation, which are so pervasive within the ‘development regime.’

4 Key concepts

There are several key concepts that underpin this thesis. For purposes of clarity, I will outline key terms that will be used frequently in this thesis.

Children:

The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a "child" as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law application to the child, majority is attained earlier” (1989: article 1). In some cases, States are obliged to be consistent in defining benchmark ages – such as the age for admission into employment and completion of compulsory education. However, in other cases the Convention is

unequivocal in setting an upper limit – such as prohibiting life imprisonment or capital punishment for those under 18 years of age (UNICEF, 2000).

Mainstream development:

Mainstream development is no longer strictly concerned with GDP growth as human and social development strategies have come to dominate this discourse. By this same token, mainstream development has adopted and absorbed more alternative development concepts and methodological strategies concerning the process of development such ‘participatory development’ strategies. It is becoming increasingly difficult to discern mainstream development with the classic notion of the alternative based non-government organization (NGO). As Nederveen Pieterse (1998) argues “It could be argued that in the 1990s, unlike the 1970s, the big hiatus no longer runs between mainstream and alternative development, but between human development and structural adjustment, or in other words, between two forms of mainstream development – ‘New York’ (UN) and the ‘Washington consensus.’ (345). For the purposes of this thesis, mainstream development refers to a development discourse and policy structure that is shaped by international development bodies and related mandates and international conventions, as outlined by the United Nations and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. DAC is the principle body through which the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) deals with issues related to cooperation within developing countries. The United Nations provides to this body the internationally legislated framework for promoting human rights that have been enshrined into international law. Donor country development agencies, such as the

CIDA, respond to these human rights initiatives in cooperation with the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD.

Development subjects:

The concept of the ‘development subject’ can be defined by drawing on Bhabha’s (1990) notions of the methods by which colonial discourses create categories of underdeveloped subjects. His analysis concludes: “[This] strategic function is the creation of a space for a ‘subject peoples’ through the production of knowledges in terms of which surveillance is exercised and a complex form of pleasure/unpleasure is incited ... I am referring to a form of governmentality that in marking out a ‘subject nation’ appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activity” (75).

Subjectivities:

Within the context of this thesis, I employ a governmentality approach to the concept of subjectivities by examining “the discursive fields within which the human being has become the subject of knowledge, of regimes of explanation, classification and interpretation governed by norms of truth (Rose, 1996: 296). Therefore, I explore the cultivation of the subjectivities of girls in the ‘third world’ in terms of how the subjectivities of girls are positioned, and described as well as in terms of which subjectivities are required of girls within mainstream development discourse. I also join with post-colonial theorists such as Escobar (1995), Mohanty (1997b) and Rankin (2001) when they assert that development discourse attempts to foster the subjectivities of development subjects who then potentially internalize this discursively imagined positioning. Such may be the case when ‘third world’ subjects in the field who are involved within development programming initiatives come to regard themselves as

developed or as ‘underdeveloped’ in relation to the social and political discourse of the program itself.

‘Techniques of power’:

‘Techniques of power’ can be defined here as the processes, both formal and informal, through which power comes to be exercised. “...Foucault suggests that power is intelligible in terms of the *techniques* through which it is exercised. Many different forms of power exist in our society: legal, administrative, economic, military, and so forth. What they have in common is a shared reliance on certain *techniques* or methods of application, all draw some authority by referring to scientific ‘truths.’ ... our society bears witness to the production of quite specific practices which characterize the ways in which power relations function within it” (McHoul & Grace, 1993: 65, original emphasis).

Power/knowledge regimes:

Foucault (1978) conceives of power/knowledge as relational in practice, “not static forms of distribution, they are matrices of transformation” (99). Neither power nor knowledge operates without the other and are dependant on one another to give each its meaning. A comprehensive definition of ‘power/knowledge regimes’ is made by Fraser (1981) as she asserts:

Foucault claims that the functioning of discursive regimes essentially involves forms of social constraint. Such constraints and the manner of their application vary, of course, along with the regime. But they typically include such phenomena as the valorization of some statement forms and the concomitant devaluation of others; the institutional licensing of some persons as being entitled to offer knowledge-claims and the concomitant exclusion of others; procedures for the extraction of information from and about persons involving various forms of coercion; the proliferation of discourses oriented to objects of inquiry which are, at the same time, targets for that application of social policy. Their obvious heterogeneity notwithstanding, all of

these are instances of the ways in which social constraint, or in Foucault's terms "power", circulates in and through the production of discourse in society.

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Development regime:

The term 'development regime' can be defined as the ways in which development discourse "constructs and orders the 'reality' in which it seeks to intervene" (Nustad, 2001: 485).

Regimes of representation:

'Regimes of representation' is meant to signify the practice of establishing specific forms of representations as 'realities' of knowledge production through discourse. Representations shape the way 'that reality is imagined and acted upon' (Escobar, 1995:5).

Political rationalities:

I examine how the subjectivities of girls come to be cultivated and discursively realized through engagement with particular political rationalities. Political rationalities can be defined as ways or methods of reasoning, associated with specific 'techniques of power.' Political rationalities are not pure in that they are the intellectual properties of an institutionalized reality that are internally formalized as problems to be remedied (Lemke, 2001). Further, these types of rationalities attempt to suggest a social reality that has always existed. Rationalities then become formalized processes that act to shape and govern human conduct.

5 Research questions and key objectives

Although a number of overarching themes operate within the context of this project, my central questions are the following:

- i. What has been the history and structure of mainstream development discourse on girls?
- ii. How have the subjectivities of girls been constituted, cultivated and even *imagined* within mainstream development discourse?
- iii. What subjectivities are now required of girls within the context of the emerging rights based discourse regarding children?
- iv. How are these required subjectivities faring in practice?
- v. What are the formalized processes and shifting political rationalities associated with international development consensus that act to constitute ‘third world’ girls’ subjectivities?
- vi. Finally, how do mainstream development discourses constitute girls in the ‘third world’ as gendered ‘underdeveloped’ subjects in need of the expertise and rational knowledges of international development bodies?

This thesis has three objectives,

- i. First, it aims to establish the constitution of the subjectivities of girls in the ‘third world’ within mainstream development discourse as an original object of sociological investigation.
- ii. Next, this thesis acts as a groundwork for future alliances with post-structuralist dialogues concerning the discursive positioning of children and girls within the context of international development communities.

- iii. Finally, this research contributes to the sociology of childhood by providing a critical look at the past as well as the current trajectory of a mainstream development discourse on girls who reside in the ‘third world.’

6 Chapter outline

In chapter two I begin with a discussion of the theoretical and methodological frameworks that I employ in examining how girls are situated within mainstream development discourse. I outline the critical approach taken by post-development and post-colonial theorists who employ the work of Michel Foucault when they problematize development as a historically produced discourse embedded in complex relations of power. I then examine the governance of childhoods under neo-liberalism. Next I go on to outline the debates in the social sciences around the emerging paradigm within childhood studies and the impact of this discourse with reference to the construction of childhoods in ‘third world’ countries. Finally, I examine the ways in which gendered ‘underdeveloped’ subjectivities are formulated within development discourse with specific reference to women and girls as articulated by post-colonial and southern feminists.

In chapter three I lay out my specific research tasks and engage in a brief outline of the different methodological approaches to discourse analysis after which I situate this thesis in the post-structuralist vein of said methodology as inspired by the work of Michel Foucault. After briefly speaking to the utility of this approach in the context of development policy text and mandates, I go on to outline the procedure of discourse analysis that I employ for the remaining substantive chapters.

In chapter four I locate the emerging discourse of children's rights within mainstream development as articulated by the United Nation's *Convention of the Rights of the Child* (1989) and put into practice by international development bodies such as CIDA under the framework of the 'rights based approach.' I outline the political rationalities associated with this shift in child-centered policy and programming, and then move on to unpack this framework as a mechanism for governing childhoods in the 'third world' through the constitution of their subjectivities within development discourse. Finally, using examples from Bangladesh, I problematize this emerging discourse in the context of programming initiatives centered on educating children as to their specific rights.

In chapter five, I extend this critique of the emerging discourse of children's rights to the history and structure of the mainstream development discourse on girls and constitution of 'third world girlhoods.' By unpacking the specific domains of Welfarism, and the movement towards women and gender and development initiatives, a clear picture emerges of the ways in which the lives of girls and their subjectivities have been narrated to serve to legitimize the development discourse and intervention strategies as well as the political rationalities that underpin them. I then outline the ways in which this new discourse of children's rights potentially impacts the discourse on girls in ways that renders them instrumental to the development process by shaping and framing their futures. The example of the Adolescent Development Program (ADP), a development initiative funded and monitored by CIDA, will serve to demonstrate how the progression of the discourse of girls and 'girlhoods' within mainstream development discourse

attempts to cultivate the subjectivities of girls for their own internal rationalities as well as to (re) produce these notions in hearts and minds of girls ‘on the ground.’

Chapter six, the concluding chapter, will summarize the arguments made throughout this thesis and end with a look at ‘the way forward.’ By this, I mean to examine future projects to be undertaken with the ideas derived from the research of this thesis.

7 The disclaimer

Development discourse is a process that is both highly structured and managed, while also plagued by a variety of discursive and conceptual inconsistencies, including a lack of clear and precise causal relationships and/or tidy sequential timelines regarding historical developments. Rather, one is faced with historical anomalies, methodological inconsistencies and development rhetoric that becomes acceptable and used even if it retains limited viability either as theory or practice. Alternatively, at times a particular discourse will thrive only through text and policy dialogue and never be entirely applied to programming ‘in the field.’ The method of relying too intently on internal documentation or recycling existing policy rhetoric among development bodies can result in identifying too closely with concepts or widely accepted trends and not seeing the tensions and distortions that exist when applied to specific development populations. In terms of this thesis, tracing the domains within different and yet related discourses on girls has not been an easy task. Development has an unruly past and its present environment is fast paced and volatile. Further, these domains are at times distinct but more often than not intertwined and heavily reliant upon each other, despite potential inconsistencies. Also, there is much competition in the various communities and even

among multidisciplinary teams involved in framing theories, policies and practices in these domains, notwithstanding the consensus that appears in official documentation. Such may be the case with a mainstream development discourse on girls that is informed by discourses concerning basic needs, gender based dialogues, and advanced liberal ideologies concerning rights.

I will attempt to bring a measure of clarity to some key related issues in the following chapters and will aim to shed light upon the potential political strategies associated with shifts in thought regarding girls, as well as suggest some difficult questions that may form the basis of further research in these areas.

chapter two: situating theoretical frameworks

1 Introduction

Given the varied schools of thought and paradigms that are employed across disciplines, and the propensity for scholars to cultivate their own eclectic mix of theoretical and methodological procedures, it is not surprising that ontological and epistemological inconsistencies can become apparent as one's research process progresses. Having said this, subscribing too closely to the theoretical underpinnings of one's research project, or aligning oneself too strictly to a particular paradigm to inform methodological decisions, can become what Seale (2002) refers to as 'unhelpful foundationalist thought.' (99). Lather (1991) further speaks to the 'untidy realities' of social research that do not always reflect back well on the initial mapping of one's theoretical positioning. In employing a variety of theoretical tools to situate the specific issues surrounding the construction of the subjectivities of girls in development discourse, this project locates itself within the overarching ontological paradigm of social constructionism and the epistemological tradition of post-structuralism. At the level of ontology, the view of the gendered construction of the subjectivities of girls through development discourse flows into an epistemological standpoint that problematizes mainstream development discourse as the deployment of specific rationalities associated with strategies for governing 'third world' populations. From these overarching traditions I begin to situate the theoretical frameworks that contribute to unpacking the contours of this thesis.

An analysis of the constitution of the subjectivity of girls within development discourse requires a theoretical lens capable of accounting for (1) development as a

historically produced discourse embedded in relations of power to be problematized through the perspective of post-development and post-colonial theorists who employ complex conceptions of power as productive for purposes of governance; (2) child governance in neo-liberal regimes; (3) debates concerning the social construction of childhood and the emerging paradigm of a culturalist turn within studies in the social sciences; and (4) the representations of third-world childhoods through development discourse, as problematized by southern feminist scholars, including a look at the specifically gendered implications that these ‘regimes of representation’ have for girls and ‘girlhoods.’

2 Development as discourse

post-development and post-colonial debates

This section discusses development as a historically produced discourse and the power relations embedded therein, as articulated through the works of post-development and post-colonialist theorists. Many post-development advocates (see Briggs, 2002; Cowen and Shenton, 1995, 1996; Crewe & Harrison, 1998; Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995; Rahnema; 1993; Sachs, 1995), attempt to examine the role of relations of power within development as a specialized discourse that serves to uphold as well as to normalize the mainstream development paradigm. Some post-development skeptics (see Bebbington, 2000; Nederveen Pieterse, 1998; Schuurman, 2000) question the value of any concrete contribution given by the post-development discourse and argue that such critiques, while worthy, are lacking in tools to provide for the development community to move forward beyond an emphasis on discursive problematizations. Nederveen Pieterse (1998) argues that one of the central constraints of the post-development critique is the emphasis placed

on resistance rather than emancipation, thereby focusing too intently on what ought not to be done rather than on identifiable goals. Nustad (2001) counters this argument by reminding us of the role of the post-development critique as a mediating tool of inquiry. Nustad further argues that post-development demonstrates why development interventions will not succeed, and that the post-development analysis must be kept separate from an attempt to construct alternatives. Briggs (2002) further strengthens the post-development stance in light of growing criticisms:

By drawing inspiration from the discursive turn in the social sciences and local and indigenous knowledges, post-development effects a move away from the centering of economic relations which characterize neo-liberal, political economy, regulation school and other variants of development studies. In doing so, it initiates a wider critique of development than has hitherto been possible. This indicates the possibility of criticisms and analyses that promote more ethical and nourishing engagements across cultures and lifestyles that coalesce at the site of development efforts.

-Briggs, 2002:421-22

Despite internal debate, many post-development advocates do see uncovering embedded relations of power to be central to the interrogation of the ‘development regime.’ The problematization of development as a modernist form of colonial practices, for example, enables post-development and post-colonial theorists to unpack the historical complexity implicit in these geo-political, economic and social relations of power. Post-colonial theorist and Maori indigenous researcher and activist Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) makes the argument that, while textual and literary criticisms of imperial practices in research are needed, it is important to remember that in very specific ways “Imperialism still hurts, still destroys and is reforming itself constantly” (19).

For post-colonial theorists this ‘post-colonial’ period is still heavily marked by colonial relations in the new form of process of modernization and international

development initiatives that shape the political, economic and social fabrics of many 'third world' countries (Kothari, 2002). The transition out of colonialism into modernization and development is marked by a shift in emphasis, as opposed to the decisive end of one project and the beginning of another (Crush, 1995). Here post-colonial theory is often employed as a larger umbrella approach that seeks to interrogate Western thought and discourse about the non-Western world. It can be considered as a type of "methodological revisionism that enables the wholesale critique of Western structures of knowledge and power" (McClintock, 1994 quoted in Kothari, 2002). Southern and post-colonial feminists, for example, argue that development discourse needs to be interrogated for its specific ethnocentric and masculinist bias. The aim of southern and post-feminist critiques is then to de-center Western, masculine knowledges as they are exported to the South (see hooks, 1992, 1994; Mohanty, 1991, 1997a, 1997b, 2003; Razack, 1999; Saunders, 2002).

Many southern and post-colonial feminists challenge Western feminists, activities and development specialists for their role in the construction of their one-dimensional and victimized poverty stricken third world sister whom is in need of their management and liberation (Kothari, 2002). The image of the Western liberated woman only exists in relation to the 'underdeveloped' and oppressed 'third world woman' (Mohanty, 1997b). This practice by Western feminists and scholars of framing 'third world' women in particular established subordinate roles is achieved only through a discourse and mode of representation that attempts to frame their own identities and experiences as civilized and developed. As such, development discourse centered upon gender-specific initiatives are rendered highly suspect in their practice of the configuration of essentialist categories of

third world women devoid of identities beyond those mapped out by mainstream development discourse.

power/knowledge regimes

Advancements made in mainstream development rhetoric that attempt to incorporate new kinds development of speak, such as those outlined as ‘sustainable’ or ‘participatory development’ strategies, are still regarded by post-development theorists as different discursive constellations of the same elements (Nustad, 2001). A critical examination of the reliance of development textual materials is representative of mainstream development processes of ‘normalization’ (see Escobar 1995; Briggs, 2002). Development experts produce a system of development rationalization that is “...no more than the order they have been trained to perceive or discover. Procedures for producing knowledge about the Third World are thus embedded in the processes of ruling, including, of course, a whole political economy and regimes of cultural production” (Escobar, 1991: 673). Further, specific practices of designation or classification become the processes of authoritative agenda-setting that act to ‘overdetermine’ individual subjects through particular policy frameworks that “rely upon the appearance of rationality, technique and efficiency” (Wood, 1985: 350). These practices highlight the ways in which development practitioners enter the textual world of both academic and development institutions and consume the neutral categories of analysis that may serve to marginalize experiences of people living in developing countries, including those of girls.

In his work in the post-development paradigm, with regards to various development strategies of intervention, Escobar (1984-85; also see 1988;1995;1996) extends a Foucauldian approach to development discourse. Escobar’s work strives to examine the

professionalization of seemingly neutral development knowledges that produce the wholesale institutionalization of development discourse and practice, thereby rendering specific domains of development susceptible to techniques of evaluation and calculation. The power of development discourse, he argues, recreates and sustains itself through the production of specific development based ‘knowledges’ that are consumed and acted upon. Taking his cue from Foucault, Escobar concerns himself with how ‘truths’ or practices of ‘truth telling’ about the ‘developing world’ lead to procedures that dictate the validity of statements about the ‘developing world’, thereby negating alternative views. These constructed ‘modern forms of knowledge’ as well as their specific objects of study (Escobar 1996) serve to make visible the material and discursively created structures that shape our understandings and consensus of the ‘need’ to develop and manage both ‘underdeveloped’ economies and social subjects.

rationalities of governance

...the emergence of a new – that is, modern – political rationality in which power works not in spite of but through the construction of the space of free social exchange, and through the construction of a subjectivity normatively experienced as the source of free will and rational, autonomous agency. It is this idea of a form of power, not merely traversing the domain of the social, but constructing the normative (i.e., enabling/constraining) regularities that positively constitute civil society, that Michel Foucault tries to conceptualize in his work on “governmentality.”

-Scott, 1995: 201

Governmentality concerns itself with the processes and techniques by which government attempts to effectively govern populations. Government, in this sense, resides within two domains. In the first, techniques of governance define a discursive field in which the exercise of its power is rationalized, “In this manner, the government

enables a problem to be addressed and offers certain strategies of solving/handling the problem. In this way it also structures specific forms of intervention” (Lemke, 2001: 191). Here techniques of power cannot be fully understood without unpacking the political rationalities that are responsible for their emergence (Lemke, 2001). The other domain would conceive of government as ‘the conduct of conduct.’ This signifies the relations between techniques of power and processes of subjectification⁸ whereby populations are both governed and act upon themselves to self-govern. In this sense, government instills a new self-regulating field of the social, one that intervenes at the level of society itself (Scott, 1995). Within this arrangement, both “the modern sovereign state and the modern autonomous individual codetermine each other’s emergence” (Lemke 2002: 51).

The employment of a governmentality framework within mainstream development discourse can serve to make visible this discourse as a mode of reasoning or a system of rationalities that attempt to guide ‘third world’ populations towards specific desired outcomes. These include the dissemination of a discourse within mainstream development that requires specific strategies for social, political and economic development, including international frameworks for human rights. If effectively undertaken these initiatives promise to serve to enable populations to move out of spaces of ‘underdevelopment’ and into the realm of the ‘modern.’ These discourses also require the formulation of the specific dispositions of development subjects to adopt and internalize, thereby serving to order and manage their very subjectivities (Rose, 1996).

⁸ Rose (1996) argues that a genealogy of subjectification would require tracing the programs of government as well as the practical means accorded to our human condition to act upon ourselves.

A key element to unpacking the contours of development discourse and strategies of representation and intervention lies in the employment of a post-structuralist framework that employs Foucault's relational conception of power as a promoting rather than as a strictly repressive force (Briggs, 2002). This suggests focusing on specific power structures and mechanisms practiced *through development policy*, as opposed to focusing on the injustices of development alone. Such an analysis would incorporate the perspective of "...a different modality of power in relation to the decolonizing countries-one which relies not *predominantly on force*, but on the mobilization (including self mobilization) of human subjects and nation states through the notion of development" (Briggs, 2002: 424, emphasis added). More specifically it would examine the processes by which "development practices close down or open up lifestyles and individual identities" (Briggs, 2002: 426). Therefore, the goals of development institutions such as the World Bank are not established to repress populations through the threat of diminishing life (although this may in part be the experiences of some) but conversely to *invest* in their very processes of life, to organize and direct the underlying structures that shape and validate the social relations that bind them. This governing of the third world through 'taking charge' and implementing development initiatives through a discourse centered on specific development rationalities underlines the complexity and pervasiveness with which power is harnessed by the 'developed world.' Foucault (1978) gives voice to this dynamic more generally in the *History of Sexuality Volume 1* in mapping out his conception of 'new technologies of power':

The law always refers to the power of the sword. But the power whose task is to take charge of life needs continuous regulatory and corrective mechanisms. It is no longer a matter of bringing death into play in the field of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the domain of value and utility. Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise, and

hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendor; it does not have to draw the line that separates the enemies of the sovereign from his obedient subjects; it effects distributions around the norm ... a normalizing society is the historical outcome of a technology of power centered on life.

-Foucault, 1978: 144

Life is the objective. That is, life and the ability to optimize life as a productive force to be utilized through institutional regulation and the organization of populations to act in accordance with the dominant social, economic and political apparatus. As such, post-development or post-structuralist critiques of development articulate the spaces where caution needs to be taken in the implementation of development initiatives, and call for the re-evaluation of how development institutions and practitioners position themselves in relation to the people and communities they claim to be ‘developing.’

With regards to children, Foucault’s interests would lie with the increasing attention and need for knowledges in the domain of childhood and from this inquiry would attempt to address the ways in which childhood is increasingly governed (Bell, 1993: 391). The child has increasingly become a focus for ‘techniques of governing’ through the creation and management of childhood by power/knowledge networks (1993). The development discourse centered on girls frames itself in terms of enabling populations through the realization of their rights, for example, to improve their economies, their societies, and themselves through the adoption of specific development intervention strategies. These strategies are contingent upon the political rationalities associated with specific ways of reasoning that act to govern a particular discourse about girls as well as their social conduct.

3 Liberalism, neo-liberalism and governing children

What makes a neo-liberal government founded on empowerment and autonomy so compelling is its claims to enable the progress of populations by “providing truthful answers to the question of how one should live and how one should direct or remake one’s life” (Rose, 1996: 301). However, it is only relatively recently that children have begun to be afforded such liberties. Bell (1993) contends that in classical liberal theory, children were rendered as dependent subjects who ‘naturally’ depended on parents for care. The hierarchal relations within families were therefore taken for granted and only once a child became an adult did they then submit freely to being governed under the liberal state. “The subordination of the child is therefore non-political, temporary and based on natural ties, not contract” (Bell, 1993: 394). Within this context, the classic tenants of liberalism – autonomy, freedoms, participation, choice and responsibility – were not necessarily extended to children. Under neo-liberalism, however, this would be challenged. Neo-liberalism has revitalized many of the central concepts of classic liberalism but has done so within the context of a twentieth century framework (Rose, 1993). Under neo-liberal rule, children’s autonomy is recognized as they become individualized units of the family and, therefore, increasingly subject to the techniques of governance so pervasive in the adult spheres of life.

These new strategies of governance can be found in the West, for example, in laws where children have been given rights over parents and institutions (Bell, 1993), and exported to the ‘third world’ through development child-centered programming (Boyden, 1990). With the inception of an emerging neo-liberal ‘rights based’ discourse within

mainstream development, children in the 'third world' are newly defined autonomous development subjects who are expected to participate in their own development process. Parallel discourses in sociology, as well as other fields within the social sciences are engaging with the culturalist turn in childhood studies. In this emerging childhood paradigm, children are increasingly acknowledged for their agency and capacity to act as individual social subjects.

4 Constructing childhoods through discourse

This section locates the discussion on childhood within the social constructionist argument that the current form of modern childhood, as conceived of by the West, is based upon socially and historically specific processes. Development policy specific to children is grounded in the fields of biology and psychology that conceive of childhood as accompanied by a set of universally valid rights that can be enshrined in international law (Boyden, 1990). International child welfare discourse has been heavily influenced by ideologies of social work and legal professions, both of which tend to neglect accounts of the impact of overarching social, political, economic and cultural conditions that impact on the lives of children in developing countries (Boyden, 1990).

In his work *Centuries of Childhood*, Ariès (1962) gives a historical account of the origin of the construction of childhood in the West as the creation of a distinct category of life between the 15th and 18th centuries. Ariès argued that the impact of emerging capitalism on children's upbringing in the West generated a new conception of a bourgeois childhood as a distinct, biologically-defined stage of development. Further, that childhood was increasingly tied to bourgeois ideals of family, privacy and individuality (Ariès, 1962). In the twentieth century, children came to the attention of the

social sciences largely from the work of development psychologists who grounded their analysis in terms of thematic and naturalistic accounts of childhood. The progression from childhood to adulthood was based almost exclusively on categorized stages of psychological development. The social sciences, however, were more concerned with the social structural conditions that shaped childhoods. Within the Western discipline of sociology, the dominant conceptualization of childhood and children has been criticized as one that rendered children as dependent, passive and non-productive (see James and Prout, 1990; Morrow, 1996; Nieuwenhuys, 1994, 1996; Qvortrup, 1990). This assignment of total dependency upon adult relations is in opposition to historical accounts of the varied roles of children across cultures and their capacity, for example, to contribute to family economies through both productive and reproductive labour tasks. This disassociation of experiences of childhood from labour and other forms of valued work is an example of the conditions upon which 'developed' Western countries consider as measures of modernity (Nieuwenhuys, 1996).

Building on these themes, James and Prout (1990) outlined a culturalist framework with which to disrupt the notion of a singular and monolithic child upon which an ideal childhood might be 'discovered.' The social sciences, they argue, have not produced neutral accounts of childhood but instead have focused on dominant discourses surrounding Western notions of optimum childhoods that have informed both research and social policy. An analysis of the discursive practices that aim to constitute varying childhoods is thus required to interrogate the production of their specific associated rationales (James & Prout, 1990); the political rationalities that underpin their narration in discourse and policy intervention.

Following this critical examination of the taken-for-granted ‘universal’ and ‘natural’ childhood experiences, James and Prout (1990) outline a framework of what they term the ‘emerging paradigm’ of childhood within the social sciences. The ‘emerging paradigm’ in the social sciences not only takes into consideration that childhoods are socially constructed⁹ and reconstructed across time, and that the experience of a childhood cannot be separated from other socially contested variables such as gender, class, race and ethnicity. Other important points of departure from more traditional views of childhood include the acknowledgement that childhood is not a singular or universal phenomenon; that children are worthy social units of analysis in their own right separate from adults; and finally, building upon the latter, that children are active in the meaningful construction of their own lives (James and Pout, 1990: 8). From this, sociologists have begun to deconstruct the ways in which notions of children can include aspects of their capacity to “... be at once both powerless and powerful [This] is an important conceptual contribution if we are to better understand the complex relationship between producing knowledge and representing children” (Caputo, 2001: 181). The delicate balance between children’s capacities for autonomy and their need for protectionist measures is one that has not yet been properly achieved and one that may not come to pass under the political rationalities of neo-liberalism.

The internationally based discourse of children’s rights, for example, as a stated obligation for all countries, finds common ground with some of the above assertions regarding children’s evolving status in society. However, while the potentially enabling

⁹ James and Prout (1990) define the social construction of childhood as a “biological immaturity rather than childhood which is a universal and natural feature of human groups, for ways of understanding this period of human life – the institution of childhood – vary cross culturally although they do form a specific structural and cultural component of all known societies” (3).

strategies of 'rights' may be much needed protectionist measures for children in some instances, a global standard of childhoods has already been found highly problematic in practice. Therefore, the emerging discourse of the culturalist turn in childhood studies is potentially both accepted but also critiqued by development skeptics such as post-colonial theorists, including post-colonial feminists.

5 'Regimes of representation': framing 'third world' girlhoods

The international human rights discourse surrounding the girl child is underpinned by a universal and stereotypical construction which presents her as a victim of backward, oppressive and highly patriarchal cultures. Typically, the girl child is portrayed as the desperate and reluctant victim of female genital mutilation in Africa; the poverty-stricken child laborer and child-bride in India; the child prostitute in Thailand; the undeserving victim of honour killing in the Middle East; the illiterate, uneducated, exploited, and uncared for child in Latin America; or the unwanted girl child in China. More recently, the girl child has entered the popular western imagination in the form of the fleeing, illegal, refugee who is in need of our protection on the one hand, and who signifies the barbarism of her country of origin on the other hand. All of these images are typically displayed prominently in the fund-raising initiatives of international aid organizations and in the mass media.

-Jiwani & Berman, 2002: 1

As discussed earlier, southern and post-colonial feminists have long problematized the portrayal of women in developing countries as monolithic subjects as representative of a type of discursive colonization (Mohanty, 1991, 1997b). Their status as 'underdeveloped' subjects takes on a gendered dimension within mainstream development policy and programming when they are expected to take on certain characteristics. Mohanty critically interrogates the representation of an 'underdeveloped' subjectivity in mainstream development literature (Escobar, 1995). These qualities "consist of features such as powerlessness, passivity, poverty and ignorance, usually dark and lacking in historical agency ... not infrequently hungry, illiterate, needy, oppressed

by their own stubbornness, lack of initiative” (6). Gendered ‘underdeveloped’ subjectivities consist of notions of women and girls in developing countries as sexually constrained or alternatively as battered and exploited. Women are often also categorized as ignorant, poor, and uneducated, as ‘underdeveloped subjects but gain the additional features of being bound by their traditions, highly domesticated, family oriented, and victimized (Mohanty, 1997: 80b). Southern and post-colonial feminists regard such representations as a highly gendered and racialized discourse in need of critical deconstruction and “a methodological revisionism that enables a wholesale critique of Western structures of knowledge and power” (Kothari, 2002: 39).

Girls also become victim to this potentially discursive misrepresentation in the ways that they are framed within mainstream development discourse. They have the additional component of their age as a feature to incite politically charged discourses of extreme exploitation and vulnerability; images that may be used as political strategies to legitimize development interventions on their behalf. This is in part due to an implicit assumption within mainstream development discourse around the social development of children in the ‘third world’. This discourse assumes that children should evolve to maturity in a linear trajectory towards a Western centered conception of childhood and that this specific path is inherently more desirable than any other possible choice. Further, it suggests that specific child based development intervention will enable children who reside in the ‘third world’ to journey down this path with fewer negative consequences (potential roadblocks) to their overall social development.

The emerging paradigm of childhood is influencing an emerging mainstream development discourse on children and girls within developing countries in complex, and

at times contradictory ways. On the one hand, the 'emerging paradigm' of childhood allows us to consider the social and cultural conditions under which childhoods are produced without making normative reference to the Western ideal. However, although this emerging paradigm acknowledges the existence of multiple childhoods in an attempt to separate itself from more traditional Western notions of childhood as the hegemonic ideal, it falls short of accounting for the complex processes that constitute third world childhood experiences. What this framework neglects to highlight are the transformations brought on by strategies of colonialism, modernization and development interventions as currently established through neo-liberal economic policy that have impacted the social, political and cultural conditions under which many developing countries currently operate (Balagopalan, 2002). It does not acknowledge how through these processes, identities are renegotiated such that they have an impact on nations, communities as well as conceptions of local as opposed to universal notions of childhoods.

For girls who live in developing countries these constructions of a universal ideal of childhood impact a gendered discourse on the construction of 'girlhoods' that act to cultivate their subjectivities within mainstream development discourse. It is important that attention be drawn to the complex mix of discursive strategies used to formulate and produce imagined 'girlhoods' through a development discourse that can potentially become reproduced 'on the ground' via intervention strategies and then imposed upon the newly defined development categories of girls and boys. More productive measures should be taken to chart the deliberate discursive configurations of gendered representations that attempt to conceptually locate the lived experiences of third world women and girls.

6 Conclusion

This chapter has served to demonstrate a post-structuralist approach to development through the lens of both post-development and post-colonial perspectives, including those of post-colonial feminists. The employment of the work of Michel Foucault has weighed heavily upon these critical development frameworks through his conceptions of ‘power/knowledge regimes’ and the facilitative and enabling aspects of governance as specific ‘techniques of power.’ As a potentially charged political strategy, children have been afforded autonomy under neo-liberalism; a kind of individualizing status not extended to them under classical liberal rationalities. Some of these same elements can be found in the emerging paradigm of childhood, that argues for the complexity of experiences of childhoods, including an increasing emphasis on child autonomy. However, as argued by southern feminist and child specialists, this discourse has not yet adequately accounted for the ways in which histories of colonialism, modernization and now development interventions shape the lives of children in the ‘third world.’

As Caputo (2001) argues “...children live their lives through a complex interaction involving a number of competing discourses of childhood” (Caputo, 2001: 180). With the more recent development policy literature around ‘rights’, development discourse will have to engage with what this means in terms of its position on ‘girlhoods.’ Until recently, development discourse had depended on gendered and ‘underdeveloped’ representations of women and girls as almost exclusively vulnerable populations to legitimize programming intervention on their behalf. So what will the subjectivities of girls look like now with the inception of a discourse that extends to ‘third world’ children

personal autonomy, rights, entitlements, and the ability to participate as development subjects? This question will be addressed in my substantive chapters.

chapter three: methodology

1 Introduction: research tasks

Discourse analysis creates the possibility of “stand [ing] detached from [the development discourse], bracketing its familiarity, in order to analyze the theoretical and practical context within which it has been associated” (Foucault 1986: 3). It gives us the possibility of singling out ‘development’ as an encompassing cultural space and at the same time of separating ourselves from it by perceiving it in a totally new form.

-Escobar, 1995: 6

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a descriptive account of my methodological framework. This framework consists of a post-structuralist, Foucauldian inspired approach to discourse analysis, and its specific contribution to unpacking institutional mainstream development policy text and internalized dialogue. This approach specifies the ways in which textual devices are employed to legitimize and normalize the cultivation of specific subjects and subjectivities. In this way it can be argued that: “Discourse has a hegemonic function. Its principle effect is to establish itself as a form of common sense, to naturalize its own functions through its appearance in everyday text” (Collins, 1989 in Luke, 1995: 20). Therefore, it is through discourse analysis that the disruption of certain ‘truth claims’ that come to be embedded in policy text can become de-centered. Expanding upon this dialogue, this thesis is guided by a qualitative research approach that aims to interrogate the ways in which ‘techniques of power’ are deployed through development discourse to constitute the subjectivities of girls. I explore the role that mainstream development discourse plays in the organization of gendered ‘underdeveloped’ subjectivities and how it employs specific political

rationalities prescribed through formalized documentation to inform development policy and practice.

My empirical research is invested in unpacking development policy texts from international development bodies, including Unicef and CIDA, as well as development mandates as outlined by international United Nations conventions focused on women and children. Central documents to this thesis include: *CIDA's Action Plan for Child Protection* (2001); *CIDA's Social Development Priorities* (2002). In chapter five, I provide a brief but illustrative example of how the subjectivities of girls in the 'third world' are used within development programming initiatives, through a cursory examination of the Adolescent Development Program (ADP), a development project funded by CIDA.

I chose to specifically focus on development policy texts from CIDA as they are the formal channel for official development assistance for the government of Canada. Therefore, they are active in aligning themselves with current international development political agendas. As such, their documents serve to reflect the knowledge base of international development bodies that are largely produced for both internal circulation within development institutions, as well as for public knowledge and consumption.

In addition to an examination of policy texts and programming initiatives at CIDA, I also examine the progression of the mainstream development discourse on girls by tracing some of the more prominent UN Conventions on Women and children their subsequent mandates. These include the *Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) (1979); the *Nairobi Women's Conference* (1985); the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989); the *World Summit for Children*

(1990); the *Vienna Human Rights Conference* (1993) and the *Beijing Women's Conference* (1995). The conventions outlined in my substantive chapters are by no means the only UN women's and children's conferences that have taken place to date, nor are they the only conventions that have had an impact on the global concerns of women and children. I chose these particular conventions because they were, according to my research, the most widely cited mandates in terms of framing the needs and rights of children and girls in the 'third world.' Not all are dealt with in the same depth and it is important to note that the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* and the *Beijing Women's Conference*, for example, are given higher priority.

A secondary component of my research involved in-depth, open-ended interviews with eight development practitioners.¹⁰ A snowball method was employed to gain access to these informants. Informants for this portion of my research consisted of development practitioners who operate within CIDA, as well as the non-governmental organization (NGO) UBINIG: an acronym in Bengali that when translated into English stands for Policy Research for Development Alternatives. These informants specialize in a range of development streams including child protection units, as well as gender mainstreaming and/or development policy branches. My UBINIG informant was a specialist in gender and development initiatives in Bangladesh.

¹⁰ Please refer to Appendix A to review ethics documentation for interviews. It is important to point out that I conducted these interviews when I was still working within the theoretical and the epistemological parameters of the first phase of my empirical research regarding girls and domestic labour in Bangladesh. At this time, I was employing an Institutional Ethnography approach. Thus the language used within these documents speaks to the research outline of that first project. As my project moved towards a poststructural analysis and textual discourse analysis, these interviews became secondary. Indeed, it was partly my frustration with the limited data obtained through my interviews, that I made the shift to analyzing texts as a central source of data.

My interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to an hour in length between February and June of this year. Six of these were conducted on-site at CIDA. One interview was conducted by email with a CIDA development policy specialist and the other was conducted in a private home where my UBINIG informant was residing at the time. Six of the eight development practitioners interviewed were women, two of whom were Bangladeshi; one working within CIDA and the other, as already mentioned, living and working with UBINIG in Bangladesh.

A key aspect of this portion of the research process required requesting that my informants direct me to the texts that serve to inform their particular understandings and perceptions of the issues faced by girls in developing countries. Four of the eight interviews proved to be the most illuminating and yielded interesting commentary on the views of development practitioners with regards to the contemporary discourse concerning the 'rights based approach', in terms of its capacity to strengthen program effectiveness. The informant from UBINIG was more critical of the role that this new discourse played in informing programming and in how the 'rights based approach' could ultimately help the realization of the stated international goal of poverty alleviation within the 'third world.' These varying opinions are featured within the substantive chapters of this thesis, where they are explored in greater depth.

The remainder of this chapter will serve to outline the central aspects of a post-structuralist Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis and its application to unpack the mainstream development discourse centered on 'third world' girls.

2 Discourse analysis: an overview

Due to the multiplicity of various mediums of discourse within our everyday worlds of talk and text, discourse itself becomes both a pervasive as well as an invisible force in our lives (Potter, 2004). Discourse analysis is used at both analytical and theoretical levels within a range of social sciences disciplines (Potter, 2004), each with its own disciplinary frames of reference. These include the fields of linguistics, cognitive psychology, literary theory, cultural studies and philosophy. In sociology those that attach themselves to the linguist turn such as sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication and ethnomethodology are especially notable, as these branches attempt to connect processes of socialization through language development. Each methodology brings with it a different vantage point from which to disrupt versions of the social world and investigates how these versions become (re) produced through discourse.

In the widest sense of this methodological approach, Potter (2004) positions discourse analysis as characterized by anti-realist and constructionist paradigms with an added nod to reflexivity, thereby emphasizing “the way versions of the world, of society, events and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse” (146). Many of the more commonly known forms of discourse analysis focus on the development of language and see discourse as a linguistic object to be analyzed, such as through the practices of speech-act theory and conversational analysis (Potter, 2004). Within other frameworks of discourse analysis there exists a kind of analytical commitment to further studying discourse as talk and text, as well as situating an analysis that takes into account ‘what people do.’ Therefore, this type of discourse analysis is concerned with the performance of subjects. Still others use discourse analysis as a critical and highly

political methodological tool to focus on relationships between discourse and the broader social formations through which versions of a social world are constructed (Luke, 1995). This movement in discourse analysis is at times couched in post-structural debates (see Potter 2004; Wetherell et al., 2001), and at other times used within the context of critical discourse analysis (see Luke 1995; Wodak et al. 2001; Van Dijk 1993).¹¹ It is influenced by the work of Foucault, as well as structuralist and critical theory fields of social inquiry that span the disciplines of feminism, neo-Marxism and critical linguistics.

A post-structuralist approach to discourse analysis concerns itself with how discourse acts to constitute both objects and subjects and how this construction is reflected back through interactional materials such as text (Luke, 1995; Potter, 2004). That is to say, it demonstrates how discourse is used to constitute identities and subjectivities, as embedded in power/knowledge regimes in both broad social formations as well as at 'local centers' of governance, such as those forms of discourse that become internalized by subjects and communities. Escobar (1996) defines a post-structuralist analysis of discourse analysis as not only confined to the realm of linguistics but as "a social theory, a theory of the production of social reality which includes the analysis of representations as social facts inseparable from what is commonly thought of as 'material reality' ... Discourse is the process through which social reality inevitably comes into

¹¹ Critical discourse analysis as a subset of critical linguistics or critical language studies (Luke, 1995; Wodak, 2005) shares with other variants of discourse analysis a motion to study the social context of language and a recognition of how social subjects negotiate meaning in knowledge and identity construction (Luke 1995). Critical discourse analysis takes its point of departure from mainstream notions of discourse analysis in that it interrogates the "role of discourse in the (re) production and challenge of dominance" (Van Dijk, 1993: 249) as well as to problematize the discursive strategies employed by elites that act to maintain processes of inequality (Van Dijk, 1993). In this branch of discourse analysis, the talk and text become a sort of "battleground for a politics of representation" (Luke, 1995: 5). Van Dijk argues that critical discourse analysis, of this variety, tends to focus more heavily upon notions of top-down relations of power situating this work more comfortably within the fields of critical theory.

being” (46). Therefore, a central tenant of a post-structuralist approach that incorporates a Foucauldian framework to discourse analysis is to conceive of discourse as a strategy that both constructs and reproduces versions of social life through the systematic creation and categorization of ‘truths’ about the social world. Further it traces, through a genealogical lens, how various techniques of power have come to be employed at historical junctures only to be made manifest as forms of ‘legitimate’ knowledge. This project strives to make linkages between that of a Foucauldian analysis of ‘power/knowledge regimes’ and the discursive relations embedded within development discourse that act to construct the subjectivities of girls. The use of discourse analysis in this context serves to de-center the institutionalized knowledges created and presented about girls who reside in ‘third’ world countries. It serves to accomplish this task by unpacking generalized truth claims about their positioning as children and as gendered ‘underdeveloped’ subjects, whose needs and rights are constructed by international development bodies on their behalf, based upon specific and shifting political rationalities.

3 Development discourse and institutional text

Policy texts are central to the organization and implementation of development programming initiatives within national development bodies such as CIDA. In aligning themselves with those mandates outlined by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)¹² as exemplified by the Millennium Development Goals, national development institutions are expected to coordinate their policy and programming with those of the international development consensus.

¹² DAC is the principle body through which the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) deals with issues related to cooperation within developing countries. The United Nations provides to this body the international legislated framework for promoting human rights.

Luke (1995) defines text as “language in use, any instance of written and spoken language that has coherence and coded meanings ... texts are those artifacts of human subjects’ work at the production of meaning (i.e. representation) and social relations” (13). Texts come to represent discursive strategies of processes of representation and normalization. These processes are further strengthened through practices of ‘intertextuality’, which refers to the “repeated, and reiterated wordings, statements, and themes that appear in different texts ...in this way texts are actually lodged together within other texts and may intertextually index each other” (Luke, 1995: 13). Therefore, a strong element in the deployment of a particular discourse, concerning girls for example, can be identified through an examination of the consistent and re-occurring themes across texts such as ‘the rights based approach’ or statements such as ‘serving the best interests of the child.’ These practices also serve to frame repeated specific discursive representations of a single ‘third world’ girl as inherently exploited, uneducated and vulnerable.

Development policy texts are sites of discourse production that encapsulate the sum of the official development knowledges concerning specific subjects of development inquiry. Every text then becomes a kind of social action (Luke, 1995), with particular interests, features and intended outcomes identifiable to those who operate within similar institutional frameworks. Part of the force behind the ‘development regime’ is its ability to establish relatively uniform ideological consensus around shifting development discourses (Briggs, 2002). When a conceptual shift is made within mainstream development discourse, international development bodies integrate its elements into policy for internal circulation to ensure that outgoing documents reflect this new

conceptual shift or approach. Development discourse, as articulated through development policy texts are central to the dissemination of development ideology (such as the shift from children perceived ‘needs’ to a discursive emphasis of their ‘rights’) that must then be absorbed into the collective consciousness of the international development community. Discourse, as expressed through textual representation becomes a mechanism to (re) produce existing ideas, or alternatively, to educate development practitioners regarding new conceptual frameworks for policy and programming interventions. Certain policy documents act as the summation of development knowledges of the lived experiences of girls in the ‘third world’ and serve as textually based modes of ‘regimes of representation.’

4 Foucault and method: unpacking development discourse

Indeed it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together. And for this very reason, we must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant and the dominated one; but as *a multiplicity of discursive elements* that can come into play in various strategies ... Discourse *transmits and produces power*; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it.

-Foucault; 1978: 100-101

Foucault’s method acts first and foremost to make explicit the relations between power and discourse; showing how through discursive practices certain ‘techniques of power’ come into play to form systems of rationalities performed in any number of given localities that come to ‘count as the truth.’ Foucault’s interests lie in the structures and systems formed through discourse and their subsequent *effect in the real* to which discourses are linked (Foucault, 1980b: 237, emphasis added). A method inspired by a

Foucauldian perspective on systems of power, employed within an interrogation of development discourse, aims to unpack how local sites of discourse are transformed into highly abstract and generalized forms, where social relations become governed by organizational and institutional logics. The standardization and codification of development policy acts to deploy the universal categorization of development subjects (Wood, 1985) thereby including them in power/knowledge regimes. Here the overarching ‘techniques of power’ within development organizations must be considered, as they serve to animate the local conceptions and everyday understandings of development practitioners, as they consume and produce textually based policy driven development initiatives that frame girls who reside in developing countries in specific ways.

For the purposes of this project, what is critical is to discern the point of application (the target) of the specific gendered discourse on girls, in both the discursive and non-discursive fields it strives to encompass. Moreover, I examine what effects this new field has for producing power through the creation of new political rationalities in the domain of the social (Scott, 1995). In this case, I examine the domain of a discourse that informs the discursive and material consequences of development interventions, in the form of enabling development initiatives, on behalf of girls who are located as gendered ‘underdeveloped’ subjects. I consider how the employment of specific tactics within the field of the discourse, as inspired by new or shifting political rationalities, became enacted to cultivate new subjectivities and new subject positions for girls.

It is through the construction of a ‘need’ for development interventions that a multitude of administrative and organizational practices come into play. These practices include those that regulate economies, political positions, gender relations, and the very

bodies of third world peoples to act in accordance with the ‘techniques of power’ that structure and secure the dominant position of the developed world. A Foucauldian inspired approach situates power outside of decision making as intention, preferring to ask how “power installs *itself* and produces real material effects; where one such effect might be a particular kind of subject who will in turn act as a channel for the flow of power itself. Foucault does not turn to the ‘authors’ of power but to *the field of power*” (McHoul & Grace, 1993: 21, emphasis added). In extending this analysis to mainstream development discourse, the significance of tracing the formation of a field of power is as Escobar (1984-85) asserts, tracing “the establishment of an ever more encompassing domain of intervention” (387). A critical approach that serves to make these discursive relations explicit, such as that undertaken through the lens of discourse analysis, can highlight seemingly neutral processes of governing and production of political rationalities

Working within the context of the *practical field* of mainstream development discourse, I will (1) examine the *historical and structural conditions* under which the discourse on girls came about within mainstream development. By this I mean to examine how the perceived lives of girls and the ways in which they lived became a problem for mainstream development to ‘fix’ through specific development interventions. Within the context of this brief history, I will (2) examine the *domain (s)* within which the discourse on girls is situated through the discourse on children’s centered development initiatives as well as the discourse on women and themes of gender programming. And finally, (3) I will focus on highlighting the shifts within the discourse

itself by locating the *political rationalities* that underpin each on the domains of the discourse.¹³

5 Conclusion

Placing a critical examination of the logic of mainstream development discourse at the foreground of analysis of international development strategies makes possible the interrogation of the flows of knowledge, power, and practices of representation through development policy and projects (Klenk, 2004). Through a need to build alliances across and between international development bodies, practices of cross indexing and ‘intertextuality’ create an environment where discourse is captured in policy and programming documentation and used internally to inform largely homogeneous notions of girls. Their representations through internalized discourses is produced and reproduced for the purposes of mainstream development consensus that theoretically leads to uniform programming. The specific discourse associated with the ‘rights based approach’ is an example of such practices. Therefore, an important question becomes how to unpack the processes by which development practitioners, who base themselves in the textual world of development institutions and policy frameworks construct the seemingly neutral categories of analysis which serve to marginalize experiences of people living in developing countries, including those of girls.

This chapter has served to outline the specific research tasks for this thesis in terms of the development documents and international mandates based on UN women and children’s conventions. In addition to this textually based research to inform my

¹³ For discussions of applying a post-structuralist, Foucaultian framework to discourse analysis see McHoul & Grace (1993) *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, power and the subject*, Washington: New York University Press; and Escobar, Arturo (1984-85) “Discourse and Power in Development: Michel Foucault and the Relevance of His Work to the Third World.” *Alternatives*, 377-400.

thesis, I also conducted 8 in depth interviews with development practitioners from both CIDA and a Bangladeshi NGO. It has also traced the various schools of thought regarding discourse analysis focusing specifically on the post-structuralist vein of discourse analysis to incorporate the work of Michel Foucault.

By utilizing a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis to unpack the complex ways in which the subjectivities of ‘third world’ girls are constituted, I first trace the history and structure of the discourse on girls within mainstream development. Next, I outline the specific domains within which these discourses are situated and then locate the political rationalities that underpin each of these specified domains.

This particular employment of discourse analysis problematizes and brings to light the different and shifting modes of development discourse and the political rationalities that support these same processes. We can begin to see how “*the terrain of the political struggle itself*” has shifted (Scott, 1995: 198). What also becomes possible from this methodological perspective is an alternative reading and interpretation of a development discourse that serves to constitute particular gendered and ‘underdeveloped’ subjectivities. Discourse analysis therefore serves to de-center ‘taken for granted’ knowledges about the perceived ways in which children, and girls in particular, live within ‘third world’ countries.

In the following section I will situate the impact of the emerging discourse regarding children and human rights in the ‘third world’ as a strategy for the governance of ‘underdeveloped’ childhoods.

chapter four: governing childhoods through the emerging discourse on 'rights'

1 Introduction

The critical point here is not whether natives were included or excluded so much as *the introduction of a new game of politics* that the colonized would (eventually) be obliged to play if they were to be counted as political. And one of the things the new game of politics came to depend upon was the construction of a legally instituted space where legally defined subjects could exercise rights, however limited those might have been.

-Scott, 1995: 208

As expressed above, colonial practices were founded not only through the establishment of economic and political systems but also through the formation of social subjects willing to act and to function in productive ways within these spheres of social life (Stephens, 1995). Building on this line of thought, within the context of development discourse, processes of 'underdevelopment' are potentially dismantled or undermined through the installment of new conditions for living in society and with one's self. These new conditions replace the old less civilized ways of living and of being. "[This is how] Modern power seeks to arrange and rearrange these conditions (conditions at once discursive and non-discursive), so as to oblige subjects to transform themselves in a certain, and more specifically, *improving* direction" (Scott, 1995: 200). Such a path to a proper social development, with regards to children has been realized in part through the decisive discursive shift towards the 'discovery' or invention of children's rights within mainstream development discourse.

This chapter explores the emerging discourse on children's human rights within 'third world' countries as outlined by the United Nation's *Convention of the Rights of the Child* (1989) and then enacted through the policy framework of the 'rights based

approach.’ The Convention outlines a number of protective rights based measures to improve the social environments of children (specifically those children who live in the developing world)¹⁴ through the global institutionalization of their rights. Some of these rights include protections against discrimination based on race, sex, language, ethnic or social origin while others outline the right to be protected from physical and mental violence as well as neglect and maltreatment.¹⁵ The ‘rights based approach’ is a policy and programming framework that serves to inform the intent and scope of the Convention in the context of an international discourse on children in the ‘third world.’

Sex trafficking, exploitative labour practices and forcing children to become soldiers in political, cultural and ethnic wars, are all devastating practices that need to be addressed in sensitive ways. It is not the goal of this thesis to attack or undermine these initiatives. What I am interested in, however, is how this emerging discourse on rights is couched in terms of child agency, participation, children’s choices and their responsibilities, in a way that few other areas of discourse regarding children have explored in the past. Further, I will examine how this shift in discourse serves to legitimize contemporary political rationalities framed within the context of neo-liberal ideologies as extended to children. These neo-liberal ideologies serve to inform emerging notions of ‘third world ‘childhoods’ through internal, as well as international, systems of development formation and intervention. Therefore, this emerging discourse on children signifies the processes by which ‘third world’ childhoods are constructed along new lines

¹⁴ The Convention of the Rights of the Child recognizes children of the ‘third world’ as special populations requiring additional support. It states: “Recognizing the importance of international co-operation for improving the living conditions of children in every country, in particular in the developing countries, “ (Convention on the Rights of the Child, (1991) [1989]: Preamble)

¹⁵ These rights are outlined respectively in article 2 section (1) and in article 19 section (1) of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*.

of reasoning within development discourse, to strengthen internationally defined goals of development.

This chapter will (1) outline the progression of a mainstream development discourse that has framed the rights of children as an international political strategy; (2) unpack this discourse in terms of a mandate that serves to govern childhoods through specific mainstream development discourse and policy frameworks; and (3) will end with the problematization of this discourse as a political rationality that does not account for the diversity of children's lives within the 'third world.' Part of this problematization is achieved through an examination of the resulting impact of this emerging discourse on practices that serves to constitute the subjectivities of children through mainstream development discourse. Examples from Bangladeshi development practitioners, and projects undertaken within Bangladesh, will serve to highlight inconsistencies between mainstream development discourse and practice with regards to children's rights. It also speaks to the cultivation of the subjectivities of children so as to conform to international development consensus regarding specific rights-centered political rationalities.

2 From children's needs to children's rights

Children's issues are becoming less marginalized as specific international provisions are being made beyond the initial education and health care programming to promote them as distinct categories of development analysis (White, 2002a). With the inception of the 'discovery' of children's rights within mainstream development, discourse has come the proliferation of development expertise targeting the specific 'needs' of children in association with the realization of their newly founded rights.

Therefore, within this framework, children are seen as requiring a new and distinctive approach to help formulate their particular social development.

The movement towards an international framework that would extend human rights to children began in 1924 when the founder of Save the Children International Union (SCIU), Eglantyne Jebb, drafted what would become the *Charter of Child Welfare of the League of Nations*. In 1959 a modified version of this same framework was passed by the UN General Assembly as *The Declaration of the Rights of the Child*. The declaration attempted to outline a global standard of childhoods as a reactionary measure to the suffering of children in both World Wars (Beigbeder, 2001; Black, 1996). Despite efforts to solidify a space for children in terms of human rights and protections, this particular initiative was more or less a collection of general moral entitlements, few of which could be guaranteed by any international development body (Boyden, 1990). The central aim of this initial declaration was to protect and to promote a homogeneous Western conception of childhood that might one day become enshrined into international law (1990).

Despite its emphasis on human rights, the *Declaration on the rights of the Child* did not impact international policy and programming as was intended. The human rights orientation was considered too political for development institutions to undertake at the time (Jones & Coleman, 2005). Instead, the adoption of a focus on poverty alleviation, centered upon the rhetoric of the welfarist approach¹⁶ to ‘children’s basic needs’, as opposed to their basic rights, was put into force. The welfarist approach to development intervention was enacted through a discourse on meeting ‘basic human needs’, which

¹⁶ Welfarism is an overarching domain within which the more contemporary notions of ‘rights’ and women and development initiatives have their roots. These issues will be expanded in the following chapter.

came into effect throughout the international development community in the 1960's and the 1970's (Escobar, 1995; Moser, 1989; Razavi & Miller, 1995). Welfarist discourse for the purposes of this thesis is not considered as a philosophy but as a specific political rationality. The political rationalities associated with Welfarism are characterized by the objectives of rule that come to be directly inscribed into the calculations of rulers through the attempted management of social programs such as those of health, nutrition and education (Rose, 1993). Expertise and knowledges about Welfarism establish enclosures within which its authority was unlikely to become challenged, effectively allowing it to be conceived of as 'common-sense' rational for enabling and managing populations to develop in specific directions (Rose, 1993). However, despite the long life of Welfarism as a political rationality within development discourse, the concept of children's rights would not be forgotten.¹⁷

The *International Year of the Child* was declared in 1979 by the United Nations with the specific aim of focusing concerted effort on promoting children's specific concerns. The concept of 'the world's children'¹⁸ launched in 1979, with the inception of the *International Year of the Child*, was part of a wider initiative to center a discourse on the harmful effects of globalization on children. This discourse required a universal standard upon which to position children's well-being; a standard that has since taken on many forms since international development strategies have formally come to include

¹⁷ Despite the shift in discourse to an emphasis on rights in the 1990's and 2000 onward, the rhetoric of 'basic needs' has not been abandoned with regards to development policy and programming. In fact, much of the mainstream development discourse around the 'rights based approach' specifies rights as a basic need thereby attempting to naturalize the concept of rights within the context of mainstream development policy and intervention. Much of the justification associated with development intervention is still framed around the needs of basic resources for adults and children but also for the need for their active participation and productivity as development subjects.

¹⁸ The concept of 'the world's children' was implemented into official development discourses by agencies such as Unicef and the WHO (James & Prout, 1990).

themselves within these debates. Following this international initiative, the Polish delegation would take this opportunity to initiate a proposal for a draft of the *Convention on the Right of the Child* with the explicit aim of holding governments legally accountable for meeting their obligations in making children's rights meaningful (Black, 1996: 5). By attempting to solidify these international standards for children, it was implied that a contractual obligation existed for national governments to guarantee child welfare, because embodied in the concept of a 'right' is a direct claim upon someone else to conceive of its fulfillment as a direct responsibility (Boyden, 1990). As such, the language of 'rights' promotes notions of greater political urgency. The convention would extend a wider range of human rights to children including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights as well as the fundamental freedoms contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, those outlined in the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICPR) and finally those of the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) both adopted in 1966 (Black, 1996). The UN *Convention of the Rights of the Child* would be formally passed ten years later on the 20th of November, 1989.

The drafting of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* was undertaken by a working group approved by the UN Commission on human rights but also included other development bodies. These development bodies included the International Labour Organization (ILO) and The World Health Organization (WHO), as well as prominent NGOs such as Defense for Children International (DCI), the Save the Children Alliance, Anti-slavery International and the International Catholic Children's Bureau (Beigbeder, 2001: 147). A year after the UN *Convention on the rights of the Child* was held, another

landmark Convention would take place. The *World Summit for Children* (1990) was held in New York, an initiative undertaken by Unicef and six states, including Canada, declaring that all countries ratify the Convention of the Rights of the Child (Beigbeder, 2001). By 2000, 191 countries had done so, with the exception of Somalia and the United States (Beigbeder, 2001).

In 1993 the *Vienna World Conference on Human Rights* was held as an international effort to strengthen and identify contemporary obstacles to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). This conference framed the human rights agenda as one that was now the responsibility of the mainstream development to uphold in development policy and programming (Jindy Pettman, 1996). It also named the rights of children as fundamental to overall process of the realization of global human rights, specifically outlining children's rights to development as well as to participation.

The World Conference on Human Rights reiterates the principle of "First Call for Children" and, in this respect underlines the importance of major national and international efforts, especially those of the United Nations Children's Fund, for promoting respect for the rights of the child to survival, protection, *development* and *participation*.

-Vienna Declaration, 1993: section 4 article 45, emphasis added

Successive international human rights events have progressively refined the discourse of the needs of children to one that emphasizes children's rights in instilling a discourse of a *global consensus* for the construction and production of proper childhoods.

3 Governing childhoods through a discourse of 'rights'

Governing childhoods has historically been utilized as a political strategy to legitimized state intervention in the realm of the private sphere (Boyden 1990; Rose, 1989; White, 2002a). Childhood has increasingly become a focus of governance in and of

itself through various recording procedures such as those outlined by medical practitioners from birth, and the educational institutions that shape the progression of children into adulthood. This “bracketing off of a period of life” is a practice that enables the proliferation of rationalities and ‘techniques of power’ to become mandatory for the management and moral regulation of childhood as a distinct and separate sphere of social life (Bell, 1993). As such, childhoods have been created and made visible through power/knowledge networks (Bell, 1993).

Liberalism, as expressed as a political rationality, has been a fundamental component of shaping the political and social structures of Western countries. Liberal doctrines that focus on the freedom of social subjects are accompanied by mechanisms that drive populations in specifically desired directions, while being careful not to harm the perception of personal autonomy (Rose, 1993; Scott, 1995). Therefore, liberalism as a political rationality not only establishes itself as a positive rational force that produces and circulates knowledge through the governing body, it also enables subjects to be active in their own government. Therefore, a key component of liberal rule is its ability to govern through the regulation of choices made by social subjects (Rose, 1993). As discussed earlier, within this liberal framework, the idea of children as totally dependent on family becomes conceptually problematic. Increasingly, neo-liberalism would attend to this divide by granting children the same autonomy as other individual family members despite contradictory discourses of protectionism within Western law (Bell, 1993). These same standards now find themselves in the policy texts of international development bodies in an attempt to align all nations with the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*. In an attempt to universalize progressive Western centered norms of childhood,

the rhetoric of child welfare, and now children's rights, potentially serves as a pretext for governing an internationally recognized and cohesive standard of the affairs of childhood.

With an emerging discourse on rights come parallel discourses on freedoms, entitlements, agency, responsibility, participation, and choice. One of the central themes of the convention that signifies a point of departure from all earlier versions is the establishment of the rights of children as actors in their own life and their right to fully participate in decisions that affect them (Beigbeder, 2001; Boyden 1990). To solidify the 'human rights turn' in childhood development discourse, children's subjectivities have been re-negotiated and reframed over time through specific policy mandates. Child-centered development discourse now regards the 'rights based approach' as the favoured mechanism for achieving not only poverty alleviation with regards to children, but also for promoting political freedoms and social justice for children as a target development population. The discourse of child agency and participation is considered a contemporary commitment, within mainstream development discourse, to the recognition that children are separate social subjects from their parents and communities and experience a separate and distinct culture in their own right.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines 54 articles on the rights specific to children. Within their Action Plan for Child Protection (2001), CIDA has highlighted what they consider to be the four fundamental principles to be utilized to interpret all other articles within the convention. They include: The best interests of the child must be primary considerations in all actions concerning children; all children have the right to non-discrimination; all children have to right to life, survival, and *development*; and all children have the right to *participation* (23, emphasis added).

CIDA's action plan for child protection came into effect in 2001 along with the installment of the child protection division within the agency. This division outlines CIDA's new mandate on child-centered policy and programming under the new framework of 'the rights based approach.' This policy mandate attempts to integrate the language associated with a global movement of the recognition of children's rights within the context of wider international development goals.

The 'rights based approach' represents a discursive shift in development based political rationalities that serves to constitute children as 'agents' and not merely 'recipients' of the development process. Below are examples from CIDA's action plan for child protection and the new language being employed in relation to children and their impact as newly defined development subjects:

Realizing children's rights is essential to reducing poverty in a sustainable way, since children living in poverty have the potential to help break longstanding cycles of poverty. For example, the World Bank considers investing in girls' education one of the most effective poverty reduction measures. Children who enjoy their rights have a much better chance of *becoming responsible adults who promote the economic and social development* of their communities, and who are committed to the principle of democracy, peace and justice.

-CIDA's Action Plan on Child Protection, 2001: 6, emphasis added

The rights based approach gives serious attention to children's rights under *the Convention on the Rights of the Child* to participate in decisions that affect their lives, and to have their views duly considered, according to their age maturity. Encouraging *children's participation as 'stakeholders'* in the development, implementation and evaluation of initiatives that are meant to help them will result in better programming.

-CIDA's Action Plan on Child Protection, 2001: 24, emphasis added

Encouraging their participation as 'stakeholders' implies that children, through their newly defined autonomous status, are now a 'responsible' category of development subject, capable of contributing to specific processes of their own social development.

Children are transformed in the eyes of the development regime from passive recipients of development programming “into clients who participate in a long-term reciprocal relationship with the institution that serves them” (Bennett, 1992 cited in Rankin, 2001: 29). It is understood that given these conditions, development programming can then function in a more sustainable¹⁹ manner.

This discourse of autonomy and participation can be regarded as strategies for rendering individual subjects, even children, ‘responsible.’ In this sense, subjects come to actively participate in the solutions to their specific problems thereby taking responsibility for both their activities and the potential failures that these same activities may produce (Lemke, 2001). A certain amount of the burden of development is then lifted from the shoulders of development bodies as development subjects are taught to take ‘responsibility’ for their own processes of becoming ‘developed.’ Their internalization of notions that they are responsible for developing in accordance with outlined mainstream development goals is representative of ‘techniques of governance’ that serve to render development subjects as highly instrumental to the overall ‘development regime.’ Theoretically, they become part of the development process that enables the realization of ‘sustainable development.’ First however, development subjects must internalize their current ways of living and thinking as contrary to their social development, as well as to the development of their social and political economies. In this context, development subjects must come to see themselves as ‘underdeveloped’ before

¹⁹ Sustainable development is a concept used throughout international development bodies and has gone through many different iterations of the ordinal definition. It was, however, initially defined as the process of development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations, Brundtland Report 1987). The idea of development subjects helping themselves through engaging with sustainable development protocols has been a pervasive form of governance through discourse.

they can begin to reconstruct themselves, their communities and 'third world' countries, along the path to modernity.

This new discourse on rights brings with it the circulation of a different mode of reasoning in relation to children and childhood. Participation is now a condition of modern 'third world' childhoods, one that children, parents, communities and even the state must respond to if they wish to be considered part of the project for development and for progress. Children's rights, as practiced through their agency and participation is now part of an international legal discourse that 'third world' countries must align themselves with if they wish to exercise their own influence and count in the international political realm of child centered discourse. Participation in the development process becomes not so much a 'right' as a condition upon which development bodies will extend or not extend support mechanisms for poverty alleviation and protectionist strategies in certain cases. As White (2002a) argues, developing countries must use rights centered rhetoric as a pre-requisite for receiving donor funding (729). International development agencies have also internalized the discourse of human rights as the most innovative and comprehensive way of achieving development based goals concerning children. As one development practitioner from CIDA explains:

For the UN bodies they have what they call a 'common understanding' that was published or produced around 1998. We [CIDA] have been looking at the question for about the same length of time, so late 90's we started to think about it in very small ways in the agency ummm so yeah it's a pretty new idea ...human rights is very much *the correct view* of development agencies and I think that has been a question you know whether or not development agencies should play a role in human rights or whether this was another bodies concern. But [it as been regarded as the concern of] development bodies and we ought to look at these things. And so the rights based approach is a *natural* progression from that.

-Development Practitioner #5

The international consensus that rights should override other mainstream development initiatives around child-centered policy and programming as both the ‘correct’ mode of reasoning in targeting ‘third world’ children and as a ‘natural progression’ in development thinking marks a conceptual shift in how development bodies and practitioners are legitimizing their continued role in shaping ‘third world’ social development.

Extending rights to children in many ‘third world’ countries can be culturally problematic and will require intervention at the level of the state (as expressed through requiring many ‘third world’ countries to sign on to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*), within communities in terms of cultural adjustments, and with regards to individual families and children. The ‘development regime’ has been criticized for exporting Western notions of childhood to the South through strategies of development discourse and intervention. Ideals of proper childhoods are disseminated through social development programming that use ‘common-sense’ techniques of rationalizations based upon the sciences of human growth and development. Basic health and education along with the more contemporary practices of removing cultural barriers that limit the realization of these practices are examples of such rational interventions. Ideological constructions of childhood as a time of privilege in which children should experience freedom to play and express emotions is elementary only to a society that has the ability to draw upon “the private domain as the ground for public culture, discipline, work, constraint and rationality (Stephans, 1995: 6). The one-dimensional view of ‘third world’ childhoods is therefore rendered problematic when applied globally. Balagopalan (2002) argues that ‘third world’ childhoods are often divided in two domains. In the first urban

middle class children are regarded as influenced by Western notions of childhood and social development, while in the second, childhoods of the urban or rural poor evoke notions of traditionalist and ‘underdeveloped’ practices (21). These simplistic binaries between Western and traditionalist childhoods (traditionalist attempting to captures all other traditions not associated with Western childhoods) are often captured within development discourse in a way that depoliticizes the complexities of the lives of children in the ‘third world.’

Within this context, the ‘rights based’ discourse can be argued to be a manifestation of the continuation of the colonial project, as children are governed through enabling tactics such as the installment of their rights in international law. In this context they are now endowed with the rights made in the image of Western notions of children and childhood (Boyden, 1990; Stephens, 1995), a path that is said to lead them away from a present as well as a future life of ‘underdevelopment.’

4 Accounting for diverse childhoods?: children and rights in Bangladesh

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) has been ratified by most developed and developing countries despite that fact that its objectives, principles and ideological foundations are not fully congruent with many of the cultures now expected by international law to fulfill its mandates. An increasing recognition exists among activists and scholars that the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* has idealized Western concepts of childhood (Balagopalan, 2002). During deliberations at the Convention, “several of the delegates from the South expressed dissatisfaction that the drafting group was ‘predominantly Western in its orientation’, and argued that greater account should have been taken ‘of the cultural diversity and economic realities of

developing countries” (Newman-Black, 1989 cited in Boyden, 1990: 198). The Convention relies on individualized notions of children, and also implies biologically based relations between parents and children as the most fundamental type of family relation (Stephens, 1995: 37). In ‘third world’ countries such as Bangladesh, relationships between families and within communities constitute an important resource for the Bangladeshi culture and especially among the poor, where it takes on critical elements of family survival. Therefore, the Western ‘fantasy’ of freedom and autonomy, as extended to any population, can only be realized at the level of development rhetoric (Blanchet, 1996; White, 2002b).

In Bangladesh, the concept of children’s rights has been slow to take hold. Therefore, development strategies for intervention within Bangladesh have focused on rising awareness within communities, at the level of civil society and of the state, to the notion that children are a distinct group with certain fundamental entitlements and rights (White, 2002b). These initiatives aim to alter the ways in which Bangladeshi society perceives children, while also working to enable children themselves to internalize and ‘recognize’ their capacities within the domain of a ‘rights’ based discourse. This strategy has had problems penetrating Bangladeshi society on many levels: the first being through educating adults to consider children as a distinct social group. As one development practitioner who is also Bangladeshi explains regarding their perceptions and experience:

I feel that maybe it is because I work in development and I am aware, and through my work I got aware for this. [But] even for me [children’s rights] would be a concept that I would not have had earlier, so I would think of nothing of saying no, of not wanting to listen to them ...not as a mother but as a person and a person within a power relationship with a child. Even for very educated people [in Bangladesh] it’s a concept that is very alien...The concept of disciplining them, the concept of molding them into the role that society expects of them often at all tiers of society is there. You know you can not speak up to elders, you have to behave

properly, and you are not to let them [children] flourish and not let their spirits grow and definitely that is something which has to do with tradition as well as their absence of awareness regarding rights in general.

-Development Practitioner #3

Here the issue of children's "marginality" in Bangladeshi society is regarded as a problem that can be remedied through the dismantling of tradition as well as through the realization of their specific rights. This process requires that children acknowledge themselves in ways that they have not been accustomed to and to then act upon this altered sense of self.

Sarah White (2002b)²⁰ conducted her own research on children and rights in Bangladesh. Her work specifically targeted street children as well as other working children (Both in Dhaka and in 'a village community').²¹ Her intention was to highlight the 'local' frameworks for understanding children, their entitlements, rights and responsibilities. Below is one of the more interesting findings of her research that highlights the potential consequences of attempting to cultivate the subjectivities of children through development based educational interventions. It is an example of children contesting the attempted enforcement of reconfigured subject positions and the associated subjectivities attached to their perceived newly 'discovered' rights as children:

Not surprisingly, many program staff talked of the difficulty of getting poor children to understand that they had rights. Some of the more experienced workers say they have now stopped direct training on children's rights altogether. The gap between the rights they have in CRC theory and the realities of their practical experience was simply too great for the children. Instead of being 'empowering', the training made them either angry and destructive or frustrated and depressed.

²⁰ Also see: White, Sarah (1992) *Arguing with the Crocodile: Gender and Class in Bangladesh*, London: Zed Books.

²¹ White does not specify as the specific 'village community' to which she is referring.

Examining how children's rights become *imagined* within the context of children's status within Bangladesh is an interesting example of how a discourse centered on the cultivation of specific subjectivities does not translate neatly on the ground. Notions associated with the correctness of rights and entitlements fall away when communities have the limited resources or differing cultural belief systems that run counter to recognizing children as newly defined 'legal' persons. As expressed above, intervention strategies that focus on educating children to become 'aware' of their rights (as if they always existed but required the hand of the development regime to help development subjects to realize them) were not experienced by children as a natural progression of the development of their subjectivities and perceptions of self.

In fact, the attempted strategies of enabling children to 'realize' their rights through development intervention was a personally painful experience. The reactions of these children in relation to the programming initiatives based on the cultivation of their subjectivities signify the lack of cultural awareness within political strategies such as through 'rights based' initiatives. And yet these strategies, in form of education-based initiatives, are still regarded as the best methods through which to attain long-term 'sustainable development' goals within mainstream development discourse. Education that promotes rationality and awareness among development subjects has the capacity and the power to alter culture. This is what development intervention depends upon. As Scott (1995) argues: "...governmental rationality sought to organize things such that the native was made to work upon himself; he was now conceived of as a productive agent. ...he yet feels and learns to appreciate the consciousness of rectitude" (213). These rationalities enable subjects, through the cultivation of subjectivities centered in neo-

liberal ideology, to remove 'backward' aspects of culture from their everyday practices and from their sense of self.

Within this discourse of 'rights awareness' the reaction to the children who were frustrated by the promotion of their rights through education might be framed by development discourse as an example of a culture so backward that the very concept of individualizing rights sparked anguish at the inability to experience or have them realized in practice. It could also be regarded as a form of agency (although not one aligned within the realm of constructed liberal initiatives) on the part of children to express their discomfort with development discourse and intervention strategies that attempt to target their conceptions of self. As Caputo (2001) argues, children can also exercise power by resisting or by manipulating the conditions under which power is exercised in relation to them. Therefore, children can actively contest a process that attempts to "...constitute their subjectivities and narrated their experiences" (Klenk, 2004: 64).

The resistance of the cultivation of the subjectivities of children - subjectivities that do not fit with their lived realities - is a strategy that may or may not materialize at the level of mainstream development discourse if it does not support the political rationalities that support the functioning of the 'development regime.' Enabling children to play the game of development is a far more effective strategy for intervention and one that targets the heart as well as the mind.

5 Conclusion

The overriding template of childhood has been taken from the West and exported to the South as the need to legitimize development intervention with regards to children has recently shifted from negotiations of a welfarist and 'basic needs' discourse to one

that claims that children's rights must be accounted for at the level of international development (White, 2002b). This discourse requires a homogenous notion of childhoods to properly enforce children-centered international mandates such as those outlined in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

The discursive shift within mainstream development rhetoric from a discourse on children's survival and 'basic needs' to one framed within the context of human rights points to a rupture within child-centered discourse; one that signifies the adoption of specific political rationalities that are becoming associated with the child development agenda. This discourse is contingent upon the specific political rationalities associated with liberal and neo-liberal ideology that has been extended to the realm of childhoods. These mandates attempt to articulate the individual status of children through discursive techniques that outline their *entitlements*, as newly defined human rights recipients, as well to highlight their capacity for productivity, participation, responsibility and decision-making separate from parents, adults and their wider communities.

With this shift to an emphasis on rights some accountability for the development process is shifted from development organizations to development subjects requiring them to internalize the objectives for bringing them out of spaces of 'underdevelopment.' Through these practices children become part of a development process that supports and enables mainstream sustainable development discourse and practice. Further, functioning within the rights based discourse becomes a conditionality to be considered for inclusion in development programming. CIDA's response to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* was to develop an action plan for child protection in 2001 that would include the 'rights based approach'. Further this approach would attempt to integrate the language of

children's rights within the context of wider international development goals. This initiative would fit CIDA's mandates to support global consensus for the construction and production of proper childhoods.

Mainstream development discourse has been problematized for its strategies of intervention that attempt to govern the conduct of 'third world' subjects. This has been organized through the strategy of altering the political and social worlds of development subjects by redefining and naming the conditions for what it means to become developed and what it means to have rights. For those who are critical of the 'rights based' turn in development discourse and strategies for intervention, a central puzzle becomes how to dismantle and make explicit the discursive power relations that are integrated into the local experiences of third world subjects to act in accordance with development policy. Children are governed by development policy and programming, when they are expected to absorb this new discourse internally, despite cultural constraints that may prevent them from realizing their intended benefits. Therefore, as we saw with the case in Bangladesh, programming on the ground does not always translate well for either party involved, in part due to the practice of imagining the subjectivities of children. As we have seen here, development discourse depends upon the representation of the 'modern' and the 'underdeveloped' as isolated categories to continue to serve the practices of imagining 'underdeveloped' subjectivities within development discourse.

chapter five: cultivating ‘girlhoods’

1 Introduction

As the last chapter demonstrates, the political rational logic of the neo-liberal subject now placed in the forefront of development rights based discourse regarding children depicts them as potential agents of transformation through the cultivation of their subjectivities within development discourse. How does this conceptual shift with regards to children more generally fare when issues of gender arise? More specifically, what subjectivities are now *required* of girls within the current development discourse regarding child rights and subsequent extensions of autonomy and participation? The specified notion of ‘third world girlhoods’, historically within the development regime as a symbol of dependence and extreme vulnerability, is now facing contradictory language and imagery within the context of the emerging ‘rights based’ discourse.

In this chapter I explore the discursive history and structure associated with the formation of a specific gendered discourse on girls who reside within the ‘third world.’ More specifically, I examine how their subjectivities come to be formulated through the employment of particular political rationalities specific to three overarching domains within mainstream development discourse.

These domains include first, those discourses situated within welfarist development rhetoric as articulated through the ‘basic human needs’ framework, where girls were framed as a subcategory of children, and characterized as largely dependent and vulnerable populations. A gendered dimension of this welfarist discourse placed the burden of the development of children upon the mother, who was expected to ensure the health of her family along specified mainstream development guidelines. Women were

identified by early child welfarist models as the primary recipients of aid and development interventions and could not be separated from a discourse on children and child welfare. It would not be until later that more complex conceptual frameworks would be needed to justify the extent and scope of development initiatives regarding children and girls in particular.

In the second domain, a discourse on girls began that can be traced through the evolution of a development discourse that concerned itself with women's issues as framed through the theoretical and practical progression of women in development (WID) to gender and development (GAD). UN women's conventions (outlined above has spanning from 1979 to 1995), although slow to formally recognize girls beyond education and health based initiatives, played a substantial role in gradually bringing the specific issues of the 'girl-child' to the attention of the international community. This discourse has garnered success, due to its reliance on framing girls and 'girlhoods' in the 'third world', within the domain of women's equality and the need to examine gender relations.

The third domain considers the emerging discourse on children's rights and how its promotion of children's autonomy and participation within the development process potentially serves to affect the narrative that has been historically told about girls and their place within development discourse. Since the inception of the 'rights based approach,' girls have been cast into a shifting gendered and child-centered development script; one that strengthens their development subject status by highlighting both their capacity as agents within the development processes, while also attempting to account for their specific and gendered vulnerabilities as located in the domains of being both

children and girls. Each of the frameworks outlined above are considered to be gendered political strategies, all of which came to be outlined by international development bodies and reflected within their policy and programming initiatives.

Navigating through this complex and sometimes contradictory terrain of the emerging discourse on girls and their rights requires a critical approach to the tendencies of development bodies to homogenize girls so as to more easily outline their perceived lived experiences. Therefore, in the final section, I examine how transforming ‘girlhoods’ is a political strategy that relies on the production of specific forms of subjectivity. By this I mean to examine the ways that subjectivities are constructed, cultivated and even *imagined* through development discourse in both the ways that girls have been situated historically and through more contemporary notions of rights, autonomy and participation.

By tracing the shifting political rationalities practiced within these highly gendered domains of development discourse, it is possible to problematize the progression of an internalized development narrative on girls that has been exported to the ‘third world’ through development discourse and strategies of intervention. Further, it is possible to understand how shifting political rationalities have increasingly incorporated notions of liberal and neo-liberal subjectivities to the narrative of ‘third world girlhoods.’ Therefore, I examine the reconfiguration of the subject status of girls (as newly defined legal subjects) within mainstream development discourse “and its production of new effects of order and subjectivity” (Scott, 1995: 213).

2 Gendering ‘needs’: welfarism and ‘responsible’ mothers

As discussed in the previous chapter, welfarism, an extension of liberal Western ideologies in the form of relief aid, was the first development assistance approach that was extended to the specific ‘needs’ of development populations. While this framework was generally pervasive in all domains of development thinking through the 1960s and 1970s, this chapter unpacks the gendered dimension to Welfarism and strategies for basic human needs. In the context of women and children in developing countries, this framework utilized the gender dimension in very specific ways (Saunders, 2002). The political rationalities under Welfarism in the ‘third world’ made part of its project the inclusion of the role of women through the education and management of the mother. They were to conduct themselves in a way that served the management and care of their families and children, along the lines of specified rational welfarist actions.

Welfarist discourse under the rhetoric of ‘basic human needs’ concerning women’s initiatives of the time focused almost exclusively on women’s ‘responsibility’ to provide and maintain a healthy family environment. This training directed at women was then thought to help solve the ‘problem’ of global population control and certain elements of international resource management. Women were regarded as key actors in affirming their children’s needs through survival strategies as outlined by international development bodies. The children’s ‘survival’ framework, launched at Unicef in 1982, for example, recognized the contribution of mothers towards the well-being of their children (Black, 1996). Therefore, the focus of support for children was increasingly obtained through the careful education and management of the mother. Further, it was intended to frame her as a ‘responsible’ and educated development subject.

According to Moser (1989), three types of programs existed under the basic needs framework with regards to women. The first concerned itself with the physical survival of the welfare recipients emphasized through programs that provided food aid assistance after natural disasters; a time when women and children were considered to be the most vulnerable. Nutritional education initiatives were also emphasized to combat disease and malnutrition targeting children under five, and nursing mothers. The second focused more on the role of the mother to ensure the survival of her children. Educational programs on nutrition now focused on training women and mothers. Mothers became increasingly responsible for their families under this framework. They also became subject to the third type of programming in the form of family planning models for population control through the dissemination of contraceptives and information on family planning and spacing (Saunders, 2002). ‘Basic human needs’ strategies that focused on planned family spacing, breastfeeding and immunization strategies were regarded as central to children’s healthy growth and development. As they matured, children were thought to benefit primarily from these welfare based development interventions.

Within this framework, women were called on to “bear children *responsibly*, in numbers and at intervals that would not overwhelm either their own or the State’s fragile resources” (Black, 1996: 186, emphasis added). These development strategies, based upon the constructed discourse of the need to educate women to properly care for their children can be critically examined as an enabling political strategy to manage women, and have women manage themselves, in pursuing new and *improving* social practices (Scott, 1995). Educating women with specific attention to health and family management became a specific gendered development discourse, and a mark of modernity, by guiding

women, and by extension their families and communities, down the path of proper social development. Gradually, the basic human needs approach would expand and begin to emphasize the social and political needs of subjects through the promotion of higher levels of education, employment, human rights, and participation in political and economic spheres (Razavi & Miller, 1995).

For girls, however, the ‘basic human needs’ approach still framed their path to development and adulthood in terms of their access to proper nutrition, primary health care and basic education. The subjectivities of girls under this approach were one-dimensional, in that development interventions were imposed upon them as secondary development subjects. Their status as potentially exploitable populations was only beginning to find its way into development discourse. Some additional considerations with regards to girls included making provisions for early child marriages, and vocational training programs for girls who could not attend school (whether due to poverty or parents electing to send sons to school rather than daughters). Strategies aimed at women were seen to have either an immediate impact on girls through the better care that their mother could provide for them, or longer term effects as girls became women with access to a wider range of social, political and economic choices. Their development status would not truly become realized under this framework until they were adults.

As discussed in the previous chapter, despite attempts to channel efforts elsewhere, the ‘basic needs approach’ as a conceptual framework has remained a fundamental component of the process of legitimizing development policy and intervention (Escobar, 1995). The discourse of ‘needs’ as a political strategy has been too successful to abandon completely, as it has been regarded as the most rational means

through which international development bodies can remain experts of the process of developing the ‘third world.’

3 ‘Discovering’ women and gender

Tracing the evolution of women’s centered discourses within mainstream development requires an interrogation of the conceptual frameworks of Women in Development (WID), and Gender and Development (GAD)²² and how these approaches have helped to frame a particular discourse on women and girls. Of particular interest is the political shift from earlier modernization based narratives of *integrating* women into preexisting development programming to a discourse that strives to promote the importance of women’s *empowerment* through economic and social advancements, and how this progression has also served to frame the discourse on ‘third world’ girls. Although theoretically and methodologically separate, both locate their development practice in liberal and neo-liberal ideology. Despite the rhetorical progression towards more inclusive practices, both schools of thought have been critiqued by post-development advocates and southern feminists alike for constructing a discourse concerning women, that treats them as isolated and simplistic development categories despite the diversity of their lived experiences (see Escobar, 1995; Mohanty 1997b).

The theoretical and practical transitions made in terms of incorporating women into international development planning and policy has undergone many conceptual leaps

²² Another school of thought exists been the WID and GAD frameworks although for many international development bodies it was short lived and largely overlooked. The theoretical transition from Women in Development (WID) to Women and Development (WAD), developed from the neo-Marxist tradition, looked more closely at the work women partake in both inside and outside of the home. WAD found more support from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and was usually only integrated into governmental development institutions through their NGO programming. Both WID and WAD remained concerned primarily with women’s productive labour activities (Rathgeber, 1990) as their primary contributions to their domestic and global economies. While WAD was an advancement in terms of understanding the further implications of class and capital in women’s lives, it still neglected other important aspects of race and ethnicity.

since the introduction of Boserup's *Women's Role in Economic Development* in 1970. In her work, Boserup argued that women were crucial players in economic development and only through acknowledging and integrating their economic capacity, could true development be accomplished in the 'third world.' The key issue for women here was their *integration* into the current development model, so that women could be incorporated into the development process as *beneficiaries*. From this work came new perspectives on women in the developing world that brought about a demand for empirical information on the status of women through sex disaggregated data analysis. Women's increasing social and political status, along with their ability to be economically productive agents, became the new marker of a developed society.

Women in Development (WID),²³ situated in liberal feminism, initially sought to address issues of women's equality through improved access to education, employment opportunities and resources such as land and credit (Parpart, 1995). WID specialists were very critical of early versions of the welfarist approach, and argued that it defined women's place in the home as a biological truth, as opposed to framing women as rational and competitive productive subjects – subjective qualities deemed essential to women's participation in the public sphere (Saunders, 2002). However, for a time, the WID framework was trumped by an emphasis on the 'basic human needs' framework that argued for an international and unified focus on health, education and training. Equality issues would become secondary to this wider 'needs based' initiative. WID specialists took this opportunity to argue that the WID approach would serve to increase women's effectiveness and productivity as workers, thus assisting both economic

²³ The Women in Development approach emerged as a women's caucus within the Society for International Development (SID) to gather data on 'third world' women as well as to promote employment opportunities for women within development institutions (Saunders, 2002).

development overall as well as the individual lives of women in particular (Parpart, 1995). In its efforts to define women as an economically worthy category of development analysis and intervention, WID has been criticized for overlooking the reproductive and domestic labour women perform in developing countries, choosing to focus only on women's capacity for income generation (Rathgeber, 1990). It has also been criticized for its ethnocentric bias in overlooking issues of class, culture, race and ethnicity.

Gender and Development (GAD), which came out of the socialist feminist movement of the 1980's, has been framed as the most inclusive and complex approach used within international development circles as one that attempts to examine how women and men function in relation to one another. It claims to link relations of production and reproduction as well as to interrogate how the public/private dichotomy positions women in relation to men in socially and economically vulnerable spaces (Rathgeber, 1990). GAD also makes more of a concerted effort (at least discursively) to understand the complex interaction of not only relations between genders but also those relations of race, class, and ethnicity. Within GAD discourse, there is a substantial emphasis on power as it informs gender relations and on empowerment strategies for women (Kabeer, 1991; Parpart, 1995). Despite its socialist feminist roots, GAD strategies are increasingly formulated in neo-liberal development terms as exemplified by the language used regarding 'empowerment' initiatives and the focus that it has taken in terms of women's potential as entrepreneurs. For instance, there has been an intense focus on women's potential to earn an income through micro-credit initiatives.²⁴

²⁴ Mirco credit initiatives were first made popular in development through the establishment of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and through BRAC. These banks lend small sums of money, mostly to women to start, establish, and hopefully expand very small, self-supporting businesses. For a critical examination of micro credit initiatives see: Rahman, Aminur (1999) "Mirco-credit for equitable and

In practice, the gender and development approach is rarely integrated in its entirety into development programming. Also, despite the popularity of GAD as discourse and at the level of rhetoric, WID had certainly not disappeared from the practice of development programming (Denis, 2001; Kebeer, 1991 Parpart, 1995 Rathgeber, 1990). Indeed GAD was largely built upon the original WID frameworks, despite theoretical inconsistencies between the two approaches. This is due to the slow pace at which international development bodies were able to shift ideology and their programming strategies, opting in the interim to incorporate the language of GAD at the level of policy and rhetoric but remaining within WID parameters in terms of programming. As one development practitioner explains about the shift from WID to GAD within CIDA:

[A contributing factor to this issue] was the difficulty of educating development practitioners within aid agencies and their counterparts in the developing world. Internal training within CIDA was difficult and once the ideas of WID were understood and sort of incorporated into programming, it became as difficult to re-educate staff and counterparts once the programming changed to GAD. The result was often a relatively good understanding of the unfolding of the different approaches by the gender specialists and a much weaker one by programming staff, with the frequent result that hybrid approaches were often used, based on staff interpretation of the concepts and the planning process of individual programs or initiatives, which are often severely time constrained.

-development practitioner #6, email interview

Due to the somewhat weak understanding of the conceptual points of departure between WID and GAD, many of the primary facets that made GAD an exciting development project have been lost. Locating power structures and hierarchies between women and men (a foundational methodological approach of GAD) has been overlooked when the

sustainable development: Who pays?," *World Development*, 27 (1), 67-82.; Rahman, Aminur (2001) *Women and Microcredit in Rural Bangladesh: An Anthropological Study of Grameen Bank Lending*, Boulder Colo: Oxford Westview press.

potential for women to become individualized income generators presented itself as a viable option. In this way, development programming has clung to the elements of the GAD discourse that best enables economic productivity, such as the rhetoric associated with empowerment, rather than unpacking the complex social and cultural relations between women and men. Further to these barriers, it has been argued that when GAD is applied "...outside of academia, within the policy and activist arenas, the utility and relevance of 'gender' has been highly contested. Indeed, in some policy application, 'gender' has come to lose its feminist political content" (Baden & Goetz, 1997: 4). As one Bangladeshi NGO based development practitioner explains of her experiences with gender and development initiatives within the context of Bangladesh:

I call them so-called gender programs, you know, it looks very nice outside but it does not fit into the dear needs of the community, the dear needs of the woman, the dear needs of the girls, ... So the problem will remain, so there will be more need for foreign aid, and we will remain poor as usual, and we will die eventually and this is the story. That is what the story is all about.

-Bangladeshi NGO development practitioner # 4, interview

Although the outlook suggested here is bleak, it points to the ways in which development intervention strategies that target women and girls cannot account for their lives in a way that serves their specific interests. As political rationalities, the discourses of Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) both serve as the technical embodiments of liberal and neo-liberal mentalities for the government of the conduct of 'third world' women and girls (Barry et. al. 1993). As such, the political strategies that underpin these initiatives can serve to overshadow their implied goals of enabling and promoting equality for women and girls.

Despite their differences, feminist activists, academics and development practitioners alike have struggled to bring the specific issues faced by women and girls to the forefront of the international development agenda using various elements of both frameworks of WID and GAD. They have rallied around issues such as the importance of women's economic contributions inside the private sphere, as well as their potential for economic productivity in the public sphere. They have highlighted the importance of the political emancipation of women, and have spoken out in the international community against the constraining of women's opportunities in education and reproductive health services. They have worked to bring the issues of girls to the forefront in terms of early child marriages, seclusion, female genital mutilation (FGM) and sex trafficking, which have all been captured in development declarations and charters that single out women and girls as special categories of developmental analysis, because of the potential vulnerabilities and exploitative conditions that their gender affords them.

However, in order to achieve these advancements in promoting the 'plight' of many poor 'third world' women and girls, much of the Western scholarship and development discourse has produced images of an 'average third world woman' who leads a truncated life based on a homogenous mixture of gendered and 'underdeveloped' subjectivities (Mohanty 1997b). In this sense, the productive development mechanisms discursively played out in gender based empowerment initiatives, so pervasive within current gender and development (GAD) discourse, situate the third world woman as inherently dis-empowered in relation to her first world counterparts (1997b).

This monolithic and somewhat exaggerated image of women and of girls in the 'third world' is used and recycled in and among development agencies to gain international

support for specific gender based development initiatives. As a result, many of these intervention strategies do not reach their intended populations. This is largely due to frameworks that cannot account for women and girls who live diverse lives outside of the imagined and cultivated subject positioning that development discourse has imposed on them. These practices are the basis for what constitute the formation of 'regimes of representation' within mainstream development discourse; one that serves to legitimize the specific political rationalities associated with women's equality in the 'third world', even if notions of equality serve the interests of the management of girls through promoting enabling initiatives such as education and health based initiatives. This practice has been deployed, for example, under the rationality of education as a tool for the promotion of freedom for individual girls, but as one Bangladeshi NGO development practitioner illustrates:

There is a big project by USAID on girls' education, but that is under population protection, so the USAID program is basically looking at girls as a uterus [and wants them] to be busy in school so that they will not bear children. So you know that is not the way to look at the girls ... But we as a women's movement we fought for education, you know we fought for the discrimination against a woman in education so we wanted to have access to education, and finally when we get it, it is because they wanted to get something else. So we have to give something in return you know ... why? It shouldn't be that way ...

-development practitioner # 4, interview

The political rationalities of a development centered neo-liberal agenda can become harnessed through enabling mechanisms, such as fostering the conditions to ensure women's equality in certain spheres of social life such as through education, to generate specific outcomes. In this case, Bangladeshi women fought for equality but found that gaining these rights did not necessarily result in the realization of their needs but instead,

served the development objective for keeping birth rates in the 'third world' manageable. This is an example of how neo-liberal rationalities of governing have shaped freedoms into a means of achieving specific governmental objectives (Dean, 2002).

An international forum for women's issues

International UN women's conferences are framed as providing a space to focus global attention on issues specific to women and their (particular) subordinate status within many developing countries, as well as establishing their specific *roles* as agents in the context of enabling international development. However, despite these overtly politicized objectives, international women's conventions and their subsequent mandates are also largely used as platforms to help shift the discourse associated with women's equality, as well as to highlight their place within international development more generally. UN women's conferences serve as reference points for gender mainstreaming divisions within national and international development institutions regarding the adoption of contemporary debates in international feminist theorizing. They inform internal gender and development policy dialogues among and between policy analysts and gender specialists who are then expected to update development policy text and to execute gender-sensitive programming strategies.

The official UN conferences²⁵ on women's equality have played an important role in mobilizing women's networks, as well as facilitating a global discourse on women's concerns. The international conferences held on gender equality, beginning with the

²⁵ It is beyond the scope of this project to speak to the vast array of international and transnational women's movements that have occurred since the 1970's that have worked to establish regional and global linkages between and among women's groups, feminists and gender specialists in the depth that they deserve. However, the most prominent themes within the progression of the discourse of women's social and economic status in the third world that has acted to shaped notions of the lives of women and girls will be considered.

Mexico Women's Conference in 1975 to mark the international women's year, have attempted to use women's centered platforms as a means to underline the complex ways that women affect and are affected by development interventions. In combating the political, social and cultural barriers to women's advancement, an international community of feminists, activists and gender specialists have been calling for universal standards of human rights to be extended to women in developing countries to protect and enhance their capacities to achieve sustainable livelihoods (Baden & Goetz, 1997). Naming gender-specific violence against women and girls in particular has been a political strategy as well as an integral component in consciousness-raising efforts to establish a 'rights based' discourse in women's international relations.

The first UN conferences held between 1975 – 80, which were held during the UN decade for women (1976-85), became an intellectual and conceptual battleground between first and third world feminists (Jindy Pettman, 1996). Western feminists and women in development (WID) specialists were accused of imposing Westernized and simplistic policy on third world women. They found themselves up against a strong minority of southern feminists and southern development practitioners who challenged Western notions of third world women's place in 'underdeveloped' societies. In 1985, with the Nairobi women's conference to celebrate the end of the UN decade for women, more alliances were made across earlier north/south divides. However, more internal divisions were established between women from similar regions, between state sponsored development practitioners and specialists and the more radical, marginalized grassroots women's NGOs (Jindy Pettman, 1996). Despite the controversies that erupted within these conferences, they have also been highlighted as fundamental to the process of

establishing a more comprehensive and accurate view of contemporary women's issues, and facilitating women's global networks and alliances.²⁶

Discourse here becomes a *mechanism* to incite internal as well as international policy and program changes. In this context, the UN conventions on women's issues have played a crucial role in persuading international development bodies to commit to women's issues both in terms of policy and programming geared towards the specific and shifting needs of women in the developing world, as well as in promoting women's roles as development practitioners within development institutions themselves (Black, 1996; Parpart, 1995).

The appearance of girls within these conventions was somewhat slow to develop. As we will see in the following section, as the subject status of girls grew within development discourse, to correspond with shifting political rationalities, so too did a need to cultivate more complex subjectivities for girls.

4 Locating girls in a women's discourse

By the mid 1980's women were beginning to be framed as economic development subjects in their own right. Policy and programming began to employ the merging rhetoric of examining women's multiple roles as participants, as opposed to clients of the development process. Discussions regarding rights was very limited during this period. As discussed earlier, women's *integration* could no longer be achieved through 'women's projects' alone. The gender and development (GAD) framework began to provide the

²⁶ One such example is the creation of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), which came out of the Nairobi Women's Conference (1985), a women's based NGO initiative that has garnered success at the grassroots level. This NGO organizes on development issues concerning 'third world' women and dedicate themselves to interrogating structures of inequality between, genders, classes, races and nations (Parpart, 1995).

conceptual tools with which to begin the transition into ‘gender mainstreaming’ as a cross cutting theme to become implemented into all programming initiatives (Baden & Goetz, 1997). However, within gender based policy and programming strategies overall, minimum provisions were made for girls. After a time, the women in development (WID) and gender and development (GAD) discourse attempted to distance themselves from welfare development rhetoric, but did not immediately extend this same conceptual break when it came to positioning a discourse on girls.

One of the most prominent UN conventions that focused on women’s equality was *The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* in 1979. This convention served as a platform for the promotion of a discourse that would potentially lead to the implementation of development-based initiatives focused on equality for women with men. Put into force in 1981, the convention stressed the specific issues of inequality and processes of extreme exploitation faced by women in developing countries. However, the majority of the initiatives within the agenda focused on women. Girls were only marginally singled out as categories of development inquiry with reference to education. Article 10 (f) of the convention briefly refers to a need to ensure the availability of programming for girls who have left their schooling:

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organization of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;

-CEDAW, 1979: Article 10.f

The *Nairobi Women's Conference* in 1985 celebrated the end of the UN decade for women and encouraged more collegiality between participants and marked the end of the international women's decade. The aim of the Conference was to review the progress achieved from the subsequent years of the UN decade, as well as to promote an agenda that would serve as a 'forward looking strategy', that would address the 'advancement of women' for the next decade (Jindy Pettman, 1996). Therefore, both old and new initiatives were brought to bear on the proceedings of the conference. The Nairobi Conference took more care to include the situation of girls into their mandate. Emphasis was still placed primarily on the needs of children and girls in the areas of health, education, and training. However, new discourses were emerging around issues of child protection:

Initiatives begun for the 1985 International Youth Year should be extended and expanded so that young women are *protected from abuse and exploitation and assisted to develop their full potential*. Girls and boys must be provided with equal access to health, education and employment to equip them for adult life. Both girls and boys should be educated to accept equal responsibilities for parenthood.

-Nairobi, 1985: Paragraph 287

As is evident from the language used above, classical liberal 'needs based' conceptual approaches to children, including girls, were still the primary focus of programming. In 1989 Unicef's *State of the World's Children* published statistics specific to women with a focus on gender disparities in life expectancies, literacy and school enrolment and women's reproductive issues such as family planning. Unicef's 1992 version of the *State of the Worlds Children* report set out 10 propositions for a new world order that were said to favor the needs of children: The proposition on 'planning births'

was described as “one of the most effective and least expensive ways of improving the quality of life on earth” (Black, 1996: 210); arguments consistently voiced over the years by UNFPA, the World Bank, WHO and prominent international NGOs (1996). This series of documents was used by other bilateral and multilateral development agencies to inform their own policy trajectories concerning women and girls. Within this framework, the one-dimensional image of girls as requiring education, health based support and protection from child exploitation, still considered girls dependent upon adults and the development process until they became adults in their own right.

Despite a discourse largely influenced by the welfarist development discourse, more advanced neo-liberal language was making its way into some of these same development texts. For example, in the same 1992 version of Unicef’s state of the world’s children, the status of women and girls and their potential for *empowerment* was identified as a central focus of Unicef policy and programming, and by 1994 Unicef began to include sexual and reproductive health frameworks (usually only directed at women) into their mainstream programming, which now included girls (Black, 1996). By the mid 1990’s the discourse of ‘child survival’, so prevalent in the ‘basic human needs’ framework, was increasingly replaced with notions of ‘child development’; a shift within the discourse of children and girls that included physical, intellectual and emotional development (Black, 1996). Following the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1979), child protection and gender units within development agencies would begin to adopt this mandate to further strengthen their specific development agendas with regards to girls. With the subsequent mandate of the *Vienna Human Rights Conference* (1993), putting human rights squarely within the realm of mainstream international development policy,

development bodies had little choice but to consider human rights in their strategies for intervention. With both these initiatives, gender specialists had a more concrete platform upon which to argue for the protections of girls against gender based violence and discrimination along with their usual concerns with regards to access to education and health based initiatives. Partly through the emerging discourse on children's rights more generally - entering children into neo-liberal rights based frameworks – and partly through gender and development initiatives that were already using the rhetoric of rights and women's participation to make women visible as development subjects, girls were increasingly targeted as a developed problem that had to be solved through more pervasive mechanisms of governance.

The road to autonomy

From the early to mid 1990s onward women's empowerment framework, so pervasive in gender and development policy, was being taught in gender analysis workshops throughout various international development agencies. This conceptual turn in development discourse signified the shift that began to see the social development of girls as integral to the development process as a whole.

Unicef adopted the term 'girl-child' in the 1980's, claiming the 1990's as the decade of the girl-child (Jiwani & Berman, 2002). This term, although ambiguous, was adopted by international development institutions and used to identify girls below the age of 18. Due to this initiative, Unicef began to incorporate the idea of girls as a category in and of themselves (at least at the level of development rhetoric). The UN Beijing Women's Conference²⁷ in 1995 began to extend a similar discourse on rights to girls as

²⁷ At the Beijing conference, the strategy of employing the term 'gender' and the gender and development (GAD) framework as a new conceptual tool for theorizing women's positioning in developing countries

pervious UN conventions had done for women. This new framework was in part due to a conceptual shift within GAD discourse that aimed to take into account the gendered relations between women and men, boys and girls (Denis, 2001). Beijing attempted to incorporate many of the mandates of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* and to specifically applying them to the situation of the girl-child. The focus on girls at Beijing was subsequently incorporated into the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. The declaration identifies the following objectives:

Elimination of all forms of discrimination against the girl child;
Elimination of negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls;
Promotion and protection of the rights of the girl child, and increase of awareness of her needs and potential;
Elimination of discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training;
Elimination of discrimination against girls in health and nutrition;
Elimination of the economic exploitation of child labour and protection of young girls at work;
Eradication of violence against the girl child;
Promotion of the girl child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life; and
Strengthening the role of the family in improving the status of the girl child.

-Beijing Declaration, 1995: 259-285, emphasis added

While speaking to issues of education, health and protection against violence and exploitation specific to girls, the discourse of girls' autonomy and participation made an important political appearance. Within the context of the basic needs framework and gender and development based concerns of the specific inequalities faced by girls came the installment of more advanced neo-liberal political rationalities. Elaborating on the above list of concerns, Beijing asserts "We are convinced that: [this framework will]

dominated much of the events programs (see Baden & Goetz, 1997). Therefore, the convention was as much about investigating the emerging policy and activist discourses on the concept of gender as apolitical strategy as it was about voicing the women's international concerns.

Develop the fullest potential of girls and women of all ages, ensure their full and equal participation in building a better world for all and enhance their role in the development process” (Beijing Declaration, 1995, article 34).

Soon thereafter, UNIFEM would establish a mandate for the “Participation Rights of Adolescent Girls” including the standard entitlement to education and health services, to life and livelihood skills, and a to safe and supportive environments. A new element would include “providing opportunities to *participate* in society, in the decisions that affect their lives, and *in the project* itself” (Beigbeder, 2001: 156, emphasis added) Emphasis was placed thereafter and into the late 90s on the status of the ‘girl-child’ and studies conducted in this area confirmed that indeed, girls and boys had different entitlements in families. Mainstream development institutions began to recognize what feminist activists and specialists had been arguing for a decade with regards to women; that the specific consequences of the gendered subordination of girls within the family and community had real consequences for development overall.

After Beijing, Unicef adopted a mission statement in 1996 to reflect this new platform: “UNICEF aims, through its country programs, to promote the equal rights of women and girls and to support their *full participation in the political, social and economic development of their communities*” (Beigbeder, 2001: 156, emphasis added). While the primary focus of development intervention remained in education and health based initiatives, more focus was being implemented within the context of the human rights rhetoric of autonomy and an evolving discourse concerning the capacity of girls to contribute to and participate within the development process. Like women before them, girls were now becoming increasingly ‘responsible’ for their own development, which by

extension would serve to impact the development of others. Regardless of these issues, it was clear that with the inception of a specific discourse that targeted girls, it became imperative to consider girls as being girls, as well as their potential development status and utility in becoming women. Either way, their capacity to contribute to the project of international development was now a cause for focus. As will be demonstrated in the following section, the investment in constructing and shaping the subjectivities of girls in development programming acts to constitute a need to some degree upon framing and managing the processes of their ‘becoming’ status as girls moving into ‘womanhood.’

5 Cultivating subjectivities

The identities at stake here are, crucially, gendered specifically female...

-Rankin, 2001: 28

I explore how the political rationalities associated with the extension of neo-liberal ideologies to children, in the form of a discourse on human rights within mainstream development is producing reconfigured standards for childhoods, and by extension reconfigured standards for ‘girlhoods.’ The political strategy of transforming ‘girlhoods’ to include a neo-liberal agenda relies on the production of specific forms of subjectivity. Therefore, this section views neo-liberalism as both a political and *gendered* strategy that serves to promote new spaces for an investment in more pervasive mechanisms of social governance (Rankin, 2001). The ‘rights-based approach’, with its introduction of the notion of extending autonomy, participation and responsibility to children and girls as development subjects, has in effect been *grafted* upon earlier versions of the ‘needs based’ discourse on girls and ‘girlhoods.’ As discussed above, these earlier models of ‘girlhoods’ were framed in terms of dependencies and gender

specific vulnerabilities. The political rationale behind these new initiatives is one that requires girls to be brought into the realm of neo-liberalism, in order to afford her the 'freedom' to develop by taking advantage of her newly 'discovered' human rights. Therefore, a mainstream development discourse so concerned with legitimizing neo-liberalism has afforded children and girls autonomy, despite decades of narrating them as dependant (under welfarism) and vulnerable (through feminist discourses) development populations. The subjectivities of girls have become more complex, and as a result have more tensions embedded therein.

The more recent discourse that attempts to frame girls as autonomous development subjects, who have the capacity to participate in and to foster the conditions that will shape their specific path to development, is potentially problematic on a number of levels. New conceptual elements of the subjectivities of girls within the 'third world' are representative of the processes by which development discourse attempts to cultivate its subjectivities through largely internal international development debates and consensus building models. As in the case of women, the response of development agencies to the discovery of a bias or exclusion of a development 'target group' within their policy and programming, has been to bring the group in as a client or beneficiary (White, 2002a). The highly gendered development category of 'girl-child', for example, is used within a particular development context to generate new subjectivities across time and across corresponding discourse on girls. Categorizing girls in developing countries as 'girl-child' as was done discursively in the mid 1990s sets the scene for development and academic development specialists. That is to say, we can conceive of what is meant by 'girl-child', we can categorize her station in the developing world as we construct it, and

how we have come to understand it and as we perceive it to be played out in the everyday. This practice of constructing the girl as 'other', is part of the very discourse that keeps her circumstances at the general, abstract and simplified level, and as such, may also keep her specific social experiences with complex economic and cultural processes hidden from view. These simplified categories serve to legitimize mainstream development discourse, strategies of development intervention and the political rationalities that underpin them. When an institutionalized discourse concerning development subjects becomes internalized within the development regime, in that texts are replicated and indexed in and among agencies, subject positions and subjectivities are cultivated and can even become *imagined*. In this context, the framing of girls and 'girlhoods' no longer present any 'truths' about their social realities, as textually they are rendered a homogenous subject; a one-dimensional and largely representational figure for the purposes of development analysis (Escobar, 1995; Mohanty, 1997b).

While girls are included in this discursive and conceptual shift within development discourse, gender specialists flag the special circumstances of girls as a potential hindrance to the full realization of their rights. The girl figure is rendered as a vulnerable population to an already constituted exploited group of social subjects. At the same time that they are articulated under the current rights based framework, girls are singled out as a special gendered category of child and are framed as being subjected to unique and separate social and cultural constraints enforced by parents, communities and wider social institutions that limit their potential. Sub-committees reporting to larger development bodies such as UNIFEM focus on specific gendered forms of violence around sex trafficking and female genital mutilation (FGM) as politically charged

examples to keep the issues faced by girls on the international mainstream development agenda. Therefore, girls become discursively representative of the importance of transformative development intervention. Their particular gendered circumstances in association with their age and class location are used to justify and appropriate development measures around neo-liberal notions of rights. This process is, however, an example of the practices of *grafting* one discourse concerning girls upon other older discourses that still have political utility but that may conflict with the current story being told about children, and by extension, about girls more generally. Therefore, the extension of neo-liberal subjectivities may sit uncomfortably with the discourse on girls; one that has depended upon the construction of their extreme vulnerability and potential to become exploited within the context of their ‘underdeveloped’ social cultural surrounding.

Requiring new subjectivities

Scott (1995) speaks to the project of subjectivity construction when he asserts: “...the point of application of modern power is not so much the body of the sovereign’s subject ...as the conditions in which that body is to live and define its life” (199). The process of developing ‘girlhoods’, like the process of developing ‘womanhoods’ before it, has become a measure of both the local and national development progress of many ‘third world’ countries (Klenk, 2004). Within this discourse, the developing girl, like the developed woman, can begin to move away from a representation that depicts her as ‘underdeveloped’, if she chooses to adopt specific mainstream development strategies. An interesting example of the potential influences of development project interventions to inform gendered subjectivities comes from the research of Rebecca Klenk. Klenk’s

(2004) research within the context of a development program which was being conducted in Kumaon, a rural North Indian village, found that the women and the girls had internalized the notion of what it was to ‘developed’ and what it was to be ‘underdeveloped.’ Klenk explains: During my fieldwork, I learned that calling someone ‘developed’ (*vikaasii* or *vikasit*) – especially a woman or a girl – was a common form of praise” (2004: 59). In this way, she found that these programming initiatives served to generate new subjectivities among development recipients; subjectivities that were internalized and used in their everyday interactions with one another. These categories were, however, defined within the context of development discourse and programming and not by the women and girls themselves. In considering the discourse of children’s ‘rights’ as a political gendered strategy that serves to promote a reconfigured understanding of girls and their subjectivities within development discourse, a fair question to ask is whether girls who can participate in rights centered programming will come to regard themselves as ‘developed’ while those, such as in the case of Bangladesh as outlined in the previous chapter, will internalize this rights based discourse and their lack of ability to participate in it as a sign of their ‘underdevelopment.’ This could potentially become an unhealthy dialogue in and among the poor childhood culture in Bangladesh.

These newly defined subjectivities, cultivated in the realm of neo-liberal ideology around notions of participation and personal autonomy, are still contingent upon the production of development subjects as a unified category despite differences in ethnicity, caste, class and age. Therefore, types of ‘development’ required of girls within many ‘third world’ countries may be culturally impossible for them to undertake. As Rankin

(2001) asks: how do such subjectivities 'fare in practice' (20)? The rhetoric of inclusion and the discursive acknowledgment of a multiplicity of childhoods, and even 'girlhoods', cannot adequately account for the varied experiences of girls, despite a development discourse that attempts to frame and to narrate their lived realities as development 'truth claims.'

The movement of children into advanced or neo-liberalism also dissolves a certain degree of responsibility on the part of international development bodies for securing girl's development to one that sees girls as "acting as responsible agents of their own well being" (Rankin, 2001: 20). This 'responsibilization' of girls as development subjects may then become a means through which girls are rendered instrumental to the development process. Within this political framework, girls as agents of development are gendered, in that they are expected to develop in certain directions to be able to care of themselves and others in the future, making the 'needs' of girls consistent with wider international development goals. This could be an example of what Miller and Rose (1992) refer to as social subjects operating within the context of *regulated autonomy*. Therefore, through their *regulated autonomy*, the subjectivities required of this form of newly established 'girlhood' require that girls be responsible for themselves, the families they are expected to have in the future, and elements of the development process as a whole.

Adolescent girls in Bangladesh

To serve as an example of how the evolution of the discourse girls has impacted programming and how it further attempts to impact the lives of girls in the 'third world', I examine the Adolescent Development Program (ADP). This program is a child-centered

development project funded by CIDA and implemented through USC Canada and USCC-Bangladesh. This project is of interest to this thesis because it is expressly an initiative that is specifically concerned with constructing a particular reality of ‘girlhood’ and ‘womanhood.’

As part of its programming, CIDA has helped to fund the Adolescent Development Program (ADP) in Bangladesh for over a decade.²⁸ The target age group being adolescents between the ages of 11-17, the majority (80%) of which are girls. Priority is given to poor, illiterate, unmarried adolescents from landless families.²⁹ This program was developed in the early 1990s with a mission statement that expressly articulates the need to ‘*socially immunize*’ adolescents against economic and social exploitation. By ‘social immunization’, the project states that it means to “proactively improve the future economic and social status of adolescent girls by providing them with literacy, numeracy, health education and income-earning skills, as well as ensuring that they properly register their marriages” (ADP: Annex A).

Part of the stated focus of this project is to ensure that girls and women properly register their marriages to ensure that these women are protected against cultural abuses that may arise through the realization of their rights. Registration of the marriage was seen as a way of ensuring that the rights enshrined in Bangladeshi law regarding married women could then be enforced, if necessary. Further, it was meant to instill a sense of empowerment in women who registered their marriages, while also supporting a dialogue

²⁸ See: CIDA (2001) [1998] Adolescent Development Program in Bangladesh, *Project Approval Document*, Canadian International Development Agency, Government of Canada.

²⁹ Migration from rural to urban areas is almost always done out of economic necessity including landlessness in rural areas. The increase in landlessness and functional landlessness (functional landlessness is defined as those who own only half an acre of land) has meant both increased poverty for families, but also a sharp reduction in the work that women have traditionally been able to do, thereby pushing women to other areas to find employment (Naved et al, 2001: 93).

between women and their husbands on key issues regarding marriage and family law. One of the related and more specific stated objectives was to support the full participation of women and girls as equal partners in determining the direction of their own development (ADP, Annex B: Gender Analysis). Their 'development', referring to those objectives as specified, was outlined and coordinated through the guidelines of the ADP project that has a specific ideological position when it comes to marriageable age and appropriate family configurations. This process of replacing older models of social and cultural behaviors through enabling populations to adopt those based on their rights is potentially what Scott (1995) refers to as "changing terrains within which to respond" (198). Girls and women can only operate within the context of a rights based framework if they are to better themselves and ensure their opportunity to develop along the path to proper social development. The term 'social immunization' here refers to directing girls away from a path to social 'underdevelopment.' This term invokes a protectionist discourse on the part of development to enable development populations to save them from themselves, as well as from their social and cultural environments.

Education is a major priority for this project. Participants are trained in areas including knowing their rights to skills in literacy and basic nutrition and health care. The programming mandate states that: "When a person absorbs his education properly s/he is able to teach his or her children or others, remembers the education throughout his or her life, and disseminates it into family, society and country. Thus it is called sustainable education" (ADP, Executive Summary: 7). Therefore, girls have the responsibility of becoming educated for themselves as well as for wider mainstream development objectives by ensuring more sustainable outcomes.

As is also clear from the stated objectives of this project, that policy and programming for girls in the 'third world' has not lost its welfarist undertones. In fact, I would argue that the extension of neo-liberal ideals of autonomy, participation and responsibility only strengthen many of the objectives of a development welfarist mandate. This is achieved by endowing girls with aspects of an autonomous existence within the development process, only to align them with development centered goals that ensure their participation within the development regime as 'responsible' mothers and wives in the future. Therefore, by giving girls rights in adolescence, their participation as neo-liberal subjects is ensured into the future. Setting girls on the path in certain improving directions (Scott, 1995) is obtained early on and as a result, girls are easier to manage into 'womanhood'.

Within this wider framework, 'girlhoods' have been shaped and reshaped through the emergence of a number of discourses on children's needs, and a highly gendered representation of the homogenized 'underdeveloped' subject. More recently, as children, they have been cast under the neo-liberal rhetoric of autonomy and participation. Along the way and within the context of these various discourses, girls have been rendered 'thinkable' (Rose, 1996), as worthy category for development intervention and management. Through the constitution of their subjectivities – created in the vacuum of the development domain of gendered personhoods – development discourse is defining the 'subject form' that it requires girls to internalize, and in so doing, enables the production of its own creative synthesis of what it means to experience 'girlhoods' in the third world and further how this experience of 'girlhood' should be shaped to ensure the realization of a particular 'womanhood.' Therefore, part of this creative construction is

embedded in notions of women in developing countries in much the same way as earlier development policy on girls framed their needs in relation to the women that they would one day become.

6 Conclusion

By tracing the domains within which the discourse regarding girls of the 'third world' has been cultivated, an increasingly complicated story emerges. Through a welfarist discourse of 'basic human needs' girls were rendered dependent, and as children, largely invisible. Mothers on the other hand were deemed 'responsible' for the health and social development of their children and extended families as part of these specific strategies for survival as conceived as by mainstream development. With increasing attention to women as agents of the development process, particularly women's and gender initiatives, some new areas of concern for girls began to make their way into mainstream development consciousness. Most of these initiatives focused on the need to protect girls from potential exploitation; a danger that the compounded effect of their gender and age afforded them. Despite these progressions in discourse, much of the actual development programming still only accounted for educational and health based issues, as the political rationalities of neo-liberal ideology had not yet included children as a population of interest. With the adoption of more neo-liberal ideology in both gender programming that focused on human rights of women and later the with the *Convention of the Rights of the Child*, girls were extended more status as development subjects in their own right. A significant number of international and transnational conventions occurred where discourse was used to incite internal and international policy and programming. The substantive appearance of girls within these conventions would evolve

from the mid 90s onward with Beijing framing girls under an emerging discourse of rights and participation.

This rights centered framework was used within a particular discursive context to generate new and at times contradictory subjectivities that in effect act to cultivate specific productive forms of 'girlhoods.' These cultivated girlhoods would act as markers to indicate the advancement of society more generally, and women and girls more specifically. However, the thrust of these discursive and practical initiatives were the product of a mainstream development discourse that strives to legitimize homogeneous notions of the lived realities of girls who reside in the 'third world.' These constructed 'truth claims' do not translate well in practice. The result is a disconnect between the rhetoric of inclusion and participation and the lived realities of girls. As demonstrated through the example of the adolescent development Program (ADP), girlhoods are meant to be the origin of the 'developed' woman. In this sense, girls are streamlined into mainstream development strategies that will span their entire lives.

chapter six: conclusions

1 Summary of project

Girls, as newly categorized development subjects, are positioned within particular discursive relations of power that both inform and build upon a gendered discourse that attempts to frame their lives and futures along specific paths to an idealized childhood experience as the ‘foundation’ for a proper social development. Development discourse focuses on altering and organizing the very desires of development subjects to align them with the categories and structures of new and thriving political rationalities (Scott, 1995). These representations are in effect political strategies used to reconfigure and to simplify the realities of the lives of women and girls for the express purpose of categorizing them within mainstream development discourse.

In chapter two, I initially demonstrated a post-structuralist approach to development that relied on both post-development and post-colonial perspectives, including post-colonial feminists, all of which drew upon the work of Michel Foucault through his conceptions of ‘power/knowledge regimes’ and the enabling aspects of governance as specific ‘techniques of power.’ A key element related to a critique of the construction of childhoods was first unpacked through an examination of the ways in which children have been afforded autonomy under neo-liberalism; an extension of political strategies of governance to childhood. The emerging paradigm of childhood argues for the complexity of multiple experiences of childhoods, including an increasing emphasis on child autonomy. However, southern feminist and child specialists suggest that this discourse has not yet properly accounted for the histories of colonialism,

modernization and current mainstream development interventions which act to shape the subjectivities as well as the lives of children in the ‘third world.’

In chapter three, I outlined the specific methodological approach of discourse analysis used to unpack the complex story that is being told about girls in mainstream development discourse. This is in part achieved through the specific practice of building alliances across and between international development bodies’ texts. These texts are cross indexed, exchanged and recycled, within and among mainstream development bodies creating an environment where discourse is recorded in policy and programming documentation and used internally to inform largely homogeneous notions of girls. The employment of discourse analysis is relevant here as it problematizes the different and shifting modes of development discourse and the political rationalities that support these same processes. What also becomes possible from a methodological point of view, informed by a Foucauldian perspective with regards to discourse analysis, is an alternative reading and interpretation of a development discourse that serves to constitute particular gendered and ‘underdeveloped’ subjectivities.

In Chapter four, I outlined the key elements that entailed the discursive shift within mainstream development rhetoric from a discourse on children’s survival and ‘basic needs’ to one framed within the context of human rights. This shift suggests a break within child-centered discourse; one that implies the adoption of specific political rationalities associated with neo-liberal conceptions of a child development agenda. These mandates attempt to articulate the individual status of children as newly defined human rights recipients, as well to highlight their potential for productivity, participation, and responsibility. Here, I argued that children become social subjects to be governed by

development policy and programming when they are expected to internalize these new neo-liberal subjectivities. Examples were drawn from development initiatives in Bangladesh that attempted to educate children regarding their rights. These initiatives resulted in frustration and failure when the children were unable to realize these rights within the context of their daily lives.

Chapter 5 served to demonstrate the application of this new discourse on rights to the history and structure of the progression of the development discourse on girls and the subsequent cultivation of their subjectivities. Girls were extended more status as development subjects in their own right with the adoption of the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* and the gendered programming initiatives that espoused its requirements. The substantive appearance of girls within these conventions would evolve from the mid 1990s onward with the UN Beijing Convention, framing girls under an emerging discourse of rights and participation. This new framework, grafted upon earlier versions of the narrative told about girls in the ‘third world’, was used within a particular discursive context to generate new and at times contradictory subjectivities that acted to cultivate particular forms of ‘girlhoods.’ This in turn led to the construction and production of homogeneous notions of the lived realities of girls who reside in the ‘third world.’ These constructed ‘truth claims’ have potentially limited success in practice, resulting in a disconnect between a discourse of inclusion and participation and the lived realities of girls as they experience them. The adolescent development program (ADP) demonstrates the governing aspects of development programming that attempts to influence the social development of girls through successive stages of their ‘proper’ development throughout their lives.

2 Key contributions of the thesis

My aim has been to (1) establish the constitution of the subjectivities of girls in the ‘third world’ within mainstream development discourse as an original object of sociological investigation. By this I mean to situate the mainstream development discourse on girls in the ‘third world’ as a problematic to be addressed within complex theoretical and methodological frameworks; (2) next, within this vein, employing complex theoretical tools to provide the ideas and research within this thesis as a groundwork for alliances with post-structuralist dialogues of strategies of governance, and power/ knowledge regimes in relation to the discursive positioning of girls within the context of international development communities; and (3) to contribute to the sociology of childhood by making explicit the specific influences of the histories of colonialism, modernization and now development interventions on the construction of girls and ‘girlhoods’ within mainstream development discourse. This in turn serves to demonstrate a disconnect between development policy and practice and the lived experiences of girls in ‘third world’ countries.

3 Limitations of the research

As detailed in the preface to this thesis, my research project and ultimately this thesis evolved into a very different one than that which I started out with over a year ago. Upon realizing that I could not fully address the questions and issues surrounding my first project, as framed within a political economy theoretical framework and an institutional ethnography methodology, I devoted myself to exploring (and *re-searching*) new intellectual questions. These new questions required me to employ different theoretical

concepts and methodological tools than I had previously been accustomed to in my research. These included, post-structuralist approaches to mainstream international development and to the construction of subjectivities, classical and neo-liberal ideology, and discourse analysis. In thus exploring these new ideas, a new theoretical agenda took over in many respects. This shifting theoretical and methodological lens led to resulting time constraints and ultimately what I regard as a somewhat compromised depth of analysis within this second project. In addition to the findings detailed here, I wish to emphasize that much of the underpinnings of this thesis is the less visible, but profoundly meaningful, learning process that accompanies this. My MA journey through changing theoretical and methodological terrain was a trying, but useful, lesson in how research inevitably changes as one goes along and how researchers need to have strategies of flexibility and theoretical adaptability to deal with such unexpected parts of the research process.

4 The way forward: areas for further research

Healthy, well nourished and educated people are the basis of prosperous economies and stable states. In an increasingly interdependent world, it is in Canada's best interests internationally to promote prosperity and stability around the globe. In this way, the [Social Development Priorities] framework will work towards reducing poverty around the world, and will significantly contribute to Canada's human-security agenda. The Framework also sets out ways to strengthen Canada's aid programming by adopting *new and innovative ways of doing business*.

-CIDA's Social Development Priorities, 2002, emphasis added

As a stated policy objective, it is clear from the above quote that investing in global governance through international development is as good for Canada as it is thought to be for the 'third world.' Within this wider policy arena, Canada's international policy has responded to the political international requirements of the *Convention of the*

Rights of the Child by adopting its own action plan and ‘rights based approach’; a central aspect of this thesis for the purposes of research and interrogation, in the domain of ‘third world girlhoods.’

What is clear from this analysis is that greater work is needed to unpack the complexities of the constitution of the subjectivities of girls in mainstream development discourse. This needs to be carried out in terms of how girls of the ‘third world’ are named, positioned, cultivated and to some extent *imagined* within mainstream development discourse in specific ways to legitimize development interventions. Specific development projects undertaken by international development bodies such as CIDA not only require rigorous critique in terms of interrogating specified programming objectives, but also require a kind of wholesale discursive interrogation. The underlying political rationalities associated with their establishment in mainstream development consciousness should also be made more explicit, even if these rationalities are couched in enabling development policies such as education and health based initiatives. Again, I feel a need to stress that some of these initiatives have positive effects and outcomes, but this does not mean that the governing apparatus of development discourse and intervention should be afforded the kind of scope that it has to define and shape the discursive space of the ‘third world.’ This is especially true when this naming has the effect of potentially influencing the subjectivities of ‘third world’ populations through development programming, by requiring them to define themselves and their ways of life as ‘underdeveloped’, so that they might become enabled to move themselves into spaces of ‘modernity’.

In defining girls in ways that serve to legitimize current political rationalities of neo-liberal ideology, it is fair to say that the girls themselves are lost. They exist discursively as markers of development goals and international consensus of children's rights, but their specific needs and interests are rendered invisible through the need to instill global and universal standards for childhoods; just as any other development subject that is discursively integrated into mainstream development consciousness. I believe that one of the primary areas that would benefit from greater research is the unpacking of the extension of neo-liberal subjectivities of autonomy to girls as they are directly grafted upon past discourses. These past discourses have highlighted the construction of their extreme vulnerability and their potential to become exploited within the context of their social cultural surrounding. How, if at all, will these tensions play out on the ground? Will this dialogue remain in the realm of development rhetoric, or will these tensions become apparent practice through the dissemination of discourse that affect programming? A second area for future research is the potential instrumentality of framing girls as autonomous participants within the development process. Attempting to shape and govern their lives from adolescents into adulthood, so as to fulfill their gendered development subject status as responsible wives and mothers, needs to be further problematized.

In light of the arguments made within this project concerning the constitution of the subjectivities of girls, I wish to consider how I might proceed in developing the issues of the informal and domestic labour of girls, which I raise in my first project. I started out wanting to make the domestic and informal labour contributions of girls in Bangladesh visible. Now I am concerned with what this visibility would mean for them

within the context of emerging neo-liberal rights based discourse regarding children in the 'third world.' I now find myself now somewhat concerned about making developed subjects *visible* and, therefore, accessible to political strategies of mainstream development. So what might be a way forward?

Therefore, a second attempt at looking at my first project regarding the invisible domestic and informal labour of girls within the context of both the international economy and in terms of mainstream development discourse would have perhaps a different objective. A more dynamic project would consider their visibility or invisibility in the context of unpacking the interlocking³⁰ nature of their specific circumstances in terms of their placement in relation to class, race, ethnicity, age and how this positioning is captured or overlooked within mainstream development discourse and strategies for intervention. This would require perhaps more than one project with more than one objective, as I have found this framework to uncover multiple layers of related issues for investigation.

³⁰ Razack (1999) sees systems of oppression as interlocking, which is to say that she dismisses intersectional or additive models of oppression as incomplete. An intersectional approach examines the sites at which gender, class, race and ethnicity come together and inform experiences of oppression whereas an interlocking analysis is concerned with the relations among and between these categories as informed by historically embedded relations of power. An interlocking analysis traces complex and highly gendered relations based on race, class, ethnicity and age in terms of their historical situatedness, and how they function in relation to one another to create meaning and legitimacy in a variety of social and cultural arrangements (Mohanty, 1997; Razack, 1999). The historical significance behind such an analysis based on gender, class, race, ethnicity and age can help to inform how these relationships are forged and how they continue to operate through fields of power/knowledge.

Appendix A: Ethics Proposal

Description:

The purpose of this research is to explore the socially and economically invisible labour practices of girls in Bangladesh. Due to current economic restructuring policies within Bangladesh, attributed to the end of the multi-fiber agreement in 2005, and the potential subsequent rise in informal labour and home-working, girls are increasingly relied upon to work in the home to support their families. With regards to this household dynamic, I wish to examine two important functions undertaken by these girls: (1) the role they play in performing domestic work, (2) the additional labour that the girl-child performs in the context of assisting her mother in home-working and informal activities as subcontracted by the garment sector in Bangladesh.

At the policy level, I intend to explore how international trade agreements have affected the transition to more informal home-working in Bangladesh and the relation between these agreements and the domestic and informal labour participation of the girl-child. Another essential component of this thesis is examining the response of development community to this particular form of invisible child labour, as well as the theoretical conceptualizations of the girl-child as framed by development practitioners and academics as a secondary labor force within the private sphere.

Methodology and Participants:

My methodology for this project will first include a review of relevant literature from academic, organizational and institutional sources, as well as a review of reports from international development agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A second phase of my methodological process will consist of in-depth open-ended interviews using a snowballing method with 10 to 15 development practitioners, from both governmental and NGO based organizations within Canada. I will also be employing email interviews with development NGO based practitioners in Bangladesh.

From this pool, I will draw from civil servants here in Ottawa who work in international development agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), as well as those who work with local development NGOs. I will also draw on the knowledge of informants from Dhaka University in Bangladesh as well as Bangladeshi NGOs who specialize in child labour issues. As these informants will be working within the academic and development community context language barriers should not arise as an issue for concern. This latter stage will be facilitated by my contacts at Dhaka University in Bangladesh, and the Center for Policy Dialogue, in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Security and Storage of Data:

Tape-recorded data and subsequent transcriptions along with field notes will be stored in my personal files at home. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to data, which will be stored indefinitely. When conducting interviews in the field, data will be stored on my person and at all times in my possession.

Anonymity:

For the purposes of this Master's thesis, anonymity will be ensured to participants in the final report of this thesis by providing participants with pseudonyms (i.e. development practitioner #1) and not using or identifying any specific information as related to their development organization. It is important to note that anonymity will be difficult to ensure at the data collection stage as a snowball method is employed for the purposes of the interview process to find potential participants.

Confidentially:

While anonymity will be provided to participants, responses of participants will be quoted for the purposes of my Master's thesis and may be used in subsequent research papers, and/or presentations regarding these issues.

Risks to Participants:

Risks to participants are minimal as federal government development practitioners are civil servants and development documentation provided but such institutions are open to the public. With regards to development practitioners from NGOs based in Canada they are subject to their own internal policy regarding the sharing of information on the details of their specific programs.

Dissemination:

The findings of this research project are to be utilized in the thesis requirement for a Master of Sociology at Carleton University. The results of this study will be available to research participants upon request upon the completion of the thesis.

Benefits:

Potential benefits to stem from this research include:

- (1) At the practical level, development practitioners and policy makers need to be aware of how the invisible economic contributions made by girls potentially supports families as well as wider domestic economies as opposed to focusing exclusively on how to eliminate these reproductive practices altogether.
- (2) Further, the overemphasis on the labour of girls, as a hindrance to educational development indicators alone can be problematized. As such, more attention can begin to be focused on the larger global economic neo-liberal structures that depend on the invisible labour of the reproductive tasks performed by families including that work performed by girls.
- (3) An interrogation of the ways in which development practitioners and development textual policy conceptualize the work of the girl-child may lead to more complex methodological development tools that account for interlocking forms of oppression.

Letter of Information: Qualitative Interviews

Investigator:

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Supervisor:

Andrea Doucet, Ph.D.
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Carleton University
(613) 520-2600 (ex. 2663)
Email: andrea_doucet@carleton.ca

Title of Research:

Working in the Shadow of the Margins: Girl-child domestic and informal labour in Bangladesh

Purpose of Research:

This research study is being undertaken as part of a Sociology Masters thesis at the Carleton University. The purpose of the study is to gather information on the specific role of the girl-child in her capacity as a domestic and informal labourer within the context of her own family. Further, to examine the extent to which the economic contribution of the girl-child is acknowledged and accounted for in development planning and policy with regards to development initiatives that aim to address child labour issues.

Procedures:

This qualitative research study will include individual interviews of a minimum of one hour in duration within the office or organization of the participant. You will be asked questions concerning policies, practices and/or programs with regards to your organization that relate to gender analysis and mainstreaming, child rights, child labour, and the, specifically the girl-child as a category of analysis. I will be taking notes for the duration of the interview and interviews will also be tape recorded. If you are not comfortable with this arrangement, simply inform the principle investigator prior to the interview.

Benefits and Risks:

There are **no anticipated risks** related to this study. Risks to participants are minimal as federal government development practitioners are civil servants and development documentation provided but such institutions are open to the public. With regards to development practitioners from NGOs based in Canada they are subject to their own internal policy regarding the sharing of information on the details of their specific programs.

Anonymity:

Anonymity will be ensured in the final report of this thesis by providing participants with pseudonyms (i.e. development practitioner #1) and not using or identifying any specific information as to your position within your organization. However, anonymity will be

difficult to ensure at the data collection stage of the process as a snowball method is employed for the purposes of this interview process to find potential participants.

Confidentially:

While identities will be protected, responses of participants will be quoted for the purposes of this Master's thesis and may be used in subsequent research papers, and/or presentations regarding these issues.

Data Storage:

Tape recordings of notes taken during the interview will be used for the purposes of transcription, and then will be stored indefinitely in the principle investigator's files for the use of future research projects and publications. When conducting interviews in the field, data will be stored on my person and at all times in my possession. Only the principle investigator and supervisor will have access to the data collected.

Once the study is completed, participants are able to request the results of the research. If participants have any questions, please feel free to contact myself or my supervisor at the contact information provided at the beginning of this letter.

Freedom to Withdraw:

You may withdraw from the project at anytime. Should you decide to withdraw you may decide at that time if I may use the information you have provided to that point or have it destroyed. If you start the study and decide that you do not want to complete the interview process, or at any point you decide you would like to withdraw any part of your interview statement, simply inform Aimée Campeau or Andrea Doucet in person, by letter, or by telephone.

Approval of Research:

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns or questions about your involvement in the study, please contact the chair of the Carleton Ethics Committee:

Prof. Antonio Gualtieri, Chair
Carleton University Research Ethics Committee
Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6
Tel: 613-520-2517
E-mail: ethics@carleton.ca

For any research conducted for the purposes of this study, participants must fill out and complete an informed consent form in order to participate in the research project.

Consent Form

I, _____, agree to participate in this research study. This study is being conducted by Aimée Campeau as part of the thesis requirement for a Master of Sociology at Carleton University. The purpose of the study is to gather information on the specific role of the girl-child in her capacity as a domestic and informal labourer within the context of her own family. Further, if the economic contribution of the girl-child is acknowledged and accounted for in development planning and policy with regards to development initiatives that aim to address child labour issues.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of my participation returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

- I will be required to answer a set of questions concerning policies and practices in with regards to my organization that relate to the subject matter.
- My participation will involve answering this set of questions, which will be audio-taped for the duration of the interview, which will be a minimum of one hour in length.
- This interview will take place in the offices of my organization.
- There are minimal unforeseen risks associated with participation in this study. All information requested should be in the public domain, or subject to the organization's policies regarding the sharing of information.
- I am aware that I may request anonymity in the final report of this thesis with regards the questions asked of me, ensuring that my identity will not be disclosed, but that my responses to the questions asked of me may be quoted for the purposes of this Master's thesis as well as any further research projects undertaken by the interviewer in this area.
- I understand that tape recordings and any subsequent transcripts will be stored in the interviewers personal files indefinitely.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the project at anytime. Should I decide to withdraw I may decide at that time if the principal researcher may use the information I have provided to that point or have it destroyed.
- Access to a summary of research results will be provided to me if I so choose to request such information.

Aimée Campeau or her faculty advisor, Andrea Doucet, will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

Aimée Campeau
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Professor Andrea Doucet
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andrea_doucet@carleton.ca

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Please sign both copies of the consent form and return one to the researcher.

Prof. Antonio Gualtieri, Chair
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Carleton University
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Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6
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E-mail: ethics@carleton.ca

Letter of Information: Email Interviews

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Supervisor:

Andrea Doucet, Ph.D.
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
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Procedures:

This qualitative research study will include email interviews. You will be asked questions regarding your knowledge concerning the labour of the girl-child within Bangladeshi society as well as potential questions concerning policies, practices and/or programs with regards to your organization that relate to gender analysis and mainstreaming, child rights, child labour, and the, specifically the girl-child as a category of analysis.

Benefits and Risks:

There are **no anticipated risks** related to this study. Risks to participants are minimal as NGO based development practitioners in Bangladesh are subject to their own internal policy regarding the sharing of information on the details of their specific programs. It is important to underline that information obtained through web based electronic correspondence such as email is neither totally private nor secure.

Therefore, the letter of information and consent forms outlined here are not a secure form of transmission. As not all countries share the view that a certain amount of privacy should be associated with e-mail correspondence, the actual private nature of such communications can not be ensured. In order to best protect your privacy interests as a research participant, you may wish to have these e-mails reviewed by a third-party.

Anonymity:

Anonymity will be ensured in the final report of this thesis by providing participants with pseudonyms (i.e. development practitioner #1) and not using or identifying any specific information as to your position within your organization. However, anonymity will be difficult to ensure at the data collection stage of the process as a snowball method is employed for the purposes of this interview process to find potential participants.

Confidentially:

While identities will be protected, responses of participants will be quoted for the purposes of this Master's thesis and may be used in subsequent research papers, and/or presentations regarding these issues.

Data Storage:

Email correspondence, answers to questions as well as transcripts will be stored in files on the principle researcher's personal computer and will be stored indefinitely for the use of future research projects and publications. Only the principle investigator and supervisor will have access to the data collected.

Once the study is completed, participants are able to request the results of the research. If participants have any questions, please feel free to contact myself or my supervisor at the contact information provided at the beginning of this letter.

Freedom to Withdraw:

You may withdraw from the project at anytime. Should you decide to withdraw you may decide at that time if I may use the information you have provided to that point or have it destroyed. If you start the study and decide that you do not want to complete the interview process, or at any point you decide you would like to withdraw any part of your interview statement, simply inform Aimée Campeau or Andrea Doucet in person, by letter, or by telephone.

Approval of Research:

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance by the Carleton University Research Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns or questions about your involvement in the study, please contact the chair of the Carleton Ethics Committee:

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E-mail: ethics@carleton.ca

For any research conducted for the purposes of this study, participants must fill out and complete an informed consent form in order to participate in the research project.

Consent Form

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I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of my participation returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

- I will be required to answer a set of questions concerning the role of the girl-child as well as policies and practices in with regards to my organization that relate to the subject matter.
- My participation will involve answering this set of questions, which will be emailed to me by the principle investigator.
- There are no unforeseen risks associated with participation in this study. All information requested should be in the public domain, or subject to the organization's policies regarding the sharing of information. However, I am aware that email correspondence is neither totally private nor secure and that it may be in my best interests to have a third party review the email correspondence.
- I am aware that I may request anonymity in the final report of this thesis with regards the questions asked of me, ensuring that my identity will not be disclosed, but that my responses to the questions asked of me may be quoted for the purposes of this Master's thesis as well as any further research projects undertaken by the interviewer in this area.
- I understand that my responses to the questions asked of me by email will be stored in the interviewers personal electronic files indefinitely.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the project at anytime. Should I decide to withdraw I may decide at that time if the principal researcher may use the information I have provided to that point or have it destroyed.
- Access to a summary of research results will be provided to me if I so choose to request such information.

Aimée Campeau or her faculty advisor, Andrea Doucet, will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

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Signature of Research Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Please sign both copies of the consent form and return one to the researcher.

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