

“EMPOWERED TO CHANGE THE WORLD FOR THE BETTER”: GENDER,
CITIZENSHIP, AND JUSTICE IN THREE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION
PROGRAMS FOR GIRLS

LEYNA LOWE

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores possibilities for environmental citizenship for girls. When environmental education emerged as a field of study in the 1970s, it articulated an environmentalism for young people based in the language of citizenship. However, environmental justice and feminist environmental education researchers have pointed out that this citizenship was homogenized, with little consideration given to gender, race, class, and sexuality, and that this citizenship was based on obedience to normative environmental prescriptions rather than on democracy and justice. At the same time, girls are often excluded from the vocabularies of citizenship because of their age, gender, and other intersecting factors, and their marginalization has been exacerbated by the myriad of programs for girls which, since the 1990s, have been “empowering” them with the message that they must change themselves rather than struggle for their social rights. This dissertation argues for a feminist project of environmental citizenship that politicizes gender and the intersecting categories of difference in girls’ lives, and also taps into environmental education’s democratic potential to argue that girls need to be exposed to possibilities of social transformation and justice.

To bring gender and girls into environmental education, this dissertation rests on evidence gathered in field observations, interviews, and focus groups conducted with three environmental education programs for girls: the Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada (Toronto), Green Girls (New York City), and ECO Girls (Ann Arbor), to demonstrate that gender, race, and class matter in girls’ access to the sciences, the outdoors, and environmental programming. Using a feminist environmental justice lens, it assesses each of the program’s different models of ecological citizenship, arguing that an intersectional perspective and an openness to analyzing power, privilege, and difference generate more robust environmentalisms and ecological citizenships for girls. Specifically, the research considers that individual approaches to empowerment will not achieve the kinds of social change that are necessary for gender equality and environmental justice, and that forms of public engagement that are rooted primarily in service, leadership, and civic-mindedness – as opposed to activism, advocacy, and collective mobilization – are alone not enough to expose girls to the possibilities of full citizenship, social transformation, and democratic engagement.

DEDICATION

For girls everywhere

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INTRODUCTION

Green is for Girls

In pursuing the goal of enabling all children to have a voice in improving their communities and the environment we need to be aware of the special barriers to the participation of girls.¹

- Roger Hart, *Children's Participation*

Since the field of environmental education was founded and integrated into international UN policy and the formal education curriculum in the 1970s, feminists and environmental justice researchers and activists have been contesting the field's social exclusions. The environmental educators who developed the field had articulated environmental education as a social practice concerned with the socio-political dimensions of the environment and young people's roles in relation to it. In a brief history of the field, however, feminist environmental education scholar Annette Gough argues that "environmental education to date has been concerned with universalized subjects, rather than recognizing multiple subjectivities." Using the metaphor of moving margins, feminist researchers argue that the voices of women, Indigenous and colonized peoples, people of colour, and more recently, the voices of queer, fat, and disabled people are missing from and silenced by a largely white, male, heterosexual, and middle-class environmental education. As she explains,

the foundational discourses of environmental education are "man-made" discourses at least [on] two levels—because of the absence of women in their formulation and because of the modernist science that separates "man" and "nature" and associates "woman" with "nature." The genderedness of the discourses also permeates their epistemology—not only are nonmale perspectives not valued, but the epistemology, being consistent with modern science, views knowledge as universal, consistent, and coherent and the subject of knowledge as culturally and historically disembodied or invisible and homogenous and unitary.²

The environmental justice movement has been even more vocal in its critique of the whiteness, racism, and colonialism of environmental education. As contemporary environmental justice educators Julian Agyeman and Running-Grass argue, people of colour have been absent from the largely white and middle-class contingent of environmental education and, subsequently, issues of social justice that touch their lives such as poverty, housing, healthcare, and workplace safety have been excluded in favour of focusing on ecological preservation and conservation. Environmental justice and feminist scholar Giovanna di Chiro has remarked that the socio-political dimensions of the environment have been for the most part ignored in environmental education. While these interventions have challenged the marginalization of particular groups from the field and made some progress in pushing environmental education to become more diverse and democratic, the voices of girls have been absent from this discussion. To date, there has been little consideration of the gendered dimensions of girls' citizenships and experiences of the environment, seeing as young people, when discussed in environmental education, are often portrayed as an undifferentiated category where gender is concerned.

This dissertation asks, "what does an environmental education that takes girls' citizenships seriously look like?" More specifically, I am interested in how a gendered intersectional analysis of girls' marginalization might expand environmental education to consider a wider diversity of human experience in constructing environmental knowledge and practice. If the goal of environmental education is to create an "educated citizenry," as environmental educator William Stapp proposed in 1970, and to enable "citizens to face the challenges of the present and future," as the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) policy statement asserts, then how might environmental education account for girls' gendered citizenships?³ Can it address and politicize the concerns that touch their lives?

There is an important case for why girls' citizenships should be taken into account in environmental education. Girls in many parts of the world come to know themselves in societies marked by structural gender inequalities that intersect with other forms of oppression. They are disproportionately the victims of sexualized violence, more likely than boys to be burdened with domestic and family responsibilities and are sometimes forced to become mothers before they are ready. Girls in many parts of the world, including the United States, are denied access to sex education and lack reproductive rights. Girls' bodies are more likely to be controlled and regulated by teachers, parents, boyfriends, or husbands, and they also experience other kinds of gender-based violence that intersect with their sexual, racial, class, or religious identities, or with other factors such as disability, size, and appearance. In Canada, an estimated 1,200 Indigenous girls and women have gone missing or have been found murdered since the 1980s (the number is likely much higher), attesting to the ways in which colonial violence in Canada permeates Indigenous girls and women's lives.⁴ The Highway of Tears, a stretch of Highway 16 that passes through a remote and heavily forested area of northern British Columbia, is a geography of violence for many Indigenous girls who have gone missing or murdered while traveling along this route, many of them forced to hitchhike from their isolated communities in the absence of adequate public transportation.

Increasingly, research is pointing to the "environmental" dimensions of girls' oppressions. For instance, recent research shows that Indigenous girls and girls of colour are at a greater risk for toxic exposure from living near contaminated environments, as shown in a study of Mohawk girls in Akwesasne Nation who experience puberty earlier from high levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and from Akwesasne mothers who have a high incidence of miscarriage and whose milk also contains large traces of PCBs.⁵ The Laotian Organizing Project

and SAFIRE, both of which are programs anchored in grassroots environmental justice organizations in Southwestern U.S, have organized with Laotian and Asian Pacific Islander girls on issues of reproductive rights and freedom and provide insights into how racialized girls experience health hazards in their communities, lack access to healthcare services, and are exposed to chemical additives in beauty and personal care products. Furthermore, on a global scale, there is greater recognition of the impacts of global capitalism and climate change on girls' lives, especially in developing nations. A 2011 report entitled *Weathering the Storm* by Plan International finds that girls in the Global South are more likely to suffer from the impacts of climate change: they are more likely than boys to leave school to attend to domestic and agricultural responsibilities in times of disaster; to work under unsafe conditions in factories where they are exposed to violence and toxins; to be forced into marriage at a young age by families economically impacted by climate change; and that they are more vulnerable to violence when displaced into refugee camps.⁶ In addition, girls are subjected to many forms of exploitation under global capitalism: As transnational feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues,

it is girls and women around the world, especially in the Third World/South, that bear the brunt of globalization. Poor women and girls are the hardest hit by the degradation of environmental conditions, wars, famines, privatization of services and de-regulation of governments, the dismantling of welfare state, the restructuring of paid and unpaid work, increasing surveillance and incarceration in prisons.⁷

A problem with environmental education, and a contributing factor to why educators have not considered the gendered dimensions of girls' citizenships and the environment is that the field has been resistant to political analysis and in fact, it has depoliticized children's citizenships. When environmental educators came together at the UN conferences to develop the first international policy statements on environmental education during the 1970s, they included

strong language about the need for children's participation to bring about environmental changes. However, as the field developed, environmental educators overwhelmingly treated the environment as a set of knowledge and facts about the biophysical world and children as the passive recipients of that knowledge.⁸ Many environmental education researchers have criticized the field's tendencies to be transmissive and behaviourist, noting that educators often saw it as their role to "shape" young people's environmental behaviours, which diminishes their agency and reproduces the hierarchical power structure of formal education.

Further, while environmental education was concerned with children's citizenship from its inception in that its goals were to educate them for civic participation, it did not critically question the boundaries of that citizenship and subsequently paid little attention to diversity and difference among young people and their different access to social and civil rights (or lack thereof). Children were therefore articulated as a homogenous citizenry, and educators tended to privilege young people's responsibilities towards the environment rather than exploring how children, too, are often the victims of environmental injustices and how they are young citizens capable of participating in deliberation and democracy. In the 1980s, some environmental educators began looking to critical pedagogy, feminism, and environmental justice to re-envision how environmental education could be more relevant for children's lives and empower them with the skills for democratic participation and social transformation. These environmental educators subsequently used action research in their classrooms, which allowed students to research environmental topics that were meaningful to their lives and communities and implement environmental actions accordingly. They saw this kind of environmental education as geared to social transformation because it encourages critical thinking, community engagement, youth participation in democratic processes, and problem solving on environmental issues at the

local and personal level. The introduction of transformative approaches such as action research not only challenged transmissive approaches to environmental education, but also created a heightened awareness about the ways in which children's identities as classed, raced, and urbanized subjects impacts their environmental experiences and differently defines environmental issues. However, these interventions have been for the most part marginal and environmental education has proven to be very resistant to change.

In this dissertation, I intervene into environmental education by exploring the work of three environmental organizations for girls that take their gendered citizenships into account. These organizations, which include the large national organization Girls Guides of Canada, the New York city-based Green Girls, and ECO Girls in Ann Arbor, offer three different models for what it means to take girls' citizenships seriously. Rooted in different organizational structures, the programs articulate three visions for girls' empowerment, civic engagement, and social and environmental change that draw on a diversity of environmental discourses that both replicate and challenge historical thought about the environment and about girls.

The organizations in this research raise important challenges for thinking about girls' citizenships and their relationships to the political realm. As girlhood studies scholar Caroline Caron points out, girls have been excluded from the vocabularies of citizenship. While there is a substantial body of feminist literature exploring women's exclusions from citizenship, girls and considerations of age and generation have been absent from these writings, which only consider the experiences of adult women.⁹

At the same time, since the 1990s, girls have become a focus of attention in academia and in the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. These different social actors have generated scholarship and programs claiming to address gender inequality and issues relating to girls' lives, which

suggests that researchers and service providers have had an interest in thinking about girls' citizenships and addressing the inequalities that impact them. From STEM programs, to international campaigns like Plan's I am a Girl, to corporate initiatives like the Dove Self-Esteem Project and the Nike Foundation's Girl Effect, and to nonprofit and for-profit self-esteem programs of which there are too many to count – e.g., I am B.E.A.U.T.I.F.U.L, GLOW, Fearlessly Girl, Girl Scouts U.S.A., Girls Inc., The Girl Campaign, and Standing Strong, to name but a few – there is no shortage of programs aimed at girls' empowerment.

Many of these programs, however, influenced by scholarship in the Global North on gender equity in education and feminist psychology, have articulated girls' citizenships primarily through a de-politicized gender lens rooted in what girlhood studies scholar Jessica Taft has identified as a "liberal feminist psychology" of empowerment. As Taft explains, these programs, which have privileged the issue of self-esteem as one of the most salient problems in girls' lives, claim to empower girls by providing them with special training in STEM, with confidence-boosting techniques, and with the help to "develop their individual potential," as the Girl Scouts program "Uniquely Me!" proclaims.¹⁰ This attention to girls' empowerment, which originated from a number of landmark publications released in the 1980s and 1990s, created a narrative about girlhood that suggested that girls' biggest problem was the "confidence gap" and it established a climate for thinking about girls' citizenships primarily as a function of lowered self-esteem and the need for leadership skills and confidence, an approach which paints girls' subjectivities as "fragile and vulnerable." Similarly, in campaigns like Plan's "I am a girl," the Nike Foundation's Girl Effect, and Girls' Inc., girls are given educational and economic opportunities so that they can be better positioned to participate in the global capitalist economy.

This understanding of their citizenship, which narrowly articulates them as citizen-workers for economic development and corporate profit, ultimately contributes to girls' civic disempowerment. Taft argues that in organizations like Girls Inc. and the Girl Scouts U.S.A., girls are taught the skills to change themselves and overcome the barriers that they encounter in their lives: they are taught "only skills for dealing with problems as they exist and are not exposed to the possibilities of social transformation."¹¹ She defines these programs as "normative" in that they rely on a psychological model of empowerment based in individual change rather than social transformation. As such, the programs articulate girls' citizenships away from the public sphere and the realm of politics.

A central argument that structures this dissertation is that girls' citizenships need to be politicized. It is not enough to examine girls' empowerment in the way that many girls' organizations have done, examining only gender at the exclusion of all other intersecting forms of oppression and depoliticizing girls' issues by focusing on individual and psychological models of empowerment. Organizations for young women will only be successful in "empowering" girls if they provide them with the tools to challenge the systemic inequalities that structure their lives. Taft refers to girls' organizations focused on challenging systemic inequalities as "transformative." As she explains, transformative organizations equip girls with an analysis of social inequality and articulate a citizenship for girls based in confronting and transforming unequal social conditions:

By encouraging girls to think systematically about the conditions of their lives and their communities and the intersecting forces of racism, sexism, classism and ageism (among others), the transformative model of girls' programming helps girls to develop their capacity as organic intellectuals and to critically analyze social problems. They come to see their problems not merely as private troubles, but as socially constructed and understand that their lives are not isolated from the community and social forces, but shaped by them.¹²

I suggest that it is not enough to empower girls for their own individual success, whether that be through educational or behavioural interventions so that girls can better navigate our social world as it currently stands. Individual empowerment does little to dismantle social inequalities and challenge sexism, racism, homophobia, segregation, and other environmental injustices.

Rather, I argue that the conditions for girls' empowerment arise when they learn to think about and challenge their exclusion from citizenship and articulate a citizenship identity for themselves that questions and pushes the boundaries of that very citizenship. I also argue that the conditions for girls' empowerment are fostered when girls are given space to question power, to express themselves creatively, and to have opportunities to be change agents in the community on issues *that matter to them*. Girls, in other words, need a citizenship that is rooted in justice.

Given that this project is about politicizing girls' citizenships and the environmental issues that impact their lives, I examine girls' environmental organizations through a *gendered environmental justice lens*. There are several reasons why the lens of environmental justice is the most suitable choice for this research. The first and perhaps most obvious reason is that the three organizations for girls in this research are about the environment, and they all claim to address social and/or environmental justice issues. Secondly, and more importantly, the environmental justice lens at its core addresses issues of citizenship and exclusion. As political ecologist Alex Latta argues, while environmental justice activists have challenged and in some cases, rejected the environmental citizenship lens promoted by Green environmental theorists, environmental justice is fundamentally about the *struggle for citizenship* and recognition for marginalized communities.¹³ Born in the 1980s when communities of colour began connecting racism, segregation, and poverty with environmental quality and human health issues, environmental justice challenged the exclusion of people of colour from policy decisions affecting their

communities and the governmental disregard for their community health concerns, particularly in regards to the siting of toxic facilities in their neighbourhoods. Environmental justice activists have also challenged major U.S. environmental organizations and environmental education for excluding people of colour from their boards, staff, and classrooms and for discounting social inequalities and quality of life issues from the environmental agenda and curriculum.¹⁴ The movement's struggles have therefore largely been based in the desire for recognition, inclusion, and rights for low-income communities and communities of colour to a more just and sustainable society.

Another reason for choosing the environmental justice lens is that environmental educators are also beginning to recognize that transformative environmental education cannot exist without taking considerations of justice into account. Given that early environmental education's democratic potential was not realized when the field was established in formal education from the 1970s onward (teachers simply integrated environmental topics into the existing hierarchical, individualist, and regulatory school structure), many environmental educators today advocate teaching about the environment through sustained, critical engagement that questions power and exclusion and supports student-led action in the community. Ecojustice pedagogues, for instance, insist that "the environmental crisis cannot be solved without social justice," and they advocate that it is the responsibility of teachers to educate students about environmental problems through a lens "that interrogates the intersection between urbanization, racism, classism, sexism, environmental, [and] global economics" and that considers "cultural diversity for what it offers to community problem solving."¹⁵ Environmental justice is therefore a critical tool for opening environmental citizenship to critical examination and for articulating a more democratic understanding of citizenship that is sensitive to marginalization and difference.

Because girls are sidelined from the realm of politics by adults both in research and in everyday life, including in girls' empowerment organizations, I turn to the writings of ecological feminist Sherilyn MacGregor to explore how girls' marginalized citizenships might be politicized. While MacGregor does not write about girls and education, her research on women's environmental activism in Toronto highlights how women's gendered activism have been similarly depoliticized through their omission from citizenship theorizing and, strangely, in ecofeminist theorizing in the designation of women's activism as "care." She argues that women's ecological activism should be situated in the realm of politics and citizenship to resist the problematic tendency in Green theory, ecofeminism, and neoliberal policy to depoliticize it through its association with care and the private domestic sphere. MacGregor argues that citizenship is a necessary and a powerful tool for women's full participation in politics and democracy because it politicizes the inequalities associated with private, gendered labour in the home and calls for the more equitable distribution of that labour. MacGregor's theory of women's ecological citizenship provides a pathway for thinking about how girls' citizenships are similarly depoliticized and how thinking about girls' citizenships through the lens of politics can better address the inequalities that shape their lives.

For these reasons, an environmental citizenship for girls must take the oppression, labour, and injustice in girls' lives into account. I propose that seeing girls' citizenships in environmental organizations through a gendered environmental justice lens that is *intersectional* creates the potential for a more inclusive and transformative education for girls. This work involves recognizing that girls' lives are shaped by race, class, gender, sexuality, colonialism, disability, and nationality, and that girls need space to critically explore and challenge systemic injustice. It also means that educators will have to actively challenge traditional approaches to working with

girls. Rather than reproducing hierarchical power relations that girls are all too familiar with in settings such as the school, environmental educators espousing a transformative and justice approach to education are tasked with seeing girls as co-learners in the educational process and with finding ways to nurture more active forms of citizenship. As environmental justice educators argue, this kind of education means starting from young people's *lived* experiences of the environment to effectively excite them about environmental issues and inspire them to become change agents in their communities.

If the outcome of environmental programs for girls is to empower them and to achieve greater environmental sustainability, I suggest that they should nurture girls' sense of agency through social critique and open them to the possibilities of an active civic life oriented to social transformation. Environmental educators concerned about democracy and environmental justice activists alike agree that creative, youth-led community action projects are fundamental for social change and community empowerment. For environmental justice educators, community action projects are rooted in a history of direct action and having to "speak for themselves," which has been a political necessity for communities of colour that have not had the luxury of having their interests and well-being looked after by policymakers. Similarly, environmental educators writing about citizenship also recognize that environmental problems fundamentally originate from undemocratic decision making and the non-participation of citizens. They argue that environmental sustainability cannot be achieved unless children are treated as citizens and initiated into participatory democracy through their leadership and participation in community environmental projects. Teaching girls to be obedient, to follow rules, and to adapt themselves to the social and economic structure as it currently stands will not nurture girls' sense of themselves as citizens who matter and whose participation is needed for a more just and democratic world.

Girls, I suggest, are better served when educators help them cultivate an identity rooted in public participation for social transformation.

Because it is my goal to trouble the ways in which girls' citizenships have been defined through normative assumptions about their identities, biology, and political agency, I use the word "girl" and "young women" in this dissertation with the assumption that these are socially-constructed categories and that girls' identities are much too diverse to speak of any singular "girl" identity. I use the categories "girls" and "young women" interchangeably to refer to the participants in the programs and "women" and "service providers" for those who are teaching the girls either as volunteers or paid staff members, with the recognition that these categories are performative and that this categorical distinction needs to be troubled, given that the relationships of power that are often assigned to "girl" and "woman" are more complex than these culturally-defined boundaries suggest.¹⁶

This research contributes to the growing body of literature in girlhood studies that argues for the inclusion of girls in feminist theories of gender and citizenship. It provides an avenue for thinking about how age is an important dimension in the exclusion of women from full citizenship and in the construction of gendered citizenships. It also contributes to the scholarship in girlhood studies that critiques girls' exclusion from citizenship. I demonstrate how the logic of individual empowerment that is found in many girls' programs, which does not position girls for public engagement, can also permeate their efforts to be green, which translate into a focus on green consumerism and de-politicized environmental interventions in the community through service and volunteerism. My research with three organizations located in three very different institutional settings also highlights how the organizational structure of the programs directly impacts how girls are perceived as citizens and how they define girls' empowerment.

In exploring environmental organizations for girls, I hope to highlight how environmental concerns also need to be taken into account when girlhood studies researchers and educators talk about girls, gender equality, and social change. As environmental justice activists point out, social concerns *are* environmental concerns; for people in urban areas who experience racism and segregation, are low income or living in poverty, or are marginalized because of other social differences such as sexuality or disability, issues of housing, homelessness, (un)employment, workplace safety, and community safety are sustainability issues that threaten their survival and are just as important as ecological preservation and conservation.

I also hope to intervene in environmental education to argue that gender matters when it comes to thinking about young people's citizenships. In a society permeated by gender inequalities that often result in psychic and physical violence towards girls, educators need an understanding of the environment that considers young women's experiences of inequality. Such an analysis would go far in addressing the gendered environmental injustices that girls experience that bar them from full citizenship and create the conditions for girls' participation as full citizens in public life.

Overview of the dissertation

The first two chapters trouble the citizenships that environmental education has constructed for young people. They critique some of the ways in which the field, historically and today, has depoliticized environmental issues and has constructed a (white, western, male, able-bodied) universalized citizenship for children that excludes considerations of power, marginalization and difference, and they argue that the field can be democratized by taking environmental justice into account.

In Chapter One, I begin with a new reactionary outdoor education movement founded in 2005 by American journalist and environmental educator Richard Louv. The New Nature Movement, as it is called, constructs a depoliticized environmental education for children that is based in the fantasy that children, naturally, belong in nature. The New Nature Movement is a contemporary reaction to the global environmental crisis and the belief that young people are in crisis (and contributing to the declining environmental situation) because they are spending more time indoors and are losing touch with nature. In describing the crisis, the movement draws on antimodern mythologies of childhoods past to contrast today's declining state of nature/childhood with a golden age in which children played outside in the forests and fields and were connected to the landscape. The cultural narratives on which the New Nature Movement draws are of notable environmental heroes such as John Muir and personal anecdotes of childhood "free-range play" from the largely white and middle-class movement base which, for the most part, grew up in the suburbs of postwar America. I argue that the New Nature Movement depoliticizes childhood, ignores systemic inequalities and difference that construct different environmental experiences for children, and reifies ideologies of nature that are racist and (hetero)sexist. I propose that a much more useful way of thinking about young people's relationships to the environment is to consider how environmental problems today raise justice concerns about marginalization, participation and democracy for children.

In Chapter Two, I return to the second half of the twentieth century, the birthplace of the modern environmental movement and the field of environmental education. I draw on environmental justice and feminist critiques of environmental education to argue that the field has depoliticized the environment and children's citizenships by reproducing hegemonic and hierarchical forms of power and by excluding the socio-political dimensions of environmental

problems from the curriculum. As I explain, from the time the movement was founded in the 1970s, it has characterized children's relationships to the environment through the lens of citizenship. However, environmental education has largely conceptualized young people as what Running-Grass has termed a "homogenous citizenry" undifferentiated by race, class, gender, and other forms of difference, which is reflected in many environmental educators' characterizations of citizenship as a set of responsibilities rather than rights.¹⁷ My discussion of citizenship in environmental education is followed by an examination of the environmental justice and feminist lenses. These lenses are important because they have challenged the ethnocentrism, whiteness, male domination, able-bodiedness, heterosexuality and homophobia that permeate the field of environmental education. Furthermore, their conceptualizations of power and their critical lenses that see power as gendered, racialized, sexuality- and class-based, and rooted in the normative able-body are very different from those found mainstream environmental education. In essence, this chapter points out that different environmental lenses present wholly different visions of who constitutes the citizen, which changes are required for social/environmental transformation, and how to bring about that change. This review of these different ways of thinking about citizenship in relation to the environment in Chapter One and Two provide a historical context for environmental education and begin to situate the theoretical framework of this dissertation.

Chapter Three explores how girls' citizenships have been theorized, offers a sketch of my research methodologies/methods, and introduces the three organizations under study. Building on my discussion of citizenship from the previous chapter, I make a case for why girls' gendered citizenships and environmental concerns, which are shaped by the intersections of race, class, sexuality, ability, and colonialism, need to be accounted for in environmental education. I consider the intersectional gendered exclusions that many girls face, and suggest that girls'

citizenships have not been taken seriously and have in fact been depoliticized within formal education and in other settings. I explore the complexities of thinking about and researching girls' citizenships and I discuss some of the different approaches that organizations have used in their work with girls. Drawing on the research of Jessica Taft and Ruth Nicole Brown, I contrast regulatory approaches to more transformative ones, which I suggest carry implications for how programs for girls imagine and shape their citizenships, their understandings of public space and their political engagements with/for the environment. MacGregor's research is particularly important to this chapter for her theorization of ecological citizenship through gender. As I have already noted, MacGregor offers a model for thinking about gendered citizenships that have been depoliticized, and suggests that situating those citizenships in the realm of politics provides a pathway for addressing social inequalities.

This chapter also provides an overview of the methods used in this research. I introduce the three organizations that took part in this study, the Girl Guides of Canada (GGC), Green Girls, and ECO Girls, providing a brief description of their histories and mandates. I describe how I went about collecting data on the organizations through interviews with eighteen service providers (both paid staff and unpaid volunteers), focus groups with forty girls participating in the programs, field observation, and documentary analysis. The last part of this chapter provides a sketch of the research context by discussing some of the environmental injustices in the three cities in which the organizations are located – Toronto, New York, and Ann Arbor/Detroit – thus highlighting the necessity for examining environmental issues through an environmental justice lens.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six delve into my interviews with the service providers and girls from each of the three organizations in this research. I begin with Girl Guides of Canada (GGC)

and explore how this organization has relied on a model of environmental citizenship that is regulatory. I examine how the two units, a Brownies unit and a Guides unit in Toronto, focus on green issues such as household energy reduction and garbage cleanup, which mirror the environmental education typically taught in schools, and as such does not consider the gender, race and class dimensions of environmental issues. I also explore how the kind of environmental citizenship practiced in GGC is rooted in a white, liberal global sisterhood and humanitarianism that permeates the World Guiding Association, which positions girls from White western nations like Canada as the privileged, rights-bearing and benevolent sisters who help the supposedly oppressed girls from Third World/developing nations. I examine how the hierarchical structure of the organization allows little room for girls to shape the agenda and how the emphasis on girl empowerment through self-development, leadership, and service orients girls to more traditionally feminine notions of citizenship and public engagement. I echo Bronwyn Hayward's argument that "education aimed at fostering values of voluntarism, charity and obedience is not the kind of substantive justice education required for a strong, ecological democracy."¹⁸ Because camping is so central to the organization and its history, I also consider its significance vis-à-vis the kind of disciplinary citizenship that the organization is trying to produce.

In Chapter Five, I turn to Green Girls. Although staff members have in the past described Green Girls as an organization that explores environmental justice issues, I argue that the lenses of environmental stewardship and citizenship more accurately describe the organization, and that the environmental citizenship that the staff imagine for the mostly low-income girls of colour who they serve is rooted in a white, middle-class and philanthropic approach to change. In focusing on hands-on STEM education, Green Girls emphasizes girls' acquisition of scientific knowledge, their development of positive feelings for education, and service to community with

the goals of exciting their interest in science careers and helping them with educational attainment so that they can rise out of poverty. Although these goals are laudable and necessary for leveling the playing field in education, I suggest that an approach to change that focuses only on girls' individual educational success does not challenge the systemic racism, poverty, and segregation that shape girls' lives and thus will be unlikely to create systemic change. I argue that for Green Girls to tackle systemic inequality, the staff must rethink how they conceptualize girls as young citizens. Rather than articulating their purpose through a lens that aims to "help" girls who are disadvantaged by racism, poverty, and gender oppression, and teaching them through a curriculum developed by the staff that is rooted in empirical science and service to community, Green Girls could begin with girls' accounts of environmental injustice and develop a curriculum that promotes girls' self-determination. And finally, I consider Green Girls' location within the nonprofit organization City Parks Foundation to discuss how the structure of philanthropic organizations, particularly those that are privately funded, can disempower the people they are trying to serve. I draw on Daniel Faber and Deborah McCarthy's environmental justice critique of philanthropic organizations to suggest that nonprofits, rather than assuming the responsibility of "deciding what are the primary problems and needs of a particular community," can instead foster a more active citizenship for girls, youth, and their communities by challenging the systemic barriers "that bar citizens from directly participating in the identification of problems and solutions," thus engaging in a philanthropy rooted in social justice.¹⁹

In Chapter Six, I focus on ECO Girls, an organization that has an entirely different relationship to the community that it serves. While ECO Girls, like Green Girls, is geared to low-income girls of colour, its curriculum and pedagogy are articulated through the perspectives of a

diverse group of women, most of whom are women of colour, who use the lens of culture, diversity, and environmental justice to explore environmental issues. While ECO Girls originates from a university setting, it connects girls to community activists and artists who explore the environment through culture and the politics of race, class, gender, and colonialism, and creates space for the expression of girls' diverse cultural identities. I consider ECO Girls' complex positioning vis-à-vis environmental justice, noting how ECO Girls is not advocacy-based like other youth environmental justice organizations. Despite the fact that it is grounded in environmental justice concerns, it is not rooted in the environmental justice model of youth empowerment that supports youth organizing and participatory action that challenges their civic disempowerment. Further, I critique the organization's tendency to favour individual forms of environmental engagement and suggest that it is linked to ECO Girls' positioning of young women more as citizens-in-the-making rather than citizens capable of making change in the here and now. Despite its unwillingness to engage in overly political forms of public engagement, I suggest that ECO Girls nevertheless is an organization committed to teaching girls how to think about the politics of environmental issues through a lens attuned to race, class, gender, colonialism, and to exposing girls to the myriad of ways in which they can contribute to social change.

In the concluding chapter, I explore some of the tensions that the programs raise in carving out space for girls in the outdoors and in environmentalism. I consider how the programs' analyses of gender intervene into environmental education, but I also identify what they leave out and how their omissions reproduce the normative tendencies of environmental education and girl empowerment programs. I suggest that the organizations' institutional structures – the large, hierarchical, national/international body of the Girl Guides of Canada, the

mid-sized, privately-funded NYC-based nonprofit City Parks Foundation that houses Green Girls, and the small community-based, horizontally and academically-administered program that is ECO Girls – have a significant impact on the approaches the service providers take to working with girls. Not only are they enmeshed within the spatial geographies in which they are located, which, in turn, shape their environmental and gendered narratives, their governance also impacts how they constitute girls’ citizenships and locate them within the community. Most importantly, I consider the ecological citizenships that the programs carve out for girls to argue that, when working with young women, thinking about social and environmental transformation requires educators to take a careful look at how they imagine young peoples’ citizenships and how they relate to young people. Their position vis-à-vis girls, young people, and the communities in which they are working, and their approaches to doing that work have a lasting impact on young people’s sense of themselves, their agency, and their potential for environmental transformation. Finally, I briefly turn to a relatively new program for girls, Radical Monarchs, which I suggest warrants future investigation for the citizenship possibilities that it presents for girls through activism and radical resistance.

CHAPTER ONE

From the New Nature Movement to Environmental Justice: Environmental Education for the Twenty-First Century

In 2005, the American journalist and environmental educator Richard Louv published *Last Child in the Woods* (2005) where he argued that the bond between children and nature has been

broken. In the opening pages, he declares that,

Americans around my age, baby boomers or older, enjoyed a kind of free, natural play that seems, in the era of kid pagers, instant messaging, and Nintendo, like a quaint artifact.

Within the space of a few decades, the way children understand and experience nature has changed radically. The polarity of the relationship has reversed. Today, kids are aware of the global threats to the environment – but their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading.¹

Reflecting on his own free-range childhood spent playing in nature, which he believes was a typical feature of his generation, Louv goes on to argue that children today in contrast are uninterested in and fearful of playing outside. In our modern urban age, he notes, children are sequestered indoors where they feed their addictions to their phones, video games, and television shows. “Nature,” he argues, has become “something to watch, to consume, to wear—to ignore,” and parents, fearful that their children might be injured by traffic, strangers or wild animals, are prohibiting them from playing outside unsupervised. In *Last Child in the Woods*, Louv links children’s increasingly indoor, plugged-in, sedentary lifestyles to the rising rates of “obesity” and “mental disorders” like attention deficit disorder. Citing research that suggests that time spent in nature reduces the symptoms of problems such as attention disorders, Louv set out to argue that children’s maladies today are not physiological but stem from the absence of nature in their lives. Coining this phenomenon “nature deficit disorder,” he argues that the term “describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties,

and higher rates of physical and emotional illness.”² His purpose in writing the book was call for an environmental education based in a “nature-child reunion.”³

Last Child in the Woods was an instant success. The book, which quickly became an international bestseller, built on the research of environmental educators, conservationists and naturalists that had been calling for an environmental education that connects children and nature, but made it appealing a much a broader audience.⁴ In 2006, Louv co-founded the Children & Nature Network (C&NN), a nonprofit organization to support environmental educators to “fuel a worldwide grassroots movement to reconnect children with nature,” a movement that Louv himself coined “The New Nature Movement,” or the “Children and Nature Movement.”⁵ That same year, Louv and one of his C&NN co-founders, Cheryl Charles, made a public call to establish a national program that they called “No Child Left Inside” (NCLI) to encourage parents and caregivers to take their children outside and to bring nature back into their lives.

With the introduction of NCLI, policy makers passed bills at the federal and state levels in the U.S. legislating children’s access to the outdoors as a right. National Parks, nature conservancies, schools, and wilderness camps across the U.S. have subsequently seized on the language of the bills and are now offering curriculum and programs that are centered on children and families in the outdoors. In 2009, the Child & Nature Alliance of Canada was founded “to provide a Canadian context to the worldwide movement to enhance children’s health and well-being by reconnecting them to the outdoors” and in the UK, The Wild Network emerged after filmmaker David Bond created his documentary film about children and nature, *Project Wild Thing* (2012).⁶

Linking all of these initiatives in different parts of the world are the stories the New Nature Movement tells about childhood. Bond fondly recalls packing his bags each Easter holiday as a child to go to the family cottage in Yorkshire Dales, an experience which harboured “particularly strong memories” for him.⁷ Canadian wildlife artist Robert Bateman, an outspoken supporter of Louv’s initiative, contrasts children’s screen-bound realities today with his own boyhood spent exploring the ravine behind his Toronto home, and Robert Michael Pyle, an educator and lepidopterist who serves on the Board of Advisors at C&NN, tells us in his autobiography *The Thunder Tree* (1993) about his boyhood spent exploring the scrubby bird- and butterfly-filled shores of the High Line Canal that bordered his suburban home of Aurora, Colorado.⁸ “For many parents,” writes journalist Louisa Wilkins in a *Gulf News Parenting* article posted on C&NN’s blog, “their own childhood memories offer a stark and discomfoting comparison to their own children’s experiences (or lack of) with the natural world.”⁹ This nostalgic narrative that childhood was once nature-filled and that it is not today is not only a recurring theme in the New Nature Movement, it is the substrate on which it is founded. It relies on a story about a past characterized by unimpeded access to nature where children were free to roam around and simply *be* children.

In this chapter, I explore how nostalgia forms the basis of the New Nature Movement. Drawing on the work of Louv and of other prominent environmental educators who write about and promote the New Nature Movement, I argue that the fantasy that children belong in nature is a reaction to contemporary cultural anxieties about social change, and a product of romanticized thought about children and nature. As historian and youth scholar Nancy Lesko argues, youth since the 1800s have been the “site” onto which adult anxieties are projected, a “place that people could endlessly worry about, a space that adults everywhere could watch carefully” and

manage.¹⁰ The New Nature Movement's preoccupation with what it defines as young people's disconnection from nature, measured against an idyllic past, reflects a deep discomfort with social change and the breakdown of traditional gender and racial categories. I suggest that the New Nature Movement is not unlike other antimodern movements for children, such as the early twentieth century Canadian and American camping movements, which used back-to-nature solutions to "protect" children from the unfavourable influences of modern society. Historians investigating summer camps in Canada and the U.S. have used the term antimodernism to describe how at particular points in history, play advocates and reformers attempted to shape modern society by reaching to, according to Sharon Wall, "a natural, simple life of community and connection" while being "implicated in, and even celebratory of, some of modernity's central organizing principles." However, as Wall points out, while camp was treated as an antidote to and to some degree a rejection of modern society, it was very much "part of that society, helped individuals to adjust to it, and at times, even fueled the culture of commodification and consumption that lay at the heart of modernity itself."¹¹ Subsequently, I explore the New Nature Movement's mobilization of antimodern imagery of childhood, imagery which is based in white, middle-class ideologies about children and nature, to argue that returning children to nature is not an adequate solution to the environmental crisis.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first part describes the crisis of childhood and nature according to the New Nature Movement, and situates this crisis within a historical pattern of nostalgic thinking. Using Louv's writing as a starting point, I draw on his metaphor of the "frontiers," which he patterns after the frontier thesis of the nineteenth-century environmental historian Frederick Jackson Turner, to provide a frame for how nostalgia works in the Movement and for thinking about the romanticized imagery of landscape and childhood that permeates the

New Nature Movement. After introducing Louv's frontier thesis, I identify and map out the problems that the New Nature Movement has identified with children in modern society. In this discussion, I draw on Louv's work as well as the work of other environmental educators associated with the New Nature Movement who write about children and nature, have written directly for the C&NN, and most of whom are linked to C&NN through their positions as Board Members, Advisors and Associates. In the second section, I turn to the antimodern neopastoral imagery that animates the New Nature Movement. I focus on three particular images – that of the so-called “savage” child of the wilderness, the hard-working farm child of the country, and the backyard naturalist of the countryside and suburb – and I situate this imagery within a history of antimodern thinking about children and nature over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In my examination of these three landscapes of childhood, I explore the gendered, racialized, and class meanings that underpin them, and I suggest that these meanings are what give the landscapes significance within the Movement. The final section briefly contrasts the New Nature Movement's romanticized conceptualization of childhood against the environmental justice movement's much more political account of children's environments. Like the New Nature Movement, environmental justice is very much concerned about children and struggles on their behalf, but its concerns coalesce on issues of environmental access, justice, democratic participation, and inequality, which I argue make for a much more compelling approach for imagining an environmentalism for children.

This chapter is focused on the New Nature Movement for two reasons. First, while the movement has been around for over a decade, it continues to gain visibility and expand internationally. The movement's growing presence and the absence of critical engagement with it suggests that many environmental educators have rather uncritically heralded it as a useful

approach for teaching environmentalism to children and achieving more sustainable futures. Second, my examination of the New Nature Movement will frame the argument of the rest of my dissertation, which contends that a citizenship education based in the regulation of young people and inattentive to the systemic inequalities that structure their lives is inadequate to the task of formulating an inclusive and democratic environmental education. If the goal of environmental education is to foster participation for a democratic society, as many educators claim it should, then it should challenge the mechanisms of control that have long been embedded in education and subvert the systemic power relations that engender social inequalities, rather than reinstating romanticized and depoliticized notions about nature and childhood that undercut children's political agency. Furthermore, this analysis also foregrounds my discussion in the ensuing chapters exploring the possibility of theorizing girls' gendered citizenships through a lens that acknowledges their differences and their agency.

Modernity's descent into the "third frontier"

In 1893, the American historian Frederick Jackson Turner published "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," an essay in which he famously declared that the first frontier—the wilderness that had made America—was in decline. He argued that the "era of 'free land' " was over and that the American frontier had closed.¹² Turner saw this original wilderness frontier as the "meeting point between savagery and civilization" that allowed each successive generation pushing its boundaries in the expansion westward to return "to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line."¹³ He based his assessment on the U.S Census of 1890 which revealed that colonial expansion westward had ended and the vast expanse of America had become settled. Although Turner's thesis has been long celebrated as an important cultural

narrative of American history and culture, it has also been challenged as a national mythology steeped in anxieties about social change. Historian William Cronon argues that the frontier myth came from growing anxieties about the effects of civilization and urban industrialization on masculinity and American democracy. With the closing of the frontier, many feared that the wilderness that produced masculine men would be replaced by the feminizing influences of urbanization. Anxieties also centered on fears that immigrants would take the last of the land, which intensified nativist sentiments.¹⁴ “The mood among writers who celebrated the frontier individualism,” Cronon writes, “was always nostalgic; they lamented not just a lost way of life but the passing of the heroic men who had embodied that life.”¹⁵

In *Last Child in the Woods*, the book that launched the New Nature Movement, Louv explicitly draws on Jackson’s metaphor of the frontier to describe the twenty-first century crisis of children and nature. Louv argues that the de-natured world in which children are now growing up is the “third frontier.” He notes that, “in the space of a century, the American experience of nature – culturally influential around the world – has gone from direct utilitarianism to romantic attachment to electronic detachment. Americans have passed not through one frontier, but through three.”¹⁶ Louv describes the three frontiers, which are patterned on Turner’s thesis, as follows. The first frontier, which the reader should now be familiar, is very much the same as Turner described it: represented by American wilderness during the period of colonial settlement and characterized as the “meeting point between savagery and civilization.”¹⁷ The second frontier, according to Louv, began with Turner’s declaration in 1893 and is represented by the “domesticated” and “romanticized” landscape of the farm. It is characterized by “familial attachments to land and water” that were mainly acquired through our “cultural linkage to farming,” something which he argues came to an end in the second half of the twentieth century.

Although the wilderness frontier had disappeared, Louv tells us that it was nostalgically conjured in the imaginations of people like Teddy Roosevelt, Edward Abbey, and Daniel Beard who longed to be, and sometimes performed the identities of frontiersmen. This time period is also represented by camp-lore and woodcraft, which Louv argues represents a time when boys experienced these familial attachments to landscape through direct experience in nature. The third frontier, according to Louv, began in 1993 when the U.S. Census Bureau dropped its annual survey of farm residents. This newest frontier is marked by the absence of that familial connection to land and water that was characteristic of the second frontier. Mostly urban and suburban now, young people in the third frontier are alienated from nature. Louv argues that young people are also increasingly living high-tech and consumer-driven lives, are overweight, under-exercised, over-schooled (indoors), and suffering from disorders like “nature-deficit” and “cultural autism,” the latter which Louv argues creates “tunneled senses,” feelings of isolation and containment” and an “atrophy of the senses.”¹⁸ Children, in short, are living in a frontier where they have virtually no connection to nature, a world more electronic than it is natural.

Louv’s modern interpretation and extension of Turner’s frontier thesis echoes the nineteenth-century historian’s anxiety about social decline and his belief in the existence of an earlier golden age. As Raymond Williams argues in *The Country and the City* (1975), narratives of decline are typical of nostalgic thought. Williams, who examines the cultural origins of nostalgia in a very different landscape, the English countryside, argues that authors since the sixteenth century have been lamenting the loss of the rural landscape and its accompanying ways of life, but that the object of nostalgia, the “golden age” for which they long, has continually shifted over the course of history with each successively removed within arm’s length of about a generation. Nostalgia, he argues, works like an escalator— from our observation point we can

only see “over the last hill.”¹⁹ Each generation subsequently subscribes to the belief that it is living in an age of decline and that people within a generation or two ago lived more authentic lives. This pattern is very much evident in the New Nature Movement and is captured by Louv’s use of the metaphor of the frontier. His frontier analogy locates this contemporary moment of social decline in relationship to a succession of golden ages, a first and second frontier of wilderness exploration and farming, marked by changes in “the American experience of nature” from “direct utilitarianism to romantic attachment to electronic detachment.”²⁰ From its twenty-first century observation point, the New Nature Movement has set its sights on the “hills” of the wilderness and of the farm/country/suburb. The country and suburb are especially significant given that the movement is represented largely by white, middle-class environmental educators who cultivated their love of the nature in these landscapes as children during the postwar boom.

Romanticized stories about the past are problematic because they are used as a “stick to beat the present,” as Williams puts it.²¹ Retrospect, he argues, allows the nostalgic subject to abstract moral values of the past from their complex and contradictory contexts and idealize them with the intent of attacking the instabilities and contradictions of the present. The problem with retrospect is thus that it “mystifies” or masks the relations of power and the inequalities that produced earlier ways of life. In other words, the belief that there was a simpler, happier time in history is a fallacy, for in every nostalgic account of a time past, the grave social inequalities that produced that landscape are overlooked or erased.²² As my recounting of Turner’s frontier thesis shows, nostalgia is a reaction to change and an expression of anxiety about the social changes that threaten to disrupt established relationships of power. Just as Turner used the imagined wilderness frontier to critique the social changes that were transforming the established gender, racial, and class social order of the 1890s, so, too, is the New Nature Movement relying on the

past to air white, male, and middle-class anxieties about the twenty-first century. What, however, are the social changes that the New Nature Movement finds so troubling, and perhaps more importantly, what anxieties does it specifically express?

First and foremost, the New Nature Movement is troubled by children's consumption habits. Rather than being out in nature, children are staying indoors and consuming technology.

Louv argues that:

Not that long ago, summer camp was a place where you camped, hiked in the woods, learned about plants and animals, or told firelight stories about ghosts or mountain lions. As likely as not today, "summer camp" is a weight loss camp, or a computer camp. For a new generation, nature is more abstraction than reality. Increasingly, nature is something to watch, to consume, to wear—to ignore. A recent television ad depicts a four-wheel-drive SUV racing along a breathtakingly beautiful mountain stream—while in the backseat two children watch a movie on a flip-down video screen, oblivious to the landscape and water beyond the windows.²³

Because children are staying indoors more often where they plugged in, Louv argues that they have significant health problems. Children, he suggests, are experiencing higher rates of ADHD because they are "overstimulated" with electronics and media, which leads to concentration difficulties, restlessness, and trouble listening to and following instructions.²⁴ Louv also tells us that children's physical health is being impacted. As he notes, the number of children defined as "obese" by the Centre for Disease Control has raised by 36 percent between 1989 and 1999, and children consequently are more at risk for cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure.²⁵ Joe L. Frost, a play advocate and frequent contributor to the C&NN blog, suggests that children's "poor health" is linked to their lack of exercise and eating habits. In the current culture of affluence in the United States, he argues,

the centuries-old freedom to play evolved into a play and play environments crisis that threatens the health, fitness and welfare of children. Children in America have become less and less active, abandoning traditional outdoor play, work, and other physical activity for sedentary, indoor virtual play, technology play or cyber

playgrounds, coupled with diets of junk food, fast food, and gorging at all-you-can-eat restaurants.²⁶

The result of all this consumption of unhealthy technology and convenience foods is that the modern age, in Frost's words, is producing "a nation of short-winded kids with elevated cholesterol and blood pressure levels, and declining strength and heart-lung endurance."²⁷

The New Nature Movement also criticizes modern child-rearing practices for keeping children indoors. Specifically, it argues that modern parents are over-anxious about the possibility that their children will be harmed outdoors. According to Pyle, who is on the Board of Advisors of C&NN and a frequent columnist on the C&NN blog:

Cuts, scrapes, and broken bones as unwonted trophies of outdoor adventures have always been with us. But now the panoply of threats has expanded to include abduction and personal harm at the hands of adults. These specters are not new but were so rare in former times as to represent nothing more than a cautionary bogey. With population expansion and crowding, the frequency of assaults—or its perception—has increased to the point that few parents are comfortable allowing their children anything like the outdoor freedom and latitude that my generation took not only for granted but as an essential birthright.²⁸

Louv labels this fear the "boogeyman syndrome," adding that "fear is the most potent force that prevents parents from allowing their children the freedom they themselves enjoyed when they were young. Fear is the emotion that separates a developing child from the full, *essential* benefits of nature. Fear of traffic, of crime, of stranger danger—and of nature itself."²⁹ Parents, he argues, fear that if their children are left to play on their own outside they could be hit by passing cars or abducted or harmed by strangers. Further, Louv argues that children's play has been "criminalized"; that in most cases, children have been barred from building forts, climbing trees and venturing off path in their neighbourhoods and parks, as these activities are considered dangerous for children, liable to lawsuits, and/or destructive to the environment and to private property.³⁰ Children, Frost also argues, are further contained by parents who now work longer

hours, have less time, and are more likely to fill their children's time with programs and organized activities that can give them a competitive advantage in school, which subsequently reduces their opportunities for creative play outdoors. Frost argues that this change occurred in the postwar period:

Following World War II, the technology revolution ushered in television, cyber toys, new forms of transportation, and parents' intent on giving their children advantages they themselves had missed. Over time, the working, free-roaming child of previous eras would be replaced with a pampered child, created and sustained by hovering parents increasingly fearful for their children's safety and anxious about their achievements in school and vocation."³¹

The New Nature Movement argues that the modern education system is also containing the child indoors. As Louv contends, schools in the U.S. have cut physical education requirements and have become obsessed with standardized testing in the race to be competitive in the global economy.³² As evidenced by introduction of the NCLB legislation, the New Nature Movement is very much critical of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act introduced in the U.S. in 2000, which swept the nation with school reforms that reoriented the curriculum towards rigorous standardized testing. Frost criticizes NCLB for having made cuts to physical education and the arts, for curbing children's "free, creative, spontaneous playground play" and for contributing "to the epidemic of child obesity and related health issues."³³ Additionally, environmental education, the one field of study that should be connecting children to nature, getting them outdoors and engendering an ethic of responsibility and care for the planet is, according to the New Nature Movement, doing quite the opposite. According to David A. Sobel, a prolific environmental educator who is also an Associate and Advisor to C&NN, images of environmental destruction form the basis of modern environmental education which can "have an insidious, nightmarish effect on young children whose sense of time, place, and self are still forming."³⁴ As Sobel explains, children who receive an environmental education today are

taught apocalyptic narratives of environmental destruction about denuded rainforests, declining numbers of poison arrow frogs, biodiversity loss, and indigenous peoples displaced by oil extraction. Rather than inspiring imagination and excitement, “well-meaning public-school systems, media, and parents,” along with modern environmental education, are “effectively scaring children straight out of the woods and fields.”³⁵

A major culprit that has engendered the crisis we are experiencing today, according to the New Nature Movement, is the disappearance of places for children to play. Pyle tells us in “Eden in a Vacant Lot” that he often asks his adult audiences when he delivers a talk whether they had a favourite haunt as children, to which he notes that:

In most groups, most hands go up. I then ask them to picture the place and to tell me something about it. Commonly, the special spots are watercourses, such as creeks, canals, ravines, and ponds; a big tree, clump of brush, bosky dell, or hollow; parks, especially underdeveloped ones; and old fields, pastures, and meadows ... Most people can relate the details of the spot and tell stories from their places that surprise even themselves with their remarkable clarity and nuance and the deep affection aroused.

Next I ask a question whose answers tend to arouse feelings of both sadness and solidarity: How many can return to their special places and find them substantially intact?³⁶

Pyle argues that most adults of his generation had a nearby countryside, a scrubby ditch or a sub/urban vacant lot in which to play when they were children. However, with the disappearance of ditches and vacant lots, children no longer have access to the habitats that allowed them to observe and study nature, a phenomenon that Pyle calls the “extinction of experience.” Pyle argues that urban and suburban development is the major culprit in the disappearance of children’s play spaces. Like a modern enclosure movement, suburban sprawl is destroying the countryside, while urban infill is replacing vacant lots with condos and other development projects that increase “the density of development inside of cities instead of allowing it to dribble out the edges as always before. While infilling may help to maintain city limits, it is anathema

for the lovers of vacant lots and ‘waste ground.’ ”³⁷ With fewer or in some cases no spaces to play in urban and suburban areas, and as the technological pull draws children indoors, the New Nature Movement argues that children are now only getting “second-hand” experiences of nature through school books and television screens.

Last but not least, there are a few additional changes that the New Nature Movement argues have occurred in the twenty-first century that are worth noting. Louv argues in *Last Child in the Woods* that a series of disturbing changes have taken place that have altered Americans’ relationships to nature. He identifies five changes, all related to technology and urbanization. He argues that children today are growing up in an urban world in which they are ignorant about where their food comes from, and that their ignorance and disconnection from real animals has metastasized into a tendency to hyperintellectualize their relationships to them. This alienation is accompanied by what he sees as the problematic blurring of boundaries among human, animal and machine in our “postmodern” culture, which is engendering monstrous GMOs and other unsavoury genetic experiments on animals, which Louv argues signals that we are living with the “end of biological absolutes.”³⁸ According to Louv, these changes have produced an urban culture that is more likely to be vegan/vegetarian, to oppose fishing and hunting and to speak out on behalf of animal rights while scarcely having any real contact or knowledge about other animals outside their own relationships with their pets. These urban dwellers, as Louv continues, are more likely to have “touchy-feely” relationships to animals and yet be disconnected from nature more than ever.³⁹ “Nature,” he argues, “is not so soft and fuzzy. Fishing and hunting, for example ... are messy—to some morally messy—but removing all traces of that experience from childhood does neither children nor nature any good.”⁴⁰

All of these critiques together tell a story which characterizes the “third frontier” of the twenty-first century as an urban, indoor and technologized landscape that alienates children from nature. They imply, using ableist and fat-phobic language that has gendered implications, that children today have gone “soft” – children’s bodies are supposedly softer from a lack of physical activity, and they have been softened by anxious parents, an overbearing school system, and by their own irrational fears which prevent them from being physically active outside. Louv’s critique of the blurring of boundaries between human, animal and machine, along with the culture of veganism/vegetarianism, betrays a middle-class anxiety about how modernity is causing health problems, as well as a series of category breakdowns that are shifting long taken for granted social relationships and identities (e.g., between human, animal, and machine). Although the New Nature Movement does not specifically gender the movement – it is geared to “children,” gender neutral – it is difficult not to read its critiques of the modern age as a set of fears about the supposedly feminizing and dis/abling influences of an indoor modern American society, anxieties which I will explore defined the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With these critiques in mind, I now turn to the romanticized neopastoral childhoods that are celebrated in the New Nature Movement.

The first frontier, or wilderness and the “savage” child

In the opening pages of *Last Child in the Woods*, Louv shares his boyhood nostalgia for Daniel Beard’s book, *Shelters, Shacks, and Shanties* (1914). Thinking back fondly on this book as an adult, Louv notes that,

I love Beard’s books because of their charm, the era they conjure, the lost art they describe. As a boy, I built rudimentary versions of these shelters, shacks, and shanties – including underground forts in the cornfields and elaborate tree houses

with secret entrances and a view of what I imagined to be the frontier stretching from Ralston Street beyond the edge of the known suburban world.⁴¹

Published by the founder of the camping organizations the Sons of Daniel Boone and the Boy Scouts of America, *Shelters, Shacks and Shanties* instructs boys in the art of building shelters, from the simplest fallen-tree shelter to the most complex sawed-lumber shanty, for the “more practical purpose of furnishing shelter for overnight pleasure hikes, for the wilderness trail, or for permanent camps while living in the open.”⁴² Nostalgically reflecting on this book, Louv pulls the following quotation from its pages:

The smallest boys can build some of the simple shelters and the older boys can build the more difficult ones, ... The reader may, if he likes, begin with the first [shanty] and graduate by building the log houses; in doing this he will be closely following the history of the human race, because ever since our arboreal ancestors with prehensile toes scampered among the branches of the pre-glacial forests and built nest-like shelters in the trees, men have made themselves shacks for a temporary refuge.⁴³

Associating outdoor play in nature to the fantasies of being frontiersmen and “primitives,” Louv recounts in another one of his books, *Childhood's Future* (1992), once asking a group of middle-school children on a research excursion if they ever “pretended to be a cowboy or an Indian in the woods,” and was disappointed to discover that their fantasies when they played in nature did not resonate with his own boyhood fantasies of Mohicans crouching in the woods, but were focused on “indirect” things such as technology, space exploration, and family relationships.⁴⁴

The New Nature Movement is replete with anecdotes such as this one, some more subtle than others, that suggest that children are biologically programmed to play in nature and that their play, both real and imagined, is “savage.” Sobel plucks a few anecdotes from John Muir’s autobiography about his boyhood in Wisconsin’s wilderness around 1850 in his chapter “Look, Don’t Touch” (2012):

We made guns out of gas-pipe, mounted them on sticks of any shape, clubbed our pennies together for powder, gleaned pieces of lead here and there and cut them into slugs, and, while one aimed, another applied a match to the touch-hole. With these awful weapons we wandered along the beach and fired at the gulls and solan-geese as they passed us. Fortunately we never hurt any of them that we knew of. We also dug holes in the ground, put in a handful or two of powder, tamped it well around a fuse made of a wheat-stalk, and, reaching cautiously forward, touched a match to the straw. This we called making earthquakes. Oftentimes we went home with singed hair and faces well peppered with powder-grains that could not be washed out.⁴⁵

Sobel, quoting from sociobiologist E.O. Wilson in reference to this passage, argues that children need time during their childhood to be “untutored savages for a while” and to wonder, explore, and get muddy.⁴⁶ Criticizing the fact that conservation and preservation areas today are like museums, Sobel invokes Muir’s hands-on and sometimes violent accounts of his experiences in nature to argue that this kind of contact is the precursor for developing meaningful connections to the natural world.⁴⁷ This space where children can be “savage,” a landscape occupied by so-called cowboys, “Indians,” and explorers, is the New Nature Movement’s first frontier. It is imagined to be wild and unmannered and it draws on nostalgic narratives of boys’ wilderness play to argue that children belong in nature. While these stories are meant to support New Nature Movement arguments to get “kids” out in nature, a category that is supposedly race, class, and gender neutral, these stories are problematic because they rely on racist and sexist tropes.

The New Nature Movement’s suggestion that there is something innately “savage” about children comes from antimodern thinking about childhood, race, and civilization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. When the frontier “closed” with Turner’s declaration in 1893, camping, woodcraft, nature study, and wilderness excursions replaced the frontier in providing boys with opportunities to connect with their supposed primitive masculinity, which was believed to have been endangered by city life. Urban areas at this time in the U.S. were growing with modern industrial capitalism, and, as historian Philip Deloria has characterized it, the fear

that men earning wages in the factories were “cogs in the industrial machine” rather than “independent yeomen” generated a culture of anxiety about modern masculine identities.⁴⁸

Deloria argues in *Playing Indian* (1998) that early camp organizers responded by creating youth organizations for boys that looked to an imagined frontier history to re-imagine modern masculine identities. In 1902, Ernest Thompson Seton established a camping organization for boys called the League of Woodcraft Indians, an organization focused on “Indian” rituals, camping, nature study and the development of physical strength and moral character. Seton organized his first group of boys into a tribe called the Sinaways and taught them indigenous tales, led nature study games, and instructed them on how to make indigenous costumes.⁴⁹ So successful was the League of Woodcraft Indians that Beard established his own camping organization called the Sons of Daniel Boone in 1905, and in 1910, with Beard and Robert Baden-Powell, Seton founded the Boy Scouts of America.

From the very beginning, each of these organizations offered its own romanticized version of frontier life. Seton romanticized and emulated the practices and knowledge systems of Indigenous peoples in his original organization, the Woodcraft Indians, believing their ways of living in close connection to nature to be antimodern and thus a more authentic expression of human existence. Beard, who disdained Indigenous peoples and later condemned Seton’s celebration of them as un-American and unpatriotic, centered his organization on the image of the American pioneer that Beard believed embodied the qualities of resourcefulness and technological inventiveness, and he therefore emphasized pioneer activities such as knot-tying and fort-building in his organization.⁵⁰ Despite their different cast of characters and representations of American history, what linked Seton’s and Beard’s camping organizations was their shared belief that in enticing boys to participate in pre-industrial forms of labour in natural

settings, boys could re-connect with a simpler, more authentic way of life that men supposedly lived in the past.⁵¹

The promotion of “wilderness activities” like woodcraft, camping and nature study for boys in these new youth organizations stemmed from late nineteenth-century fears that white urban masculinities were in decline. The space of the city, particularly in America’s northeast and in Canadian cities like Toronto, had come to be associated with the degenerate influences of poverty, crime, disease, immigration, environmental degradation, prostitution and sexual degeneracy, which engendered a deep unease for city life among middle and upper-class white Americans and Canadians. As evidence of this unease, psychologists identified and labelled new illnesses, including agoraphobia, hysteria, vagabondage, and neurasthenia, which they associated with urban life. These pathologies represented what Anthony Vidler has termed a “generalized fear of the metropolis” which originated from the feeling of alienation produced by the spatialities of the fast-paced, mechanical, isolating, and mass-oriented environment of the industrialized city.⁵² At the turn of the twentieth century, when the “father of adolescence,” G. Stanley Hall, published his seminal work on child psychology, he gave credence to the idea that the city had “overstimulating” effects on the child’s constitution, but it was mostly boys with whom he was concerned. Applying Darwin’s ideas about species evolution to the study of human development, Hall argued that city boys were at risk of neurasthenia, a disease associated with overworking the brain and which he argued was responsible for depleting the male “nerve force.”⁵³ Observing that white city boys were “flabby,” “effeminate,” “over-intellectualized,” “narrow-chested,” “chain-smoker” youths, Hall and his followers, among them U.S. President Roosevelt, complained that urban boys lacked the strength of body and character that the hardworking boys from the countryside possessed. Although they placed white manliness at the

pinnacle of civilization, Hallians were fierce critics of the over-intellectualized, urban-dwelling bourgeois man who had come to pass as “civilized.”⁵⁴

Psychologists like Hall and the education professionals who subscribed to their theories saw camping and the woodcraft movement as an antidote to these supposedly effeminizing influences of city life. Before Seton founded his camping organizations, early summer camps originating in New Hampshire around 1870 had already made this connection, but these camps were mostly private and aimed to assist the “city-bred” sons of bankers and businessmen in managing the transition from boyhood to adulthood. Through camping, these early camp leaders imagined themselves to be working to “harden” soft city boys into men and emphasized physical exercise, collective work, and moral character-building as their principal values.⁵⁵ Furthermore, they used images of indigeneity, which they problematically associated with racialized and colonial notions of savagery, to achieve the goals of their character-building programs. Early camping brochures promised parents and their boys that exposure to wild nature could transform them so that they were “swarthy, long haired and hardened...as gloriously savage as their wild surroundings,” an image which paradoxically appropriated a romanticized and racist image of the generic “Indian” to make, as one piece of camp propaganda proclaimed, “College Men and Sons of Notables, Who Live like Educated Aborigines.”⁵⁶ Seton shared Hall’s belief that modern industrial capitalism was corrupting young men with its “system that has turned such a large proportion of our robust, manly, self-reliant boyhood into a lot of flat-chested cigarette smokers, with shaky nerves and doubtful vitality.” Seton imagined children to be like Indigenous peoples, something evidenced in a statement he made in which he noted, “I know something of savages – of boys, I mean; it is precisely the same.”⁵⁷

The appropriation of the imagery of indigeneity in this way had to do with the close links made in the eighteenth century about Indigenous peoples, children, and nature. Enlightenment scientists, looking to explain the origins of the white European race, proposed that childhood was a reiteration, in an individual life course, of the much longer history of the development of Man from “savagery” to “civilization.” This theory, known as “recapitulation,” emerged directly from European colonial expansion and domination. Explorers took what they saw from the Indigenous peoples that they visited and colonized as living evidence of civilized humanity’s origins. Through the travel narrative and later, ethnography, they drew connections between Anglo-Saxon children and what they deemed to be the “primitive peoples” of the British and French colonies for their supposed shared proximity to nature and their “primitive” languages and knowledge systems. They envisioned children and Indigenous peoples to be at the lowest stage of human evolution according to the stadial theory of Scottish enlightenment thought, the hunter and gatherer stage, among the four stages of evolution.⁵⁸

In Locke and Rousseau’s writings, recapitulationist ideas about children were embodied in the metaphor of the “colony of children,” a thought experiment bearing resemblance to William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* (1954) that conjectured that if a society of children were to be left on their own without survival tools or even language to communicate, that they would gradually come to these things on their own, repeating the primordial stages through which civilized Man has passed.⁵⁹ The continuing popularity of this logic is evidenced in Turner’s Frontier Thesis, where he had argued that the frontier had an indigenizing effect on the early pioneer, who was inevitably mastered by the wilderness and forced to shed the trappings of European civilization in favor of embracing the birch bark canoe and the “Indians”’ “hunting shirt and moccasins.” Turner proposed that, very much like the colony of children, the American

Frontier was an empirical testing ground for observing how quickly previously civilized subjects, shed of their trappings of European civilization and thrust into the wilderness, could recapitulate this otherwise lengthy evolutionary history within a matter of generations:

It begins with the Indian and the hunter; it goes on to tell of the disintegration of savagery by the entrance of the trader, the pathfinder of civilization; we read the annals of the pastoral stage in ranch life; the exploitation of the soil by the raising of unrotated crops of corn and wheat in sparsely settled farming communities; the intensive culture of the denser farm settlement; and finally the manufacturing organization with city and factory system.⁶⁰

A vestige of racist Enlightenment and Victorian thought, the New Nature Movement imagines that children are “savage” by nature. In *Geographies of Childhood* (1994), ecologist Gary Paul Nabhan recounts his observations of his children’s predilection for playing in and building “dens” in bushes and rocky outcrops on wilderness treks, which he argues originates from a “more ancient animal notion encoded within us,” while Stephen Kellert, a social ecologist and affiliate of C&NN, writes about children’s “primal, atavistic attraction to life, especially nonhuman animals” which essentially functions as a species adaptation for children’s development and maturation.⁶¹ Children in this narrative, as the terms “primal” or “savage” suggest, are not merely close to nature and animals, but also to the primitive ancestral human and to Indigenous peoples today. Pyle makes this link in “Eden in a Vacant Lot”:

For much of our history, when children have been left to their own devices, their first choice has often been to flee to the nearest wild place—whether a big tree or a bushy corner in the yard or a watercourse or woodland farther away. This is where they can imagine and enact adventure, construct forts and intrigues, and hunt crawdads and bugs. In aboriginal societies, this kind of play was essential for forming basic survival skills: today’s crayfish and minnows are tomorrow’s game and pot-fish. As the needs for bush skills evaporated, the atavistic pleasure of such play did not, and it continues to connect us to our hunting and gathering past, to our evolutionary legacy.⁶²

While nineteenth-century recapitulationist theories about the so-called savagery and naturalness of children and Indigenous peoples were conjecture, these New Nature Movement

claims about children's supposed savagery are supported by developmental psychology and sociobiological theory, namely by the work of E.O Wilson.⁶³ Biophilia is Wilson's term to describe our emotional and psychological connection to nature that is ensconced in our genes, which he argues evolved through a complex interplay of hereditary learning and natural selection over the long course of human history. According to Wilson, biophilia has manifested as a "learned knowledge of crucial aspects of natural history," something which is still present today even in the most urban humans, albeit in atrophied form.⁶⁴ Although the theory of biophilia includes adults in modern western societies, those who subscribe to the theory favour Indigenous peoples and children's play in nature as examples that prove its validity. Kellert, for instance, cites studies conducted with the Foré peoples of Papua New Guinea and the Koyukon peoples of the North American Arctic to argue that their impressive knowledge about local plants and animals demonstrates how "intellectual affinity for the natural world [...] is a universal tendency of all peoples."⁶⁵ Indigenous peoples in accounts such as this one become a sort of baseline for thinking about universal human tendencies.

Children, as I have already suggested, are regarded in much the same way in the New Nature Movement. Their play in nature is seen as evidence, as Pyle remarks, of our "hunting and gathering" past and our "evolutionary legacy." Children who play in nature create an imagined bond to a past where humans were connected to nature, and in this space, they are rendered "savage" again. Sobel makes this point precisely in his argument that

the forest/frontier shapes American consciousness. Bringing young children into the forest recreates the historical American experience. Having to find your way, encounter the elements, negotiate rough ground, face moderate risks and dangers, and live with the animals is a reliving of the American expansion westward. Children are brought back to their original hunting and gathering selves, and they learn to live off the land.⁶⁶

The New Nature Movement's narratives of children and particularly of boys "scampering" through the trees" and following their "atavistic" attraction to play is the product of this antimodern thinking that sees children's play in nature as childhood's natural expression. For Louv, playing "cowboys and Indians" was a natural expression of his own nature-filled childhood, and the disappearance of this frontier fantasy from the lives and imaginations of the school children that he interviewed for *Childhood's Future* was a disappointing revelation, even despite his admission that this motif was, in his assessment, *somewhat* racist and perhaps less "gentle."⁶⁷ At a time when childhood is increasingly believed to be domesticated by anxious parents, technology, and social strictures, the New Nature Movement imagines nature to be the frontier that will make them "wild," and therefore children, again.

The second frontier, or farm and country childhoods

Descending Louv's escalator into the second frontier, we discover the countryside. Louv argues that generations up until as recently as 1964

knew farmland or forests at the suburban rim and had farm-family relatives. Even if we lived in an inner city, we likely had grandparents or other older relatives who farmed or had recently arrived from farm country during the rural-to-urban migration of the first half of the twentieth century. For today's young people, that familial and cultural linkage to farming is disappearing, marking the end of the second frontier.⁶⁸

Stephen Trimble, co-author of *Geographies of Childhood*, a book that predated Louv's *Last Child in the Woods*, argues that farm life and country living provided children with special knowledges about nature, life and death. Noting that "central city children may have no experience with native plants and animals" and that of the ones who do, their access to these experiences takes place through less authentic means, such as summer camps, Trimble draws the following contrast between city and rural children:

Ranchers and farmers, in contrast, earn their livings directly from other living things. Children in rural settings know viscerally what many city children know only from television if they know it at all: that milk and meat come from cows (indeed, dinnertime steaks at a small ranch may come from a particular bovine, named Vanessa or Pete), that plants grow our food in seasonal cycles, that storms and droughts can destroy crops, and that people go hungry as a result. ... If we value what can come from living a rural childhood – from riding through cow pastures and playing in sagebrush rather than on lawns, from tending horses rather than hamsters – we must act to preserve the possibility of such a life.⁶⁹

In the New Nature Movement, we again find the suggestion that the countryside is a landscape that lacks the overcivilization and the softness of the urban third frontier. Louv in *Last Child in the Woods* argues that the rise in ADHD today, often attributed to television, is only part of a larger set of environmental and cultural changes that have altered children's lives. Louv notes that these cultural changes have everything to do with urbanization:

In an agricultural society, or during a time of exploration and settlement, or hunting and gathering – which is to say, most of mankind's [sic] history – energetic *boys* were particularly prized for their strength, speed, and agility. As mentioned earlier, as recently as the 1950s, most families still had some kind of agricultural connection. Many of these children, girls as well as boys, would have been directing their energy and physicality in *constructive* ways: doing farm chores, bailing hay, splashing in the swimming hole, climbing trees, racing to the sandlot for a game of baseball. Their unregimented play would have been steeped in nature.⁷⁰

At the same time that Trimble and Louv romanticize the farm as a masculinized landscape of labour that furnishes children with real knowledge about nature, life and death, they also romanticize it as a space of escape and pleasure for children who have free time for “playing in sagebrush,” “splashing in the swimming hole,” and “racing to the sandlot for a game of baseball.” While they might seem at odds with one another, these two idyllic images are two sides of the same coin and they find their roots in the myth of American agrarianism that was created by one of the nation's founders, Thomas Jefferson. The New Nature Movement's

attachment to this landscape and lament for its decline represents modern fears about the loss of the white, masculine and heterosexual identities that inhabited them.

Historically, the countryside, like the wilderness, is a landscape that makes men. In the U.S., the link between the land and the virtues of simplicity, honesty, and democracy was firmly engrained in the nation's identity despite the flourishing of other, more commercial forms of agrarianism. Thomas Jefferson in the 1780s promoted an agrarian ideology that linked whiteness and heterosexual masculinity to the cultivation of the land, fearing that American cities would industrialize and become like the cities of Europe, which he believed to be riddled with the problems of poverty, want, sexual depravity, and most frighteningly, the mob.⁷¹ As capitalist industrialization grew Canadian and American villages into cities, one response from antimodernists critical of urban industrial values in the nineteenth century was to retreat to the country setting, which was appropriately white and heterosexual.⁷²

By the late nineteenth century, privileged boys coming from urban areas, the same boys who attended the early private camps where they "played Indian," were contrasted, before their entry into the camps, with country boys who represented the values of hard work and physical fitness. In 1880, a clergyman named Washington Gladden criticized privileged urban boys and their penchant for loafing around and consuming luxuries in the city with poor boys and country boys who are busy "learning to work."⁷³ At the camps, crafts, namely woodworking, were used to connect these urban boys to pre-industrial forms of labour, not because it would be useful for them in later life, but because it taught them about "muscular coordination and digital dexterity, while helping them appreciate "the relationship between man and production." Edwin DeMerritte, the founder of Camp Algonquin, a private boys' camp outside of Boston, noted that the boys liked manual labour: "They like to handle an axe or a pick – to hoe, rake, etc. It is

outdoor life, which has been advocated as coming nearest to farm life.”⁷⁴ Farm and camp experiences were used to produce young men who conformed to the heteronormative gender roles expected of them and who could live up to the expectations of their class. As Wall notes, on the rare occasions that DeMerritte assigned one of his boys to do the dishes or wait on tables at the camp, this occasioned a pang of guilt on his part; this feminized form of labour, not befitting boys slated to become future leaders, was for “the colored help” at Algonquin.⁷⁵ These divisions of labour that privileged masculine pre-industrial craft and subordinated feminized and racialized domestic drudgery not only reinforced gender and class privileges, but racial ones as well.

The romanticization of the countryside was not only the site of production of masculine urban boys, it was also viewed as the site of health and uplift for the urban poor and racialized immigrant. Child savers of the urban reform movement in the U.S. and Canada saw the decrepit urban environment as the genesis of crime and immorality, and pointed to the cramped conditions of urban city slums and the poor and immigrant communities living there as the cause of ill-health and disease. Around the same time that “savage” white boys from privileged backgrounds were celebrated at summer camp, “feral” children roamed about in the cities, portrayed either as poor hapless victims of poverty and squalor, or as little scoundrels that played violent games in the streets, begged and stole, and disrupted civic order by endangering the property of shopkeepers. During the progressive era in Canada and the United States, reformers viewed camping and trips to the countryside as recreation that could improve public health. Kindergartens and vacation schools were some of the early initiatives that brought poor city children on excursions on or outside the boundaries of the city to places such as city piers and countryside estates, where the air was thought to be purer and cooler.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Fresh Air camps became a popular solution for mitigating the effects of urban poverty and for “improving” the immigrant poor. Fresh Air camps were premised on removing children, most of whom lived in poverty, were sick or malnourished, and from immigrant communities – Italian, Jewish, Irish, and “racialized” European groups – from the city’s poorest quarters to suburban estates, farms, or camps in the country for the duration of one or two weeks in a thinly veiled attempt at assimilating them into American and Canadian culture. The association between the countryside and health and wholesomeness is evidenced in a 1907 article from the *Toronto Star* that asked its middle-class readers:

Do you know that there are hundreds of children, children who love life and who enjoy play and have souls just as precious as those little ones in your own home, who will not have a glimpse of anything but the unhealthy, ill-smelling parts of Toronto during these enervating summer months, unless someone opens his heart and his pocketbook and sends them out into the country, where for a short time at least they will breathe pure, fresh air, and have new strength and energy instilled into their tired and wasted little bodies?⁷⁶

The Fresh Air Fund appealed to newspaper readers’ and would-be donors’ sense of rural nostalgia in their stories about poor children who, according to another *Toronto Daily Star* article in 1935, had “never laid eyes on a brook or stream, a frog, berry bush, a vegetable garden, a farm house, a dirt road, a horse or cow grazing, fresh milk in a pail, a hen with chicks, eggs in a nest, a woods, a tent, wild flowers.”⁷⁷ The Fund, which associated the country with childhood innocence, promised its readers and supporters that a week in the country would provide “needy” children with a wholesome childhood experience. Geographer Robert Vanderbeck argues that the Fresh Air Fund, which still exists today, continues to reproduce an imaginative geography of country whiteness and urban non-whiteness. In New York City, for instance, the Fund sends supposedly “environmentally deprived” Black and Latino youth to reside in the predominantly

white and idyllic country/suburbs of Vermont.⁷⁸ As Wall points out in her historical analysis, the purpose of camps like the Fresh Air camp was to “infuse working-class culture with middle-class values.”⁷⁹ It therefore reinforced class- and race-based inequalities, which Vanderbeck shows is still the case today.

At the same time that the New Nature Movement celebrates the country for its masculine association with physical labour and knowledge of the hard facts of life, it also celebrates the pastoral landscape as a space of pleasure and exploration. This more leisured landscape tends to originate from the romanticized space of the city suburb. In fact, most of the first-hand stories from educators within the New Nature Movement are about post-war childhoods spent in the suburbs bordering the countryside. Pyle, for instance, wrote about his childhood growing up in a suburb in Aurora, Colorado, which in the 1950s was developed over farmed-out prairie. Pyle recounts how:

From the day my older brother Tom came home and announced the discovery of a neat ditch full of intriguing wetness and greenery, the High Line Canal became my constant haunt, friend, and focus. Its tangled growth and sinuous path made the perfect getaway from the raw young suburb. Free to roam after school and in summer, I fled the town for the ditch every chance I got. ...

What I found was an unordered world of brown and green mystery. Long, broad-bladed grass hung over the banks and waved in the current. Chocolate wood nymphs flip-flopped among those grasses, big black-and-white admirals glided through the willows above, and still higher, their visual echo on the wing, the voluble iridescent magpies. Orioles, flickers, kestrels, and kingbirds kept us constant company if we kept our slingshots holstered. I envied the few farm kids who actually lived along the canal and did my best to live what I imagined was their lives.⁸⁰

Similarly, Louv grew up on the fringe of the suburbs in Raytown, Missouri, and recounts how “at the end of our backyard, cornfields began, and then came the woods and then more farms that seemed to go on forever. Every summer I ran through the fields with my collie, elbowing the

forest of whipping stalks and leaves, to dig my underground forts and climb into the arms of an oak that had outlived Jesse James.”⁸¹

Pyle calls these suburban and country spaces “secondhand” and “hand-me-down” lands and characterizes them as excellent locations for children to engage in unstructured nature play. He argues that the importance of the vacant lot, meadow or ditch lies in its accessibility to children, its wildness, ecological diversity, and its opportunities for endless (and unsupervised) exploration:

Lucky is the child of the city or suburbs who still has a richly inhabited ditch, creek, field, or forest within walking distance of home. Nor, I emphasize, do parks and nature reserves make up for what I call the secondhand lands or hand-me-down habitats, which correspond to what British naturalist Richard Mabey (1973) describes as the “unofficial countryside.” Parks are normally too manicured and chemically treated to offer much of interest to the adventuring youngster. And as for nature reserves, they might as well be paved over for all they offer in the way of boundless exploration. For special places to work their magic on kids, they need to be able to do some clamber and damage. They need to be free to climb trees, muck about, catch things, and get wet – above all, to leave the trail.⁸²

Pyle’s romanticization of the scrubby lands in and beyond the suburb as the “unofficial countryside” is accompanied by his critique, as I already touched on in the first section of this chapter, of the urban and suburban development that he argues is destroying the countryside. “The opportunity for experiencing nature in the cities,” he argues, “has diminished measurably, most of all in the most rapidly suburbanizing of them.”⁸³ With fewer or in some cases no spaces for children to play in urban and suburban areas, and as the technological pull draws children indoors, children are now only getting “secondhand” experiences of nature through school books and television screens, which Pyle argues has consequences for the environment and for children’s health.

Ironically, however, the romantic picture of the suburb that Pyle and Louv celebrate as the quintessential space of the natural child is itself an agent of environmental destruction that is

diminishing the opportunities for pastoral childhoods. The suburb is a product of a growing middle class which, after the Second World War, desired a piece of the countryside and space for its children to play. White, middle-class families en masse moved to the newly built suburban developments but were early on disturbed to see that the open space that brought them there in the first place was being destroyed at an unprecedented rate to make way for more suburban properties to meet the growing demand. Margo Tupper, a mother and suburban resident of Washington, D.C., wrote *No Place to Play* in 1966. She mourned the loss “of untouched woodlands which were a refuge for children – a place to play in natural surroundings” that had been located at the end of her street where neighborhood children could “build dams or catch minnows in a little creek, gather wildflowers and pick blossoms from the white dogwoods.”⁸⁴ The image of the bulldozer destroying open space loomed large in the American suburban consciousness and left its imprint on Pyle who mourned the gradual leveling of the land around his beloved unofficial countryside at the High Line Canal. While generations before him mourned the enclosure movement of the countryside in England, Pyle mourns a much more recent and thus much more accessible enclosure movement that is destroying the landscape he came to know and love as a child.

The New Nature Movement’s mourning for the loss of country and suburban nature and the childhoods that inhabited them is expressed in its nostalgia for nature study. Pyle’s romanticization of the countryside is based on his assumption that children acquired natural history knowledge from living on or in proximity to the farm and countryside.⁸⁵ He tells us that in the American nature study movement led by Anna Botsford Comstock, “the point was to emulate the discoveries that country children would make on their own, enhanced by information to put the finds in context.”⁸⁶ Country children, Pyle argues, had access to nature that allowed

them to know the names of flora and fauna and had the potential to transform children into ecologists and naturalists, as it did in his own childhood.

This romanticization of nature study in the New Nature Movement is linked to modern changes that have taken place in urban development and environmental education. As noted, Pyle argues that with the disappearance of ditches and vacant lots, children no longer have access to the habitats that allow them to observe and study nature. Further, children are also not taught about the environment in schools, and where it does exist, that education is technical, mechanistic, and filled with doom and gloom. The modern environmental education that replaced nature study over the course of the twentieth century is, according to Sobel, focused on environmental destruction and issues that are far removed from children's everyday lives. Trading in nature study's local focus for a global view of the environment and its problems, environmental education, according to Sobel, is more likely to inspire fear in children than a commitment to environmental protection. The New Nature Movement also criticizes how the more "sentimental" fields of botany, zoology, and ecology – fields more closely related to nature study – have been replaced in higher education with the "harder" fields of molecular biology and genetics. Louv quotes oceanographers Paul Dayton and Enric Sala who argue that students today in the environmental sciences are currently being denied "the sense of wonder and sense of the place fundamental to the discipline." Ecology "has moved from the descriptive to the mechanistic," valuing rigid techniques over "intuition, imagination, creativity, and iconoclasm."⁸⁷

The element of nature study most valued by the New Nature Movement is its pedagogy based in direct observation and this sense of intuition, imagination, creativity, and most importantly, wonder, that children supposedly garnered from the close observation of nature.

Frost quotes the much celebrated nature study advocate Liberty Hyde Bailey, who observed in the early twentieth century that the goals of nature study were to “open the pupil’s mind by direct observation to a knowledge and love of the common things in the child’s environment’ and ‘to put the pupil in a sympathetic attitude toward nature for the purpose of increasing the joy of living.”⁸⁸ This view of nature was upheld by Comstock and Bailey, both of whom promoted nature study in rural areas and extolled the virtues of child-centered learning through direct observation in nature. Their teachings articulated a shared appreciation for the poetic and aesthetic qualities of nature along with systematic study.⁸⁹ At a time when rural depopulation was becoming a national concern, Comstock and Bailey were prominent voices in bringing nature study to rural areas. Historian Sally Gregory Kohlstedt observes how Comstock and Bailey “assumed pupils in the country were in some sense adapted to their outdoor world. But their familiarity with the particulars of growing crops had not opened them to aesthetic or scientific ways of understanding the domesticated and wilder landscapes in which they lived; they needed nature study that was simultaneously creative and systematic.”⁹⁰ Their methods suggested that a pastoral nature aesthetic, then, coupled with systematic scientific study could infuse nature with enough joy and wonder to counteract the flow of rural outmigration. They also assumed, as did other nature study educators, that children’s sense of wonder and curiosity made them naturally suited to receiving such an education.

The New Nature Movement views rural nature and childhood through this same pastoral aesthetic. Urging children and their caregivers to “get outside!”, the New Nature Movement argues that once children are given an opportunity to have direct experiences in nature, they will most certainly fall in love with it:

The dugout in the weeds or leaves beneath a backyard willow, the rivulet of a seasonal creek, even the ditch between a front yard and road – all of these places

are entire universes to a young child. Expeditions to the mountains or national parks often pale, in a child's eyes, in comparison with the mysteries of the ravine at the end of the cul de sac. By letting our children lead us to their own special places we can rediscover to joy and wonder of nature.⁹¹

Childhood environmental educator Ruth A. Wilson tells us that Rachel Carson once wrote that “a child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement.” As Wilson explains, wonder is an essential part of children's lives and corresponds to “their unique way of knowing the world,” and this way of knowing dims as children grow into adults.⁹² Sobel, who shares this view of childhood, proposes that to nurture children's natural curiosity about the environment and their connection to it, there should be “no tragedies before fourth grade.” He argues that children first need to get to know “the flora, fauna, and character of their own local places,” and only around the fourth or fifth grade should they be presented with a curriculum that focuses on environmental problems and provides opportunities for community service or social action.⁹³ Just as the call to return children to the “wilderness” is a method of reconnecting them with their supposed “savagery,” the insistence that children need the nearby countryside, ditch, creek, or vacant lot in which to play is synonymous with returning childhood to a state of innocence. It is also a way of re-centering pastoral childhoods at a time when the countryside is in decline and in which children are losing the “familial and cultural linkage to farming” that was so core to making American and Canadian national identities.

The fourth frontier, or sub/urbanism and the return to health

The New Nature Movement's third frontier, the urban technologized landscape of our current day, should now be familiar. It is defined by the reality, according to the New Nature Movement, that most of the world's population no longer lives in agricultural areas but is now urban, is characterized by electronic disengagement, and supposedly “overweight” and afflicted by nature

deficit disorder.⁹⁴ This landscape is the most criticized in the New Nature Movement because it is marked by a perpetual decline away from nature. The third frontier encompasses the urban and suburban reaches of the city and, as Pyle argues, what little parcels of nature remain – the scrubby ditches, vacant lots, the countryside beyond the suburb – which are all being lost to urban infill and suburban development. Furthermore, twenty-first century concerns about child protection and safety, which forbid children to climb trees, to play in the woods, and that sanitize playgrounds into flat, unimaginative play spaces render the third frontier inhospitable to outdoor play.

The New Nature Movement argues that children today are left with “mediated” and subsequently inferior experiences of nature. Rather than play by themselves or with other children in the ditches and vacant lots, they are more likely to experience nature under the supervision of an adult in regimented places like zoos, botanical gardens, parks, natural history museums, or occasionally further afield in wilderness parks. While the New Nature Movement acknowledges that these are indeed valuable spaces for learning about nature, it argues that they are insufficient for fostering the organic experiences that come with children’s independent and “savage” nature play. Kellert, reflecting on the necessity for free play, sums this point up in his observation that “indirect contact with nature – caring for a pet, working in a garden, tending to a houseplant, maintaining an aquarium, or visiting a zoo or nature center – can provide important experiences for children. Yet there is no sufficient substitute, as a basis for children’s learning and development, for the direct experience of nature in the outdoors.”⁹⁵

The New Nature Movement, however, suggests that the twenty-first century urban environment can be redeemed to pave the way for a greener and more child-friendly future, what Louv calls a “fourth frontier.” As a way forward out of our supposed modern devolutionary trek

down the escalator, Louv suggests that the children and nature crisis can be the creative force behind a new movement for change, a fourth frontier, where children can reconnect with nature and eliminate nature deficit disorder. In addition to the changes that need to take place that are more social and cultural, such as turning off electronic devices, “decriminalizing” children’s play, re-instating nature study, and re-orienting ourselves towards the outdoors, Louv argues that the fourth frontier can be brought about through urban re-wilding projects. Calling these projects the “zoopolis movement,” “green urbanism,” and “landscape urbanism,” Louv envisions how the urban environment can be re-wilded with green roofs, button parks and green corridors that preserve and restore nature and invite ecological diversity and opportunities for free play.

While only Louv calls this space the fourth frontier, the New Nature Movement is replete with visions for new and better forms of green urbanism for a more sustainable future. Pyle, who was among the first to take up the issue of protecting vacant lots, the unofficial countryside of inner cities and suburbs, argues that we need to save vacant lots and ditches and resist the urge to “improve” the land through landscaping so that children can delight in its wildness and mystery.⁹⁶ Other initiatives include creating more naturalized parks, learning gardens, city farms, and adventure playgrounds with plenty of loose parts for children to play in/with. Frost, a long-time advocate of adventure playgrounds and children’s gardens, notes that since “city kids in confined schools and neighborhoods, especially those in slums and barrios, cannot be taken to the wilderness regularly. ... adults can bring exciting chunks of nature to city schools, neighborhoods, and parks,” and that these spaces can improve children’s health, stimulate their senses and enhance their learning.⁹⁷ Others, including Kellert, Louv, and Sobel, have written about the virtues of green building design. Kellert, for instance, insists that sustainable biophilic

cities must include green buildings that “can restore a world that nurtures and enriches the human body, mind, and spirit through its beneficial association with the natural world.”⁹⁸

A utopian vision for the re-developed “city” in the New Nature Movement is the eco-village. In *Last Child in the Woods*, Louv argues that our current population density in cities is unsupportable and that the future lies in repopulating the countryside, a kind of reversal back into the second frontier. While Louv does not commit to a single vision for what eco-villages should look like, his description of the town-country is borrowed from nineteenth-century reformer Ebenezer Howard, who developed a utopian model of suburban living whereby people would live in villages of no more than thirty-two thousand and repopulate economically-depressed agricultural areas in the U.S. These villages, surrounded by a large acreage of green belt, would be self-sustaining communities connected to one another by rail or highway.⁹⁹ Louv envisions the town-country to be made up of both residential housing and family farms, and while not everyone would be a farmer, people who inhabit the village “will spend part of their days raising vegetables, fruits, and animals in solar bioshelters,” and energy needs would be supplied “by a variety of technologies, from passive solar installations to wind-powered generators to old-fashioned horsepower.”¹⁰⁰ Orchards, native plants, community gardens, sustainable transportation, front porches, and housing built in close proximity to commercial areas are some of the features he imagines for the Green Town. The Green Town, according to Louv, will be a great step in the direction of a “child-nature reunion” and of better health: “the goal of this prescription must be not only to maintain the current level of health, but to dramatically improve it – to create a far better life for those who follow. We can conserve energy and tread more lightly on the Earth while we expand our culture’s capacity for joy.”¹⁰¹

The green urbanism that the New Nature Movement imagines will, its proponents argue, improve the health and well-being of people living in urban areas, a discourse which resonates with late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ideologies of urban nature as a source of moral uplift. Louv, in fact, connects his utopian zoopolis to the health-promoting playground and City Beautiful movements of the nineteenth century, which he once again paints with a nostalgic brush:

In the 1870s, the “playground movement” valued urban nature more than swing sets or baseball fields; nature was presented as a health benefit for working-class Americans, particularly their children. This movement led to the nation’s largest urban parks, including New York’s Central Park. Closely associated was the “healthy cities” movement in the early twentieth century, which welded public health to urban design, even codifying how many feet parks and schools should be from a home.

Then other forces interceded. Cities continued to build a few large urban parks in post-World War II development, but usually only as an afterthought – and these were increasingly less natural and more attuned to organized sports and the threat of litigation.¹⁰²

Louv’s nostalgic account of the early attempts to bring nature into the urban landscape through initiatives like City Beautiful problematically conceals the white, middle-class racism and elitism that undergirded early urban moral reform initiatives. As urban historical geographer Philip Gordon Mackintosh argues, urban reforms through park planning in the early twentieth century in cities such as Toronto, Chicago, and New York were not merely concerned with public health but were rooted in white transcendentalist notions of moral uplift that linked nature to social ascendancy. Park planners viewed nature as a means to control the behaviour of the working class and reduce juvenile crime, to promote hygiene, and improve the conditions of the poor immigrant slums. In the City Plan of 1909 in Toronto, for instance, planners targeted St. John’s Ward, a poor immigrant neighbourhood, for the creation of playgrounds and urged landowners

with vacant lots to set up vegetable and flower gardens for children, which were imagined to have important consequences for their moral training.¹⁰³

Furthermore, many City Beautiful initiatives that resulted in beautified urban landscapes were produced through violence. Central Park, for instance, was created as an expression of elite privilege and racism. Environmental justice scholar Dorceta Taylor has characterized Central Park as an early instance of zoning that benefited the rich and propertied classes. Parks like Central Park were designed in the nineteenth century to create wealth, to attract the wealthy and propertied to the city, and to prevent the siting of nuisance industries in the area. An early instance of environmental injustice, the rezoning of the area to make way for the park forcibly removed a poor village of propertied African-Americans and communities of German and Irish immigrants which were demonized in the press and by park developers as “shantytowns” made up of “squatters” and “tribes of squalid city barbarians.”¹⁰⁴ Although Frederick Law Olmsted, Central Park’s principal planner, envisioned the Park as a democratic public sphere in the sense that it would be a space for meditation for both the upper and lower classes alike, the Park was a reflection of elite culture. Historian Matthew Gandy argues that the Park reflected an elite “predilection for the English picturesque landscape,” but that Olmsted eschewed the more forcible approach to moral uplift that characterized European urban reform. What Olmsted envisioned for Central Park was a more “democratic republican landscape” that melded the Jeffersonian agrarian idyll with the emergent notion that the city was a place of cultural refinement. The Park thus promised to create an urban-pastoral setting in the city that would introduce a new model of cultural advancement. It would provide opportunities for fresh air, sunlight, and recreation that would ennoble the minds of its visitors, particularly those of the immigrant working classes. However, the working classes and the poor that sought recreation in

the Park when it opened quickly discovered that it was inaccessible and were confronted with regulations that prevented them from enjoying sports and picnics, activities that were deemed too plebeian for the culturally refined space of the Park.¹⁰⁵ Louv's assertion that Olmsted's Central Park transformed New York into a space of "urban health" rather than "pathology" is thus more than simple celebration for an urban initiative that sought to inspire health.¹⁰⁶ Louv's uncritical celebration of these initiatives, which ignores the historical politics of inequality, class hierarchy, and land use echoes racist and elitist discourses about nature and the city.

Despite Louv's admiration for urban greening projects past and present, his true vision for the fourth frontier lies in the re-population of the countryside. He notes that "no matter how designers shape it, any city has limits to human carrying capacity – especially if it includes nature."¹⁰⁷ A re-natured fourth frontier, then, entails a return to the country-suburb. Louv's belief that the return to the country is the best way to a sustainable future is rooted in his nostalgia for the small family farm which has become so core to the American national identity. When he describes the re-population of the countryside, Louv again relies on national mythologies of the American frontier, suggesting that rural repopulation "should seem more familiar than grandiose, rooted as it is in Thomas Jefferson's agrarian vision, Thoreau's self-reliance, and the homesteading of the West."¹⁰⁸ However, like Olmsted's Central Park, Louv's vision for the Green Town is a melding of Jeffersonian agrarianism and a modern suburban aesthetic. It combines the values of self-sufficiency, simplicity, open space, proximity to the land and a romantic nature aesthetic, with green technologies and modern principles of building design, landscaping, and agriculture. Louv's pastoral-urban landscape resurrects characteristics of an old way of life that he believes was more authentic, closer to nature, and healthier. In the process, it

re-positions the rural geographies, which have historically been produced through whiteness, masculinity, and colonialism, at the heart of a re-imagined American environmental identity.

From romanticization and crisis to justice

As my exploration of the four frontiers has shown, the New Nature Movement's call for children to "get outside!" and to re-reignite their bonds to the earth is far from innocent. It originates from deep-seated anxieties about social change and from a legacy of romanticized thought about child(*boy*)hood and nature. At a moment when social changes are supposedly transforming young people into soft, urban, unhealthy, consumerist cyborgs plugged into the global capitalist economy, the New Nature Movement finds consolation in returning children to their natural heritage, the woods and the pastoral countryside. This return to simplicity is an attempt to render childhood innocent again, but it is more than just that; it is an expression of anxiety for the loss of an American national identity that was defined through nature and captured in the cultural mythology of the frontier. The nostalgic stories that the New Nature Movement tells about the nation's environmental history, embodied by the Jeffersons and the Roosevelts, the generations of families who tilled the land, the Ernest Thompson Setons and the Daniel Beards, the Anna Comstocks and Liberty Hyde Baileys, and the little boys who played cowboys and "Indians," and who above all *played outside*, center white, heterosexual, colonial masculinity at the core of its reimagined environmental education. The fourth frontier is an attempt to reinstate familiar visions of nature, the great wilderness and the farming frontier, and in the process, to reaffirm this core identity that supposedly built the great American nation.

Because the New Nature Movement sees nature through these cultural mythologies and hegemonic identity, it has limited vision. The reiteration of nostalgic tales not only perpetuates

hidden violences, but also actively produces narrowed definitions of “nature,” “childhood,” and the nation in ways that exclude other knowledges and relationships that deviate from white, male, leisured and heteronormative ideologies. The limits of basing a movement on this hegemonic identity is revealed in Louv’s more recent book of 2012, *The Nature Principle*, where he is challenged to think differently about “nature” in conversation with a Latino youth named Juan Martinez:

As Juan talked about his mother’s garden of jalapeños and medicinal plants, I was reminded that it’s a mistake to focus only on the cultural or geographic barriers that stand between nature and people. We need to consider the strong cultural links to nature that already exist and can be built on. This requires thinking outside the tent, not only beyond ethnic and racial stereotypes, but also about what qualifies as outdoor recreation. For example, national and state park officials describe, with respect and appreciation, the many Hispanic families who use the outdoors for family picnics and reunions – social activities now seemingly rare among people who look like me.¹⁰⁹

Louv’s conversation with Martinez forced him to consider how a legacy of thinking about nature as wilderness, embodied in this case in the image of the tent, fails to account for culturally diverse expressions of human engagement with nature. Even as Louv claims that his movement is about exploring the “cultural or geographic barriers” that prevent children from getting out into nature, the barriers that he describes are “cultural” only in the sense that our society has shifted in its values to become more indoors, risk-adverse, and nature-phobic. In essence, the New Nature Movement does not explore the alternative epistemologies of, and cultural linkages to nature, and it certainly does not acknowledge that the systemic inequalities such as racism and poverty shut down opportunities for this kind of connection to nature to take place. Because systemic inequalities are not explored, the New Nature Movement reifies and rewards white, liberal, economically-privileged and self-determining citizens unburdened with the problems of

poverty, violence, gender and race discrimination for getting out into nature. It also perpetuates stigmatizing discourses about people of colour that position them as urban and anti-nature.

What our present environmental situation has shown is that crisis can be an incredible catalyst for social change. The environmental degradation of the last century produced some outstanding initiatives such as the environmental protection agency (EPA), the Greenham Commons women's anti-armament protests, and the environmental justice movement, which are only three examples among the countless creative human interventions aimed at creating healthier living worlds. However, crisis can also generate reactionary attitudes that retreat into nostalgia and resort to blaming, that may reach toward an imagined past unsullied by our current social problems, or scapegoat particular groups – namely those with the least power and on the margins of society – as the cause of these problems. It is my contention that the New Nature Movement, with its nostalgic image of a pre-technological, natural rural past, its displacement of the environmental crisis onto children, and its individualistic focus on getting children out in nature to save a generation in crisis, only deepens the existing cleavages in our already grossly unequal society. As I have already noted, the retreat into an imagined past, to a golden age of childhood where children could play more freely and safely and an agrarian past where people lived far more simply and more sustainably is a fantasy that disregards the hardships, inequalities, and violences even, that produced and permeated these landscapes. Nostalgia is an act of creation, not of remembrance. In its retreat into an imagined and seemingly ahistorical rural world, nostalgia clings to old hierarchies and stubbornly resists imagining new relationships that are possible with the new freedoms we have acquired.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, the displacement of environmental problems onto children is deeply unfair. In its particular focus on children, their relationships to nature and how they are spending (or not

spending) their time, the New Nature Movement more often sidesteps adult involvement – whether parental, educational, or corporate – in creating their children’s worlds. Children did not create the worlds they inhabit even if they are actors who do have a role in producing those worlds. As a group that is tied to the hegemonic power of the family and denied full citizenship, children typically lack the power and rights to make changes of an order that could transform our current unsustainable ways of living. Buried within the New Nature Movement is in fact an understanding that the environmental crisis necessitates the action of caregivers. Louv’s *The Nature Principle* was expressly written in response to the criticism that “adults have nature-deficit disorder too,” which led him to write an entire book about how re-naturing the psyche is a *human* necessity.¹¹¹ Similarly, after Bond investigated why children are no longer playing outside in his film *Project Wild Thing*, he concluded that responsibility for this failure lay not in the hands of children but primarily in those of their caregivers. These admissions, however, get lost in the overarching focus on children’s outdoor play and their other generational shortcomings.

Environmental education researcher Bronwyn Hayward astutely remarks that Louv’s short-sighted focus on children fails to account for the ways in which children’s environments are being seriously eroded and endangered by the policy decisions of adults, and she reminds us that we need to focus on how these policy decisions are generating significant inequalities in children’s lives in our present neoliberal times. Rather than displacing our current environmental problems onto children, she argues that we might begin by challenging policy decisions that continue to privatize public spaces and services, that favor corporate interests over those of communities, that produce inequalities among families, that increasingly regulate and criminalize the young and marginalized, that fail to produce employment opportunities and a living wage,

that commercialize nearly every sphere of life, and that fail to address environmental problems in children's lives.¹¹² Over a century of thinking about the child has produced a frame for imagining children as the embodiment of our social problems and has mobilized childhood as a category to think about, to borrow sociologist Chris Jenks's phrase, a model for a "preferred social order."¹¹³ A more useful approach would be to start working to produce a preferred social order in which the needs of communities (and children) shape policy decisions, and in which children are active participants in this process.

The environmental justice movement was also born out of concern for children's health and well-being. However, unlike the New Nature Movement, the environmental justice movement appeals to the principles of equality, justice and democracy, not nostalgia, to envision a more sustainable future for children. Environmental justice grew out of three U.S. movements – civil rights, anti-toxics, and the American Indian Movement – and it begins from the position that communities of colour, Indigenous peoples, and the poor and working class do not experience their environments in the same way as middle-class whites and that they are in fact disproportionately burdened by environmental pollution and a lack of environmental benefits. When environmental justice activists talk about health, they are not talking about the psychological wellness that comes from their affiliation to romanticized nature, but to the serious and sometimes life-threatening health consequences of living in environmentally degraded environments, which for many children of colour living in poverty include asthma from outdoor pollution, lead and asbestos poisoning from old and poorly maintained housing, and toxicity from eating contaminated fish and from playing in contaminated neighborhoods and parks. The campaigns that have come out of the environmental justice movement politicize the environment, pointing to the ways in which environments are structured according to race- and

class-based inequalities. While recognizing that children as a group are, on the whole, biologically more vulnerable to environmental hazards because toxins more readily accumulate in their bodies, the movement argues that children as a group are not homogenous and that the bodies of poor and racialized children in particular are impacted by environmental racism. Writing about childhood asthma, Julie Sze argues that environmental justice activists have given this cause as much attention as they have not only because it is a prevalent problem in their communities, but also because doing so is an affirmation “of the importance of the lives of poor children of color who have been historically marginalized.”¹¹⁴

For low-income and racialized children suffering from poor environmental conditions, escaping out to nature is not a solution to their problems nor is it even a viable option. As environmental activists have noted, the environment for many poor communities of colour is where “we live, where we work, and where we play.”¹¹⁵ Escaping out to nature, even if it were an option, would not have changed the lives of the children of Lois Gibbs and of the community of Love Canal, which suffered from blood diseases, epilepsy, birth defects and other health problems from the toxic wastes that Hooker Chemical Company had buried in the canal before the community was built over top of it.¹¹⁶ Nor would it have changed the air quality in West Harlem and South Bronx, where six diesel bus depots and emissions from trucks passing along the expressways are causing unusually high levels of asthma for the Black and Latino youth who live there.¹¹⁷ Because the health and the lives of their children are at stake and because the very environments in which they live are the sources of disease and sometimes even death, environmental justice activists use grassroots community mobilization, protest, and legal action to prevent discriminatory facility siting or zoning changes and to bring about changes in their communities that will make them better, healthier places to live. The environmental justice

movement, as we will see in the next chapter, does not download responsibility for the environment onto children, but engages them in the process of democratic organizing to equip them with the tools to be social critics and citizens who are concerned about their communities.

The New Nature Movement has much to gain by allying with the environmental justice movement. Although the movements are radically different in many ways, they do have a shared interest in the environment, human health and quality of life, and any examination of these issues is necessarily incomplete if it fails to consider the race, class, gender, and age-based inequalities that structure them. The justice-based approach of the environmental justice movement that sees the environment through a lens of marginality, difference, and struggle offers a far more compelling vision for change. While the wonder for nature that the New Nature Movement seeks to inspire in children is a worthy goal, it is only a small part of a much larger story about children and the environment. “In a deeply personal reflection,” writes Hayward, “ecologist Rachel Carson urged us to nurture a child’s sense of wonder about the natural world.” But rather than simply revel at the wonder of nature, Hayward argues that “we also need to nurture a child’s sense of wonder about the democratic world.”¹¹⁸ Democracy and social justice, not wonder for an apolitical nature and its nostalgic iterations, are therefore requisite to make the world a more livable place for generations of children to come.

CHAPTER TWO

Interventions into Environmental Education

In my exploration of the New Nature Movement in the previous chapter, I showed how this twenty-first century focus on getting children out into nature is rooted in an antimodern return to a romanticized environment. I argued that the New Nature Movement, anchored as it is in white, middle-class anxieties about social change, devises a contemporary environmental education for children that relies on romanticized and depoliticized meanings of childhood and nature that re-center white, male, heterosexual, bourgeois identities. I suggested that the New Nature Movement's attempt to get children outside places the environmental crisis onto their shoulders and is an inadequate response to the intersecting systemic inequalities and social injustices that exclude children from the environment and environmental politics.

In this chapter, I explore how children and nature have been conceptualized in the second half of the twentieth century, after modern environmental education was established as an internationally-recognized field of study in the 1970s. The modern environmental education movement, too, I suggest, has a hegemonic identity, dominated as it has been by the voices of white, western, and able-bodied male researchers and educators who have not theorized environmental education and the citizenships of children from the perspective of difference. I argue that a consequence of having this core privileged identity is that it has marginalized feminist, anti-racist, Indigenous, and non-western epistemologies from the field of environmental education. However, I explore how its identity has also been challenged by these competing epistemologies and social movements, which have been critiquing, revising, and re-envisioning environmental education to re-define its agenda and make it more inclusive and socially just.

This chapter begins with an overview of the emergence of modern environmental education in the 1970s and discusses the tensions and debates that have shaped it. I examine how it was concerned with children's citizenships from the beginning, but that early environmental educators did not always agree on the goals of education and children's positionality as learners. As I discuss, modern environmental education has been rooted in empirical science and has inserted itself into an institutional structure that most often treats children as passive recipients of knowledge rather than active knowing subjects. However, some environmental educators, namely working within critical pedagogy and participatory action research derived from Paulo Freire's writings, have managed to challenge the field with radical pedagogies that aim to broaden its focus and speak to children's lived and diverse experiences.

In the second section, I explore how environmental justice has challenged the field of environmental education. After sketching a brief history of the origins of environmental justice activism, I explore how this lens, located in an antiracist and people of color environmental politics, has pushed environmental education to reconsider how it defines nature and environmental problems. In the third and final section, I turn my attention to ecological feminism and the ways it, too, has critiqued environmental education. I show how feminist critiques of science challenge environmental education to think about science as an epistemic practice shaped by unequal social relations. The feminists whose work I examine call on environmental education to broaden its boundaries to include the voices and experiences of women, people from the so-called Global South and Third Worlds, LGBTQ, people with disabilities and fat scholars and activists.

Citizenship in environmental education

The “good citizens” into which early Guiding and Scouting movements sought to transform young people in the early twentieth century are substantively different from the “environmental citizenships” envisioned by the modern environmental education movement. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, a paradigm shift occurred in environmental thinking that introduced new discourses about the environment. New environmental problems, new technologies, nuclear disaster, a rise in human population, advances in the science of ecology, and a global/planetary consciousness generated new fears about the planet’s finitude and the human impact on the environment. In 1962, marine biologist and conservationist Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* to warn the general public about the environmental, human, and ecological impacts of synthetic hydrocarbons that were used in household products and commercial agriculture. She advocated for the general public’s “right to know” about environmental degradation and argued that citizens should be “in full possession of the facts.”¹ The warnings about the state of the environment and the calls from scientists like Carson for public education about the environment were addressed in the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment where education and training were noted to be key to “the long-term success of environmental policies.”² The modern environmental movement increasingly connected environmental problems to social ones and saw the education of the citizen as an important avenue for changing unsustainable lifeways that contribute to environmental problems.

From environmental education’s inception, educators and policy makers have used the language of citizenship to describe young people’s relationship to the environment. William B. Stapp, one of the organizers of the first Earth Day in 1970 and a professor in conservation, worked with a group of graduate students and colleagues in 1969 at the University of Michigan

to establish one of the first definitions of environmental education: “Environmental education is aimed at producing a *citizenry* that is knowledgeable concerning the biophysical environment and its associated problems, aware of how to help solve these problems, and motivated to work toward their solution.”³ Since Stapp and his colleagues published this definition, it has undergone many revisions. When UNESCO renamed its environmental education program “education for sustainable development” (ESD) in the 1990s, it introduced the following definition: “education for sustainable development will contribute to enabling citizens to face the challenges of the present and future and leaders to make relevant decisions for a viable world.”⁴ Similarly, the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) also includes civic participation in its definition of the environmentally literate person, as “someone who, both individually and together with others, makes informed decisions concerning the environment; is willing to act on these decisions to improve the well-being of other individuals, societies, and the global environment; and participates in civic life.”⁵ Citizenship and civic participation, in other words, has always been at the core of environmental education even as the field has changed and evolved over time.

However, in the first decade that environmental education was founded up until the present moment, a significant number of educators and researchers have depoliticized that education by engendering environmental citizenships for young people based in obedience. Educators and researchers, uncritical of the power structures of schooling, have interpreted environmental education to be transmissive. They envisioned their role as educators to be grounded in changing the attitudes and behaviors of young people and articulated young people’s citizenships as a set of responsibilities for learning and acting on the knowledge transmitted to them in the classroom. Young people, in other words, were problematically treated as passive

recipients of environmental knowledge. These researchers' views rightfully earned environmental education a reputation, especially in the early phase of its life, for being behaviourist. Environmental education researchers Harold Hungerford and Trudi Volk, for instance, explicitly claimed that the "ultimate aim of education is shaping human behavior," and subsequently developed a set of methods for transmitting knowledge about the environment and criteria for measuring the effectiveness of environmental education in changing young people's attitudes and behaviours towards the environment. This approach gained popularity in the U.S. in the 1970s (in the research of Lucas, Howe and Disinger, Hungerford and Volk) and was only seriously challenged in the 1990s, most vocally by Australians working in the field, for its instrumentalism, individualism and positivism.⁶ Ian Robottom and Paul Hart, for instance, have argued that Hungerford and his colleagues reduce environmental learning to the individual to the extent that they only consider individual personality differences as variables that shape young people's environmental behaviours and that they subsequently ignore how subjectivity is made through historical, social, and political contexts.⁷ Furthermore, they point out that the behaviouralist approach is instrumentalist in the way that it privileges the teacher and the school as the experts and young people as passive recipients of environmental knowledge, which is further reflected in the researchers' preferences for using quantitative methodologies that measure a predetermined outcome for education.

Environmental educators and researchers have also depoliticized environmental education by focusing on empirical science and ecology at the exclusion of exploring the political, economic and social aspects of environmental problems.⁸ Ecopedagogy scholar Richard Khan described the hegemony of empirical science in higher education where the "major trend on campuses today is for environmental studies to be lodged within and controlled by natural

sciences departments, with little more than tips of the cap to the humanities, and ostensibly no input from scholars of education.”⁹ The focus on empirical science in early environmental education prevailed despite the fact that UNESCO environmental education statements called for the field to be interdisciplinary by involving the arts, humanities, and sciences in order to address both the technical and social/political aspects of the environment. The Tbilisi Declaration, for instance, stated that nations should not only develop “subject-oriented environmental education,” but also that the “interdisciplinary treatment of the basic problems of the interrelationships between people and their environment is necessary for students in all fields, not only natural and technical sciences but also social science and arts.”¹⁰ John Fien, a longtime supporter of ESD in his teaching and research, argues that the Tbilisi Declaration saw “informed understanding, ethical commitment, critical thinking, and active citizenship” as key components to its educational programme,” but that these goals “counted for little in mainstream education policy and practice in most countries during the first wave of environmental education.”¹¹

Yet, by only focusing on teaching scientific content about the environment, early environmental education put absolute faith in empirical science, as Robottom argues. Science, he writes, is rooted in a technocratic view of knowledge and education that fabricates “objective,” “rational” and “true” knowledge that is “systematically selected and organized before the classroom activities are defined” and then is “transmitted” to students. He notes that ecology in environmental education “is often treated as a means of perceiving the environment as it ‘really exists out there’ in a purportedly objective sense, in a way that separates ‘the ecology’ from personal, political and social values.”¹² Environmental educators’ narrow focus on empirical science ultimately fails to question the power relationships and the values that structure knowledge production and the education system, and further prevents them from seeing students

as active learners who enter the classroom with their own distinct set of experiences and ways of making meaning of the world.

Further, from the time it was founded, environmental educators also depoliticized the field by carving out a citizenship for young people based in individual responsibility towards the environment. Annette Gough, feminist researcher in environmental education, links environmental education's narrow focus on the biophysical world to an ethic of individual responsibility, noting:

the explicit aims of environmental education were often concerned with stimulating a sense of individual responsibility for the physical and aesthetic quality of the total environment based on a knowledge of general ecological principles, an understanding of the impact of human society on the biosphere, and an awareness of the problems inherent in the environmental change.¹³

Environmental education's ethic of individual responsibility, an enduring feature of the discipline, permeates government policies and environmental education curricula in industrialized nations in different parts of the world.¹⁴ One well-known example is the Government of Canada's *Green Plan*, which was introduced in 1990 as a way of decentralizing environmental responsibility and downloading it onto Canadian citizens who were expected to become environmental citizens by adopting green consumer practices in their daily lives.¹⁵ Further, environmental issues in mainstream classrooms are often couched in a liberal-environmental framework focused on personal environmental actions, such as recycling, water conservation, and the reduction of energy use at home and at school. Cheryl Lousley, who conducted research with environmental clubs at two Canadian schools in the late 1990s, found that students' attempts to explore controversial environmental issues were stymied by educators who redirected their attention to non-threatening issues such as cleaning school grounds, gardening, and recycling.

Individualist green consumer ideologies are also so pervasive that they are prevalent in Green political theory. Green theorist Andrew Dobson, who writes about environmental citizenship, posits that in our global age, it makes more sense to think about our relationship to the environment, to space and to other people in terms of the ecological footprint, and that the footprint creates a political community of sorts because it begins with the recognition that there are inequalities among citizens globally in terms of their resource consumption, and it obliges those in privileged positions to reduce their footprint.¹⁶ The problem with Dobson's footprint, as well as the general use of the footprint as a teaching tool in schools is that it reduces political environmental issues to individual actions and a moral imperative to reduce one's consumption. As Lousley notes, reducing environmental politics to actions such as recycling and personal consumption "mystifies the causes and agents of environmental degradation, deflects critique and questioning, and deceptively universalizes the different positions individuals have in relation to the distribution of environmental resources, risks, responsibilities, and decision-making power."¹⁷

However, while environmental education has fallen into the trap of behaviourist and individualistic thinking, and has privileged transmissive pedagogies that sideline student agency and reinforce hegemonic forms of knowledge, it has also, from its very beginnings, harboured a democratic potential. Even while behaviourist, individualist, and positivist approaches dominated the environmental education research agenda in the 1970s and 1980s, a few researchers in those years questioned the transmissive aims of education as an impediment to what they saw as the transformative goals of environmental education, and subsequently called for a more radical approach to teaching and learning. Educational thinker Lawrence Stenhouse, for instance, noted in 1977 that environmental education invites "a re-assessment of some of the things schools

stand for,” an opinion shared by American researchers James Aldrich and Anne Blackburn who envisioned how environmental education might re-construct a system of education where students can “imagine, design, test and devise ways to move towards a desirable future.”¹⁸ However, these perspectives on education were considered marginal and thus it was only in the late 1980s that researchers began to critically interrogate the liberal and technocratic epistemologies of education. Recognizing that a critical environmental education would require reform in teaching, researchers explored pedagogies based in civic participation and critical reflection, namely through action research and critical pedagogy.

At the University of Michigan in Detroit, in collaboration with Deakin University in Melbourne, several researchers experimented with action research to re-orient education so that it was attuned to the realities of young people’s lives. Arjen Wals, who worked with Stapp as a graduate student, describes action research as “interdisciplinary, cooperative and community-oriented learning,” based in a model of education that empowers students to identify problems in their communities and collectively research, plan, and stage interventions to address the problems.¹⁹ According to Wals, Beringer and Stapp, action research recognizes that many of the things that young people learn in school are removed from their real lives. Educators who use action research view education as a political act that can either create citizens who are disaffected and disempowered, or that can empower them as citizens who are valued in the community and are active participants in shaping it. They note that “society must solve issues with the full participation of its younger members [...] students need to know that they can be forces for constructive change, that their involvement is indeed needed in the world.”²⁰

Participatory action researchers see children’s participation in the community as essential for democracy.²¹ Bjarne Brunn Jensen and Karen Schnack, for instance, argue that “Education

for democracy, or political liberal education, is, in itself, a fundamental educational task.”²² They propose that education should be about process and not content, and thus should develop young people’s “action competence,” which is their ability to intentionally engage in a project that addresses the systemic causes of an environmental problem. An assumption that is built into this research is that learning for democracy takes place through engagement in a community.

While Jensen and Schnack’s research focuses more narrowly on the context of schooling, recent theories in environmental education that explore civic engagement for democracy reach beyond the school in their conceptualizations of community. Examples of this research include David Gruenwald’s critical pedagogy of place, Chet Bowers’ conceptual and moral framework of eco-justice, and Keith Tidball and Marianne Krasny’s “ecology of learning.”²³ Bronwyn Hayward’s *Children, Citizenship and Environment* (2012) also presents an incisive critique of education and the erosion of participatory democracy in neoliberal capitalist societies. Hayward, who is a researcher in democracy and environmental education, argues that “young citizens need democratic language, tools and ways of understanding their situation to re-create a common and more sustainable world,” and that democracy is something that children learn within a community of caring adults who participate in democratic deliberation for justice.²⁴ Sharing other participatory researchers’ views that education cannot be focused on children’s individual behaviours, Hayward draws on the political citizenship theories of Hannah Arendt to argue that children have a place in public life and should participate in decentered democratic deliberation and decision making.²⁵

Environmental education’s more recent emphasis on democracy and collective action resonates with green political theories of environmental citizenship. Green political theorists argue that the only way to work toward ecological sustainability is to challenge top-down

governance and institute participatory democracy. While Greens have different viewpoints on the scope and scale of politics – for instance, they disagree on whether politics should be completely decentralized, state-focused, or global/planetary – they typically borrow from civic republican ideals of community and place tremendous value on civic participation, face-to-face deliberation, and citizenly responsibilities to struggle for “the good life.”²⁶ Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore Green political theories of citizenship and how they intersect with environmental education, I wish to point out that what the Greens do share with more transmissive approaches to environmental education is their framing of the environmental citizen through the language of responsibility and duty. Green citizenship’s and environmental education’s citizens are less concerned with rights than they are with citizen obligations to care for and participate in environmental action. Political theorist Carme Melo-Escrihuella argues that while the Greens have a clear duty approach to citizenship that “acknowledges the existence of citizens’ environmental rights, especially human environmental rights, they stress citizens’ personal duties. These duties are global and arise from citizens’ moral and political responsibility to non-human nature, fellow citizens and future generations.”²⁷ Although Greens articulate citizenship as a social and political achievement, many fall into the trap of individualistic thinking because their focus is on creating deep attitude changes, which they argue are brought about through cultivating the ‘good’ citizen who looks beyond his or her own self-interest and acts in the interest of the “common good.”²⁸ For Greens, the responsibility thus falls onto individual citizens to “do their bit,” whether that entails recycling and reducing their carbon footprints, as it does for Dobson, or donating their time to working with others on environmental projects in the community, as Green theorist John Barry suggests.²⁹

Although environmental education is not located in the civic republican tradition as Green theories are, the field has, even in its more radical articulations, relied on the language of personal duty.³⁰ Consider, for instance, Robert B. Stevenson's description of the goals of environmental education:

The goals of environmental education include the intellectual tasks of critical appraisal of environmental (and political) situations and the formulation of a moral code concerning such issues, as well as the development of a commitment to act on one's values by providing opportunities to participate actively in environmental improvement.³¹

Stevenson, who is an ESD researcher, articulates a vision for environmental education that echoes the Greens'. They are connected (more or less) in their belief that the mounting environmental crisis is exacerbating social inequity and environmental problems, and that young people need a critical education (rooted in democratic deliberation) that will empower them (with the values) to act for the environment (the "common good"). This passage quoted from Stevenson is embedded in his argument that environmental education cannot be taught from a single ideological framework such as ESD at the expense of teaching about the much wider diversity of perspectives that exist about the environment. Like the Greens who deliberate on the substance and goals of citizenship, environmental educators have spilled a considerable amount of ink deliberating about the purposes of education and the best ways to promote critical thinking, participation, and democracy.

There are problems, however, with focusing solely on these dimensions of environmental citizenship. A crucial oversight in these theoretical frameworks is their failure to consider the social conditions that create or foreclose young people's citizenships in the first place. Sherilyn MacGregor, offering an ecological feminist critique of the Greens, points out the hidden gendered dimensions of citizenship that underlie Green political thought. MacGregor

argues that Greens conceptualize “the citizen” as an autonomous, self-determining individual who is freed from the domestic and caring labour of the home and has the time to participate in democratic deliberation and civic duties. She correctly notes that the Greens fail to substantively consider rights in their theories, specifically the ways in which neoliberalism places a double burden on women that compromises their rights and disempowers them as citizens.³² Political ecologist Alex Latta raises a similar point when he argues that “subaltern voices” are excluded altogether from green theories of citizenship. He posits that the only differentiation accounted for among citizens in liberal political theories of citizenship are individual differences, meaning that citizens are not differentiated by race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, or geography.³³ While Latta notes that some Greens are concerned about systemic injustice and even build these concerns into their theories of citizenship and social transformation, he is right to point out that their “green citizens,” as exemplified in the writings of Barry and Dobson, “have the duty to right injustice, but never appear to be the *sufferers* of injustice.” The citizens to which Barry is referring, the “we” struggling to make change, are unmarked by various oppressions and are privileged political subjects vis-à-vis the passively rendered “other,” the recipient of justice.³⁴

In environmental education, children are rarely conceptualized as the sufferers of injustice. As environmental justice activist Running-Grass has observed, environmental education more generally, and the Tbilisi and NAAEE policy statements specifically, have assumed that their goal is to educate “a homogenous ‘citizenry’ composed of ‘individuals’ who can be uniformly ‘educated’ about universally ‘acknowledged ‘environmental problems’ and who, thus educated, will actively participate in education, problem-solving, policy-making and management.”³⁵ Echoing Running-Grass’s concerns, Dorceta Taylor further points out that behaviouralist environmental education has been both “ethnocentric” and “assimilationist”

because in this research, “there was no consideration of race, class, gender, social inequality, or social justice in the environmental debates or in the attempts to educate people about the environment.”³⁶ Where environmental researchers have brought up race and social class, it was to explore the different perceptions of the environment among people from different racial groupings and socioeconomic classes, which ended up perpetuating stigmatizing stereotypes about African Americans, poor people and people of colour who, on the whole, have been found to be less concerned about and involved in environmental issues. This kind of research has in fact painted children of colour as disaffected, apolitical subjects who are the part of the environmental problem rather than the solution.

Participatory action theory has been helpful in addressing the gap between children’s realities and the instrumentalist goals of schooling. As an outcome of action research informed by the socially-conscious approach of critical pedagogy, environmental researchers have increasingly acknowledged how the issues that concern children are ones that should inform educational curriculum, and not the other way around.³⁷ Participatory action research has allowed researchers to acknowledge how children’s lives are impacted by urban disinvestment, poverty, drugs, violence, toxic pollution, and natural disasters, as evidenced, for instance, in Wals’s action research project with African-American school children in Detroit on school safety and Kalay Mordock and Marianne Krasny’s research with young people living in contaminated neighborhoods in Brooklyn.³⁸ Environmental educators have been quick to point out that the introduction of critical pedagogy and participatory action research into environmental education has been a welcome intervention for pushing researchers and educators to consider how ecological sustainability is connected to social justice concerns such as race, colonialism, poverty, social welfare, gender, sexuality, and disability, which structure our relationships to the

organic and non-human world.³⁹ Paul Hart has described this shift as engendering an ontological pluralism in the field that is increasingly widening environmental education's epistemological scope, giving birth to socially critical environmental education theories such as critical pedagogies of place, Indigenous environmental education, eco-justice theory, and ecopedagogy.⁴⁰

While these are important inroads, the question that remains is how educational researchers are talking about children's marginality (their citizenships) and what, if anything, they are doing to address them. I suggest that, with the exception of critically-informed PAR, environmental education to date has presented a weak analysis of the systemic oppressions that structure children's lives, namely because it has not politicized race, class, gender, sexuality, and age and other critical axes of difference that shape children's citizenships and exclude them from mainstream environmental learning. Hayward's vision of democratic citizenship, which draws on PAR, is a useful example of how environmental educators might better attend to the ways in which children experience their environments through their different positionalities based in race, colonization, class, and poverty. Hayward politicizes children's spaces, arguing that they are increasingly contaminated by environmental pollutants, are falling apart with disinvestment, and are being eroded through neoliberal privatization, which are all tied to global capitalism and colonialism and the systemic inequalities that accompany them.⁴¹ Although Hayward's approach to citizenship does have its own shortcomings – she does not explore gender, and her analysis of racial oppression lacks rigour – it nevertheless draws attention to the ways in which environmental researchers, to develop better accounts of young people's environmental citizenships, need to politicize the racialized, gendered, economic, colonial and ableist struggles that shape children's encounters with the environment. Politicizing these issues not only creates

more opportunities for participation, it radically redefines the environmental agenda so that it responds to the systemic oppressions that structure children's lives.

Before concluding this section on environmental citizenship, there is one last important point that I have not yet addressed: the critical interventions that educators in the rural and urban South and in the Third World have brought to the field to disrupt the Northern/Western and First World monopoly of the field. It is important to note that environmental education was developed in an international forum and has been shaped by global politics and inequities. After the 1972 UN conference on the Environment in Stockholm, which was the first global conference to address the mounting environmental crisis, UNESCO-UNEP established the International Environmental Education Programme (IEEP) to create a co-operative international agenda for environmental education. The IEEP, which named Stapp as its director, planned a summit in Belgrade in 1975 that invited educators and policy makers to attend with the purpose of charting trends and making recommendations for an international policy framework for environmental education, which culminated in a document that was then presented at the international summit of global leaders in Tbilisi in 1978 where it was formalized.⁴²

Peter Fensham, an Australian environmental educator who attended the Belgrade workshop, observed how the Latin American participants played an important role in bringing attention to the problem of inclusion, and how they created a forum for discussing environmental education in ways that highlighted the epistemological and political differences among educators from the north and the south.⁴³ The north-south divide that Fensham was referring to, which also emerged as a point of contention at the Stockholm conference, concerned the different interpretations of sustainability which were defined by the north as conservation and by the south as development. This tension occurred precisely because of northern nations' position of power

vis-à-vis the Third World and because of the leading role that UNESCO has accorded to them.⁴⁴ As political ecologist William Adams observes, the UN's decision to hold the Stockholm conference "came from industrialised countries, and was the fruit of the classic concerns of First World environmentalism, particularly pollution associated with industrialization," and "was only partly, and belatedly, concerned with the environmental and developmental problems of the emerging Third World."⁴⁵ However, the domination of northern industrialized countries in setting the environmental education agenda was challenged by southern nations, which were facing immanent problems such as food insecurity, poverty, lack of health care, access to clean water, low levels of educational attainment, and desertification. The struggle to consolidate northern concerns about the environment and southern concerns about development engendered "education for sustainable development" (ESD) as the new policy agenda, which was publicized in *The Brundtland Report* in 1987.

UNESCO's shift from EE to ESD, which was solidified with the introduction of the Decade for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), has been controversial for many environmental educators. Environmental educator Bob Jickling, has been a vocal opponent to the change, noting that ESD, at the expense of addressing issues related to inequity and development, is subordinating concerns about the environment to such an extent that *Resolution 57/254* (pertaining to ESD) fails to even reference things "environmental" or "ecological." Jickling and Wals have also criticized ESD for undermining democracy in its promotion of what they see as a specific environmental doctrine dedicated to an international agenda "for development," and their voices have also joined with others who are concerned about how easily ESD can fit into international neoliberal agendas which favour corporate profit over environmental protection and human welfare.⁴⁶ Other educators, including Annette Gough,

suggest that the rebranding of EE to ESD is a matter of naming and emphasis, seeing as the Tbilisi and other declarations included social injustice concerns.⁴⁷

However, Edgar González-Gaudiano, an educator writing from Mexico, offers a different insight into ESD. Heralding ESD as a positive intervention into the field of environmental education, he argues that ESD has also fragmented the field, marking a positive shift in disrupting its identity which for so long has been based in scientific rationalism, ecology and conservation. This shift is not a matter of emphasis for González-Gaudiano, because social justice issues have been, on the whole, absent in environmental education practice.⁴⁸ The environmental researchers who see the benefits of ESD recognize that this paradigm has its problems, some of them grave problems that have to do with the fact that it is rooted in a top-down policy structure that caters to government economic priorities, which NGOs point out has failed to create a democratic space where citizens can be active participants in setting the agenda for a more democratic and just future. However, the environmental educators who maintain that we need to continue engaging with ESD in some form argue, as Huckle and Wals do, that a more critical ESD education that interrogates the problems of globalization, international policy processes, and “sustainable development” is what is needed to develop better democracies and sustainability citizenships.⁴⁹

Environmental justice, multicultural education, and citizenship

The environmental justice movement, with its anti-racist and class analysis of oppression, offers a much-needed intervention into environmental education. While one of its primary targets when it emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s was the mainstream environmental movement, the environmental justice movement recognized that the advancement of its social justice aims depended on instituting an environmental education that could work for communities

marginalized by environmental injustices. However, mainstream environmental education did not meet its transformative goals. Subsequently, environmental justice scholars and activists have challenged environmental education's transmissive approaches to educating young people. Their challenge is in fact rooted in a critique of citizenship and power that invites mainstream environmental educators to think about young people's citizenships through race, class, gender, age, and the nation, which disrupts the notion that "children" constitute a homogenous identity and that they are equally in possession of the same social rights. Further, while mainstream environmental education has depoliticized young people's citizenships, environmental justice education politicizes them by challenging young people's exclusion from the political sphere and ensuring that they have a place in grassroots community struggles for justice and democracy.

The environmental justice movement's critique of the citizenship of environmental education is nestled within its much more substantive challenge to the identity of the mainstream environmental movement. The environmental justice movement was born in the 1980s when community activists began connecting racism, class inequality and poverty to the environment and began politicizing these connections as the basis on which to struggle for their communities' health and well-being. The movement, which activists articulated as an "environmentalism of the poor" and as a "people of colour environmentalism," posed a direct challenge to mainstream environmentalism for its narrow understanding of environmental issues, which activists argued were confined to land preservation and species protection, and for the environmental organizations' homogenous membership, which was largely white and middle class. In January 1990, two prominent environmental justice groups, the Gulf Coast Tenants Leadership Development Project and the Southwest Organizing Project, sent letters to the ten largest environmental organizations in the U.S. denouncing the whiteness and racism of the

organizations and their lack of accountability to communities of colour in the Third World and the United States. They critiqued them on a broad range of issues including their organizational hiring practices, mandates, corporate funding sources, and strategies for environmental protection.⁵⁰ This challenge posed by the environmental justice movement would be the first of many that contested the hegemonic and exclusionary definitions of the environment in U.S. organizations and public policy. Such contestations have not only questioned the epistemologies of “nature” and the “environment” in the movement, they have also pointed to the ways in which people of colour have been excluded from environmental protection and marginalized as epistemic subjects.

The environmental justice movement’s challenge to the mainstream environmental movement grew out of its research-supported findings that many communities of colour and poor communities in the U.S. were disproportionately affected by environmental problems. The widely cited report *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites* published by the United Church of Christ Commission (UCC) in 1987 revealed that African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and Native Americans across the U.S. were more likely to live in neighbourhoods with uncontrolled toxic waste sites.⁵¹ The report connected the siting of hazardous facilities to the overall poorer health of “minority” communities and noted that pollution levels in these communities in several major metropolitan cities were significantly higher.⁵² Armed with the statistical evidence that the poor environmental quality experienced by communities of colour was a systemic problem, environmental justice leaders reached out to mainstream environmental organizations with the hopes of building coalitions, but were instead met with silence or dismissal. As environmental justice scholar Bunyan Bryant notes, some of

the organizations responded that their environmental justice concerns were public health issues, not environmental ones.⁵³ This perspective was not shared by the environmental justice movement or the UCC report, the latter affirming that,

Today, most Black and other racial and ethnic communities are beset by rising unemployment, increasing poverty, worsening housing and declining educational and health status. It would be very difficult to properly address issues of the environment outside the context of these concerns.⁵⁴

Environmental justice activists see the mainstream environmental organizations' rejection of their movement principles as symptomatic of a much longer history of the state's cultural denial and exploitation of people of colour in the U.S. With the greater recognition that the distribution of environmental harms was not only unequal but also connected to the denial of land rights and sovereignty to Indigenous peoples and to other patterns of racism such as racial segregation, environmental justice activists and leaders developed a framework for environmental justice that called on the state to grant people of colour the same rights of protection from environmental harms as white Americans. At the First People of Colour Leadership Summit in 1991, a keystone moment in founding the movement for environmental justice, activists and movement leaders developed a set of guiding principles that called for distributive justice in public policy that would ensure "mutual respect and justice, for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias."⁵⁵ As Robert Bullard argues in *The Quest for Environmental Justice*, the environmental justice movement deploys of the language of rights to argue that all individuals should be protected from environmental harms, which reflects its origins in the Civil Rights movement and Indigenous land-based struggles.⁵⁶

In addition to distributive justice, the movement asserted the right of communities of colour to procedural justice, or access to legal resources to examine rights violations, and to the right of participation, which asserts the right of communities to be part of the decision-making

around issues of public health and facility siting. Because many communities of colour have been burdened by survival issues such as poverty, ill health, poor housing and hazardous working conditions, they have typically lacked the knowledge, resources, and what Taylor has termed the “political opportunity structure” to oppose policy decisions that negatively impact their communities.⁵⁷ Furthermore, environmental justice activists have noted that communities of colour have been deliberately excluded from industry siting decisions and have been kept in the dark about the real environmental health impacts of proposed and existing waste and industrial facilities. After lobbying the federal government, the environmental justice movement succeeded in passing Executive Order 12898, signed by Bill Clinton in 1994, which mandated federal agencies to include environmental justice in their programs.⁵⁸ Despite this significant gain, environmental justice activists recognized that they could not completely rely on government institutions to ensure fairness in decision making and policy implementation, and as a result, the movement has retained its strong grassroots base.

Although the environmental justice movement is very much an activist movement, movement scholars have also been challenging the citizenship of the environmental movement through the environmental humanities. Their work in environmental history and ecocriticism highlights how the relationships between people of colour and nature need to be spatialized and politicized, as they are rooted in human relations of power, privilege, and exclusion. In light of the marginalizing language that has been used in environmental education to talk about people of colour and particularly Black people in reference to their relationships to the environment, many environmental justice theorists and environmental historians have emphasized the importance of spatializing race- and class-based inequalities of outdoor access and have represented alternative epistemologies of nature beyond hegemonic white, middle-class, Eurocentric and American

ideologies. Environmental historians Carolyn Finney, Kimberly N. Ruffin, Dianne D. Glave and feminist theorist bell hooks argue that the racist stereotype that Black people are afraid of and do not care about nature reinforces racist ideologies and further marginalizes them. Ruffin notes that there is a long history in the United States in which Black people have been cast as “environmental others,” simultaneously relegated to some of the poorest environmental conditions in the country and denied the privilege of accessing the beauty and benefits of nature.⁵⁹ She argues that the racist stereotypes that dissociate Blackness and nature are rooted in white domination, and that this racialization of space legitimizes violence towards, and the exclusion of African Americans from nature.

A point that many theorists have made, including Glave, is that African Americans’ relationships to the environment today must be contextualized through the history of slavery and white supremacy. Many African Americans who were slaves and sharecroppers came to see nature as something to be feared or rejected because white slave owners forcibly and violently confined them to the land and to agricultural work. While some conservationists such as Aldo Leopold associated farming with freedom and spiritual refuge, many African Americans linked it to violence and oppression and have subsequently distanced themselves from their agrarian roots, which, according to hooks, has “produced grave silences about our relationship to the earth.”⁶⁰ Finney also argues that African-American relationships to the environment are further complicated by a history of racist and colonial European science that dehumanized Black people, placing them on a lower rung of the evolutionary scale. She observes how that association legitimized various forms of violence against African Americans, including their forced sterilization in the eugenics movement, their exploitation in zoos and freak shows, and their exclusion from owning land through the homesteading laws, among many others. In other words,

the “environmental experiences of African Americans have been marginalized, whitewashed, or simply left out of the dominant narrative” of environmentalism, nature, and the outdoors.⁶¹ As Finney suggests, it is necessary to explore African-American environmental relationships within the context of this history of racism and racialization to critique their exclusion and also to reveal “new practices of environmental engagement.”⁶²

Although the people of colour identity has been core to the environmental justice movement to the extent that some scholars have noted that the movement is rooted in a non-essentialized race-based identity politics, it has nevertheless been intersectional in the sense that employment inequity, poverty, and class were understood to be inextricably linked to racism and other patterns of inequality. However, environmental justice scholars have not adequately theorized other categories of difference such as gender, sexuality, and ability. While women have been at the frontlines of environmental justice struggles in their communities and actively challenged sexism within local organizations, activist and critical geographer Laura Pulido observes that “a gender consciousness is relatively muted within the larger movement.”⁶³ Environmental justice and gender researchers Susan Buckingham and Rakibe Kulcur also argue that gender as an analytic category has not received the attention it deserves in environmental justice theorizing, a function of gender inequality operating differently than racial segregation and poverty, and also because of the gender-blindness of some grassroots movements and academic researchers.⁶⁴ Over the last ten years, several environmental justice scholars and activists have been considering how environmental problems are gendered, and how people from other social groupings including young people, LGBTQ, and differently abled people are also discriminated against, are at a greater risk of exposure to environmental problems, and/or have limited access to environmental benefits and resources.⁶⁵

Environmental education was considered an important part of the work of environmental justice from the moment that the movement was founded. As Running-Grass notes, “One increasingly recognized reason environmental injustice or environmental racism occurs is because of the lack of information and educational programs extended to people of colour and their communities.”⁶⁶ Education is therefore a critical tool for the empowerment of communities of colour because it furnishes them with a framework and strategies to be able to make positive transformations in their communities and at the level of research and policy.

In the Principles of Environmental Justice that were drafted at the First Summit, the delegates created a principle that specifically pertained to environmental education. Principle 16 states that “Environmental justice calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.”⁶⁷ This principle also stems from the environmental justice critiques of the mainstream environmental movement and its conceptualization of citizenship that I have already discussed in the previous section and which center on the lack of diversity in environmental education. Operating from a principle of diversity that resists homogenizing young people’s citizenships, environmental justice activists envision an education for young people that understands how race, class, gender, age and ability construct people’s experiences of their environments. Taylor notes that environmental justice “advocates environmental education that includes multicultural and social justice themes.” Racial and ethnic diversity in the context of the environmental justice movement more broadly is regarded as the founding principle for resisting single narratives about “nature” and environmental problems such as those found in the mainstream environmental movement.

The absence of cultural diversity in mainstream environmental education has been a main point of critique for environmental justice educators. Two decades after the Principles of Environmental Justice were drafted and since Running-Grass called on formal and informal education institutions to implement cultural diversity, movement activists have noted that environmental education had failed to respond to the critiques that they raised. In 2002, after the second National People of Colour Leadership Summit was held, NAAEE revised its position statement, which now acknowledges the need for environmental education to diversify its cultural base and widen its scope to include social welfare, economic opportunity and equity within its framework for thinking about the environment. In 2004, it published *What's Fair got to do with it: Diversity Cases from Environmental Educators*, an edited collection that explores first-person narratives intended to help practitioners develop “a process for problem solving and a process to help better relate to diverse audiences.”⁶⁸ However, Running-Grass, Julian Agyeman, and Randolph Haluza-DeLay have all noted that there continues to be an absence of people of colour working in environmental education. Furthermore, mainstream environmental education continues to use the softer language of equity instead of the more political language of justice to describe environmental problems.⁶⁹ More recently, however, there is mounting evidence that critical environmental education researchers are taking environmental justice more seriously, as evidenced in eco-justice and ecopedagogy practitioners’ recognition and inclusion of several of environmental justice’s core principles in their own practice, which include its critique of racism and call for teaching through cultural diversity.⁷⁰

Where formal schooling has failed to incorporate environmental justice and action research into its agenda, many environmental justice organizations at the grassroots level have been very successful in setting up their own education programs to meet the objectives of

Principle 16, particularly in the interest of ensuring the generational continuity of the environmental justice movement. After the First People of Color Leadership Summit, small local environmental justice organizations in different parts of the U.S. developed youth programs in conjunction with their other programs. Many of them developed summer intensive courses for youth that teach them about the environmental justice movement lens and history and introduce them to the environmental issues specific to their local communities. These programs, of which their exact number is not known, also provide young people with experience in researching and campaigning, space for peer-support and mentorship, and in some cases, paid internships for young people who are willing to take on youth leadership positions. Southwest Workers Union of San Antonio, Texas, for instance, has developed several initiatives under its Youth Leadership Organization, including an 8-week paid intensive internship program and student club that are youth-run. The programs emanate from the organization's belief that environmental organizing should involve entire families and that young people are essential for long-term movement organizing. Its aim is to support young people by helping them incorporate political education in their public-school curriculum, address injustices in their lives, and learn about campaigning, public speaking, and other useful skills that will make their organizing a success.⁷¹

More commonly these organizations tend to be intergenerational, and while staff members might offer support, they often encourage young people to identify issues that are pertinent to their lives and organize their own campaigns. There are also grassroots organizations created and organized for and by youth themselves, such as the Youth United for Community Action in East Palo Alto, California, founded in 1994, and youth are also active in organizing summits and networks that bring together youth contingencies from various environmental justice organizations across the U.S. In a report on youth environmental justice programs,

researchers found that youth environmental programs and youth-led summits filled the educational gaps left by underfunded schools or individual families by providing young people with critical thinking skills and a political education about historical patterns of racism and colonialism.⁷²

These examples of youth environmental justice projects share similarities with the participatory action research methodologies in environmental education. Taylor argues that participatory action approaches to education are critical for environmental justice because they start “with the students’ experiences, interests and the cultural and environmental references they have around them.”⁷³ For environmental education to be truly meaningful, activist and scholar Bunyan Bryant similarly argues that EJ environmental education needs to address the reality of children’s lives and the environmental problems of their communities, and that young people need to be participants in education and research at all levels. According to Bryant,

Participatory research allows both students and teachers to engage in a process of discovery and reflection. Students are integrally and actively involved in the planning, action, observation, and reflection until understanding or a solution is reached. The research process should help students liberate themselves from the shackles of oppression by actively engaging them. To be an effective research team, both teachers and students must develop problem-solving and group process skills.”⁷⁴

Participatory action is particularly important to environmental justice because it has been the basis from which activists have been able to challenge the law and government policies. Environmental justice activists have compiled a significant amount of evidence that suggests that risk assessments and policies developed by experts have often not worked to the benefit of communities of colour, and therefore environmental justice educators and researchers stress the importance of democratizing research and policy-making through community participation.⁷⁵ Environmental justice activists argue that community-based participatory research can be

undertaken when scientists consult with community members at all levels of the research, from the very beginning in identifying environmental problems in a community, in collecting and analyzing the data, to the final stages of drafting the findings and developing recommendations for action.⁷⁶ Young people's participatory action in their communities draws on a diverse range of methods for education, which include visual art, story-telling, theatre, hip-hop, dance, videography, and different forms of media. This diversity of education tools is an effect not only of the participatory action process, which allows young people greater agency in defining their learning goals, but also of the environmental justice frame, which understands that environmental learning is most relevant when originates from young people's perspectives and their community diversity.

Community organizations have also recognized that there are gendered environmental justice issues in their communities and several of them have responded by creating programs specifically for girls to address those issues. The Laotian Organizing Project (LOP) of Richmond, California, and Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice (ACRJ) in the San Francisco Bay area are two organizations that have developed their own programs, Asian Youth Advocates (AYA) and HOPE for Girls, which share the goal of educating Asian and Pacific Islander girls about reproductive justice and building them up to become activists in their communities. While AYA was disbanded in 2002, until this time it offered, just as HOPE for Girls continues to do under the program's new name, SAFIRE, an intensive course for girls that taught/teaches them about the environmental justice frame, about sexuality, sexual health, family relationships, parenting and young mothers' rights, and the relationship between toxins and their bodies.⁷⁷ AYA and HOPE for Girls also both conducted toxic tours, which the girls researched, mapped, organized, and finally led themselves. The girls participating in HOPE for Girls, for

instance, brought “tourists” on “Reproductive Freedom Tours” that showed them areas of their communities that undermined their reproductive rights: a garment factory where workers laboured for twelve hours without breaks, a medical waste incinerator that released dioxins and mercury in the air, a local prison with high rates of incarceration for Asian and Pacific Islanders, and the disproportionate number of liquor stores in their community. Both organizations articulate a framework for justice that connects reproductive justice issues to other concerns in their community, including workers’ rights and safety, school safety, and community health.

Di Chiro, who has written about HOPE for Girls/SAFIRE, argues that these sorts of programs resist narrow interpretations of environmentalism. Contrasting HOPE for Girls with the mainstream environmental movement, she points out that HOPE’s environmental justice work is a kind of “living environmentalism” for the way in which it encompasses the politics of the everyday and bridges the scales of the body, family, and community.⁷⁸ Youth education programs’ very local embedding within their communities and their distinct cultures reinforces the environmental justice tenet that the environment is “where we live, where we work, and where we play,” and as citizenship and transnational feminist scholar Bindi V. Shah adds, “where we learn”.⁷⁹ Pulido notes that their relationships to the environment are therefore not based in abstract concerns about the environment “out there,” as it is in the mainstream environmental movement, but rather that “it is their *land* and their *bodies* that are at risk.”⁸⁰

Environmental justice education draws attention to the fact that the young people who participate in youth environmental justice education programs and who take action for their environments do so from a positionality of exclusion from substantive citizenship rights. Writing about AYA, Shah observes that the girls, all of whom were Laotian and many the children of first generation immigrants who arrived in Richmond as refugees, belong to one of the most

marginalized groups, contending with poverty, high teen pregnancy and school dropout rates, crime, gang violence, incarceration, food insecurity, poor housing conditions, and underfunded schools. Shah argues that the girls' environmental justice work in AYA provided them with access to substantive citizenship, which is something they did not previously have:

APEN is creating a political subjectivity that links everyday experiences of "neighborhood race effects" to a structural analysis of race and class inequalities in the United States and empowers new immigrants to demand equal social, economic and political rights through collective action. It represents a different claim to be an American than that constructed by the welfare system and social workers, schools, churches, and so on.⁸¹

This more nuanced understanding of citizenship as something that is constructed through race, class, gender, age, sexuality, language, and the nation problematizes the homogenous and duty-bound notions of citizenship envisioned in mainstream environmental education. Environmental justice's politicized view of citizenship recognizes that participation rests first and foremost on addressing the issue of substantive citizenship rights, which raises critical questions about the conditions that make participation and inclusion in environmental education and action possible.

Furthermore, as Running-Grass, Agyeman, and Taylor argue, participation and inclusion are not possible if educators are unwilling to teach environmental education through the perspectives of people of colour. Environmental justice's challenge to environmental education to politicize citizenship and to teach environmental education through race thus opens an opportunity for environmental education to move from the center to the margins, widening not only the diversity of communities participating in environmental struggle, but also the very scope of environmentalism.

It should be noted, however, that while environmental justice organizations and the movement more generally have created a platform for youth activism, young people's place in the movement has been fraught with some tension, which suggests that environmental justice

activists must do more to organize with youth and challenge their exclusion from citizenship. On the second day of the Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held in October 2002, a group of youths staged a protest that interrupted the opening plenary. Addressing the planning committee, the youth called for their greater inclusion in the environmental justice movement by demanding that they should, among other things, have more opportunities for leadership and support. Although the first Summit in 1991 did in fact call to support youth by creating leadership positions (and had done so), and despite the fact that activists in the movement acknowledge that intergenerational organizing should be important to the movement, the protest in 2002 signalled that it could do more to integrate young people's voices.⁸²

As part of this work, the Funders' Collective on Youth Organizing (FCYO) created a grant making initiative in 2006 to support youth environmental justice activism in community-based environmental justice organizations. The initiative stems from the belief that young people are citizens in their own right who "have strengths and valuable lived experiences" and that "young people must be at the center of any meaningful change processes." The FCYO sees its mission as supporting young people in providing them with training "in community organizing and advocacy," assisting them in "employing these skills to alter power relations and create meaningful institutional change in their communities."⁸³ This initiative, along with the generally positive reception that the protesting youth received at the Second Summit, point to the ways in which young people's citizenships are taken seriously in the environmental justice movement, out of recognition that young people's participation is critical for developing a strong movement base.

Ecological feminism, gender, and difference

If the environmental justice movement's major challenge to environmental education is its critique of the whiteness and middle-class identity of that education and its transmissive rather than transformative goals, feminism's major contribution lies in the attention that it devotes to the gendered dimensions of environmentalism as they intersect with other categories of marginality and difference. In fact, feminism's gendered critique is important not only for mainstream environmental education but also for the environmental justice movement, which, while represented by a significant number of women movement leaders, has not, as I have already noted, adequately theorized gender and sexuality. Feminism, which has a long and rich history of environmental thought and activism that emerged with the modern environmental movement and that shaped it in important ways, has challenged mainstream environmental thought for its exclusions and it has drawn attention to the ways that nature is a construct embedded in the politics of race, class, gender, sexuality, colonialism and species relations. It has connected struggles of gender to those of environmentalism and has raised epistemological questions about positionality and knowledge, the de/valuation of particular knowledges, and knowledge's origins in social relations. A small but growing handful of feminist researchers have drawn from this rich history to challenge the exclusions found in mainstream environmental education and research, raising valid concerns about the male, heterosexual, able-bodied citizenship of the environmental movement and environmental education.

The earliest feminist challenges to environmental education object to its single narrative focus. Di Chiro, for instance, criticizes environmental education's hegemonic narrative that sees "nature" separately from "social problems," noting that it is problematic because it sequesters "nature" and "ecology" away from the realm of the social and problematically conceptualizes

humans as the perpetrators of violence against nature and not its victims.⁸⁴ She argues that if the point of environmental education is to solve environmental problems, as many number of environmental education definitions purport it should do, then single-narrative approaches to thinking about the environment are inadequate. “An adequate understanding of environmental problems,” according to Di Chiro, “requires that they be viewed as the products of contesting discourses, activities, and interactions amongst human societies.”⁸⁵

Gough’s early critiques of the single-narrative of environmental education focus on the IEEP and its policy documents, which she argues were dominated by white, male, Amero-Eurocentric, and English-speaking voices. Her work builds on Valerie Brown and Margaret Switzer’s, which also points out the gendered dimensions of environmental experiences as well as the lack of training and education afforded to women that would allow them to address environmental issues that are of concern to them.⁸⁶ Gough further notes that the papers that informed the policy decisions at the Belgrade workshop were with one exception all authored by men from North American and European nations, which replicated patterns of Western colonization by privileging Western scientific knowledge and narratives of progress. She notes that environmental education could be rendered a “more democratic human science” if policy makers and educators challenged the idea that there is “one true story” for policy, pedagogy, and research in environmental education. She insists that the stories we tell should come from the lives of the colonized and the marginalized so as not to replicate colonial patterns of domination.⁸⁷

These exclusions that Di Chiro and Gough were pointing to were in no way unique to the field of environmental education. In the U.S., ecofeminism developed out of women’s concern about the sexism in mainstream environmental movements and the absence of a gender analysis

of environmental problems. Women who had been working in social ecology and the New Left in peace and anti-nuclear movements, animal liberation, and environmental activism in the 1970s and early 1980s moved to organize separately in women-only collectives because they were frustrated by the overwhelming representation of men in movement leadership positions. Interrelatedly, feminists working within green political theory, social ecology, and the New Left found that the feminist analysis of sexism was not always high on their movement's list of priorities and so they responded by organizing separately, by bringing ecology and environmentalism into feminist theory, or by prioritizing the gender analysis within green and environmental political thought.⁸⁸

Ecological feminisms also developed in an international context as a reaction to international development discourse and policy. Critical of the way in which western development policy and discourse replaced colonial rule after many nations in the Third World achieved their independence, academic feminists and feminists working in NGOs from the Third World began to explore how western hegemonic development policy further marginalized and impoverished women, many of whom were dependent on farming and other subsistence-based activities for their survival. Ecological feminist Noël Sturgeon has broadly described U.S. ecofeminism as a "feminist rebellion" from within radical environmentalist theorizing and activism, and the same could be said of the feminist critics of development policy who resisted racist, sexist and colonial discourses of women in the Third World.⁸⁹

In the 1980s, ecological feminists in different parts of the world critiqued Western science and narratives of progress as important sources of environmental degradation. Some of the strongest critiques have come from feminists working on issues of development in the South

because it is here that the applications of science had visible effects. Rosi Braidotti and her colleagues explain that:

Scientific and technological progress has been unduly focused on concerns about economic goals and become implicit in ideas about development, and thus introduced in the countries of the South. Feminists across the board, as well as some environmentalists, ecologists and alternative developmentalists argue that what we see today is a ruthless application of technology, especially in the form of big-scale development projects, such as large dams which serve urban industrial water and power supply and the modernizing economies. These projects displace thousands of people from their land and means of livelihood.⁹⁰

Feminist scientists working in various fields found themselves frustrated by the power relations of dominance embedded in scientific practice. This frustration, according to Donna Haraway, led her and others to challenge “the doctrines of objectivity because they threatened our budding sense of collective historical subjectivity and agency and our ‘embodied’ accounts of the truth.”⁹¹ Recognizing that the epistemological foundations and political goals of science were a major problem in everything from scientific research to development policy, feminists developed a critique that could show how scientific practice is made through the social relations of colonialism, race, gender, sexuality, and capitalism.

Some of the critiques that they levied against science were that scientific inquiry has denied women and people of colour epistemic authority, that it is a social activity produced through unequal labour practices and inequitable power relations, namely ones that position white men as knowers and women and people of colour in subordinate positions as assistants or research subjects, and that its basis in objectivity, reason, and abstract individualism does not account for the ways in which human intention and politics shape scientific practice.⁹²

Ecofeminists Vandana Shiva and Carolyn Merchant in particular have focused on western science’s basis in colonial capitalism, a system which reduces nature to a “resource” and destroys rural and Indigenous communities’ traditional ways of life. Shiva uses the term

“maldevelopment” to refer to the western capitalist development because this system subordinates life and its diversity to the desire to accumulate wealth. Both she and Merchant describe how colonial capitalism is based in a mechanistic view of nature that reduces nature to inert matter to be exploited for economic gain.⁹³

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, ecological feminists argued for the inclusion of women’s voices and women’s experiences in science, in environmental theorizing and activism, and in development policy. Although they unanimously recognized that there was a link between feminism and ecology, they disagreed on the nature of that connection which generated substantial debate and led to the accusation of biological essentialism in much ecofeminist theorizing. “Cultural ecofeminists,” for instance, argued that women have been degraded through their association with nature by a patriarchal and masculine culture that attempts to shed the vestiges of all things “feminine” and “natural,” and therefore they linked feminism and ecology through the “fleshy” themes of motherhood, reproduction, violence against women, war, spirituality, and animals in order to revalue the “feminine.”⁹⁴ Social ecofeminists approached the debate at a different angle, criticizing cultural ecofeminists for their essentialism and their uncritical celebration of the woman/nature connection, taking the position that women are connected to nature through their socially constructed roles as women and more specifically through the gendered material conditions of production and reproduction. Bina Agarwal, for instance, critiqued the universalized understanding of “sexual difference” celebrated by cultural ecofeminists and argued that women are a fractured group shaped by race, gender, and class/caste divisions of property, production, and labour.⁹⁵

In the 1990s, poststructural ecofeminist theorists challenged the reliance on epistemic positions based in identity and examined how ontological, epistemic, and political positions are

political constructions. Catriona Sandilands, Sherilyn MacGregor, and Noël Sturgeon argue that “women” is a performative, or unstable category and appealed to feminism’s histories of and possibilities for coalition building and organizing with others across difference.⁹⁶ Sandilands and MacGregor, both of whom have offered critiques of the “mother earth,” or “earth goddess” metaphors so prevalent in early ecofeminist thought, suggest that it is better to think about women’s gendered struggles for ecological transformation as an act of politics, or citizenship, rather than a function of any kind of natural affinity to nature.⁹⁷ The opening up of the identity categories of “women” and “nature” and the possibilities of their politicization provide fruitful ground for troubling, both within ecological feminism and environmental thinking more broadly, the kind of fixity that has characterized western science and environmental thought up until very recently.

The emergence of feminist critiques of science and feminist epistemologies that connected gender and the environment created a pathway for early feminist environmental education literature to critique women’s exclusion from different environmental policies and programs. One significant source of critique came from educators and researchers in education, who since the 1970s have been writing about the low participation of girls in the sciences, which they attributed to sexism in schools. They found that girls tended to lose interest in science around age twelve, that they possessed lower self-confidence about their ability to succeed in the sciences, and that teachers were more likely to favour boys and give them preferential treatment in the classroom.⁹⁸ Education researchers Kristin Kremer, Gary Mullins and Robert Roth note in an editorial in 1991 that the gender gap was still a significant problem in the sciences and given that environmental education is very much science-based, this discrepancy should be an issue of concern for environmental educators.⁹⁹

Another pathway came from feminists involved in outdoor experiential education who critiqued the patriarchy and sexism of outdoor recreation culture. They examined the heterosexism that permeates outdoor experiential education culture, which they drew from their own experiences of being assigned traditionally-gendered tasks and of encountering sexism in the language used to describe camping skills that are “hard” and “soft.” Sexuality was an important part of this critique because many women also reported that men in co-ed programs engaged in homophobic labelling of particular women as “Amazons” and “dykes.”¹⁰⁰ Feminists responded by creating women-only outdoor experiential education programs based in a caring ethic that honoured women’s “gender differences.” Both the literature on girls in science and in women’s outdoor experiential education drew, either directly or indirectly, from psychologist Carol Gilligan’s assertion that women and girls have a “different voice,” which echoed cultural feminist narratives of women’s difference.¹⁰¹

The questioning of identity that accompanied the poststructural turn, which was very much influenced by the writings of Haraway, radically challenged human subjectivity as the privileged locus of environmental education. Anne Bell and Constance Russell argue, from as early as the 1990s, that poststructuralism has done an excellent job of critiquing liberal humanism and empirical science for its exclusions, but that it, too, had been guilty of privileging the human subject and marginalizing non-human ways of knowing. This same criticism has been levied against environmental education. Because early environmental education was often based in empirical science and typically treated nature as an “object” of study, it has largely contributed to anthropocentric ways of thinking that relegate animal voices/subjectivities to the margins. Drawing from ecofeminist and environmental ethics, and particularly Haraway’s notion of situated knowledges, environmental education researcher Leesa Fawcett asks how we

might “realize an environmentally just situated knowing” that will allow learners to “encounter the ‘other’ in its complexity”:

how do we tell stories that acknowledge other animals/beings as subjects of lives we share, lives that parallel and are interdependent in profound ways? How do we ensure that their voices are audible and that we can co-author environmental stories to live, teach, and learn with?¹⁰²

This reflexive encounter between humans and others demands that we undo the dualism of emotion and cognition that has come to characterize scientific practice. She sees the possibilities of stories as “ethical imaginings” that can create space for marginalized narratives to be told.

Queer ecology has similarly engaged in these kinds of ethical imaginings, exploring how notions of nature are overlain with socially constructed ideas about sex, sexuality, and gender, and how “nature” is deployed as a political category to police, regulate, and expand the sexual desire of human and non-human species. Challenging singular and unitary approaches for understanding “nature,” queer ecologies asks us to think through the ways in which thinking intersectionally about sexuality, gender, race, species, and embodiment is necessary to “denaturalize” hegemonic ideas of nature.¹⁰³ The call to queer environmental education disturbs the heterosexuality that permeates environmental thought. Although this research is still very much undertheorized and subsequently under practiced in environmental education, the few publications that do exist call for educators to teach from the understanding that all identities are socially constructed and to critically question narratives that heterosexualize nature.¹⁰⁴ They point to manifestations of sexism in the field and consider how ecological feminists, many of them from outdoor experiential education, have challenged homophobia and created spaces in outdoor education for queer youth. Noel Gough, Annette Gough and their colleagues propose that educators need to queer education research in addition to their teaching, which means queering “the ‘normal’ signifieds of environmental education research, such as nature-as-an-

object of knowledge, ecology, body/landscape relations, and the relationships among bodies of knowledges, teachers, and learners.” Like other queer ecological theorists, they also critique science for its limited vision in the way that it closes down ecological possibilities instead of opening itself up to seeing the stunning array of biological diversity that inhabits this planet.¹⁰⁵

Russell and Fawcett have noted that the field of environmental education today continues to be well-represented by white men, something that is reflected in the fact that seven out of the ten English language journals in the field are edited by white male academics. Marginalization, they argue, is an ongoing problem in environmental education. With the exception of research on outdoor experiential education, environmental education has had little to say about gender, class, and disability, and even within outdoor experiential education, there is a notable absence of narratives about women and girls of colour and transgendered experiences of outdoor education.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, Russell and Fawcett have called for more research that explores the sizism and fat oppression that permeates the field. As Russell, Cameron, Socha and McNinch argue, environmental education has uncritically accepted the recently popularized idea that obesity is linked to climate change, and that the field more generally reinforces dominant discourses that privilege “fit” and “able” bodies and shame ones that are “fat.”¹⁰⁷ While feminism has brought to light some very important critiques of the exclusions in environmental education, feminist scholars also suggest that there is still much work to be done.

Conclusion

Environmental education has come a long way in its struggles to develop a more socially critical theory and praxis. The new theory and practice orientations over the last twenty-five years that developed within the field and which have been introduced through environmental justice and

ecological feminism have allowed environmental education to grow to become more socially critical and oriented to justice issues. The lingering problem remains that environmental education's implementation has been spotty. Where it exists, environmental education tends to occupy the margins or is distributed among other subjects of study often with limited success.¹⁰⁸ Environmental education and ESD researcher Charles Hopkins notes that environmental education in most places is considered an elective or worse, relegated as an extracurricular activity, and Hart comments that the UNESCO discourses of environmental education that have historically defined the field as interdisciplinary, enquiry-focused, and participatory, have rung "somewhat hollow" given the fact that these ideals are rarely practiced in environmental education programs, which continue to be siloed in the "hard" ecological sciences.¹⁰⁹ As the environmental crisis worsens and neoliberal policies continue to exacerbate global poverty, a critical environmental education is needed more than ever to empower young people recognize systemic inequalities and to struggle for the changes that will make equality and sustainability a reality.

CHAPTER THREE

Theorizing and Researching Girls' Citizenships

In the previous chapter, I explored how environmental education, like the environmental movement, has had its identity challenged by anti-racist, anti-anthropocentric, feminist, queer, and fat scholars and activists. These critical interventions have been important to disrupting the array of race, gender, class, sexuality, and age-based privileges that permeate environmental education and have opened it up to epistemological and methodological critique that helps democratize the field. These critiques also point to the fact that while citizenship is central to environmental education, educators in the field have for the most part failed to adequately theorize citizenship because they have not accounted for the social differences that construct young people's experiences of their environments. Further, they have certainly not accounted for girls' citizenships and their gendered experiences of their environments. In the chapters that follow, I explore the possibilities of an environmental education that takes account of the realities of girls' citizenships. The empirical research that I conducted with three environmental organizations for girls explores the narratives they tell about the environment and girls' citizenships vis-à-vis the environment. In particular, I am interested in two overarching issues: whether they consider social differences in girls' lives and, if so, how this knowledge shapes their work within the organizations and their articulation of girls' citizenships in relation to the public/political sphere.

But first, before diving into these conversations and the analysis that accompanies them, I explore what it means to think about girls as citizens. In this chapter, I draw on the writings of girlhood scholars who have theorized girls' citizenships to consider how girls face gendered social inequalities that are particular to being *young women*, and how these gendered inequalities

intersect with other forms of oppression. I argue that these inequalities can undermine girls' agency, human rights, and ability to participate in democracy (and thus shape our social world), which ultimately bars them from full citizenship. Further, I argue that girls' citizenships are depoliticized. Institutions and other social actors, including formal schooling, local programs for girls, and international campaigns for girl empowerment, depoliticize the very real inequalities in girls' lives by articulating their "problems" through an individual lens of empowerment that encourages personal change rather than social transformation and critique. I draw from the research of girlhood scholar Jessica Taft to suggest that the individual empowerment model for working with girls, what she calls the "normative approach," is ineffective in challenging girls' oppression and marginalization. Because one of the roots of this problem lies in the depoliticization of girls' citizenships, I also draw on Sherilyn MacGregor's research on women's ecological citizenship to explore how the depoliticization of women's citizenships and gendered labour contributes to their marginalization and further excludes them from the realm of politics and citizenship. While MacGregor focuses on women, her research is useful for my purposes because it locates women's exclusion from the political realm within systems of power and oppression based on race, class and gender, and because she offers a pathway, through citizenship, for politicizing the social relations that oppress women.

These theoretical issues introduce the methodological approach that undergirds this research. As my discussion will show, different ways of thinking about girls impact how education is delivered to them and how they experience that education. I also suggest that these different ways of thinking impact research, both through the questions we ask about girls and the environment and the methodologies that we choose. This chapter explores some of the methodological issues that arise from doing qualitative research and narrating the lives of women

and girls. I again look to MacGregor's research to examine the dilemmas of interpretation that arise with qualitative research to suggest that using a diversity of research methods and exploring the gaps, contradictions, and complexities in the stories that are told within the research context are important for ensuring that representations of reality are not taken as uncontested truth.

Finally, this chapter also introduces the three organizations for girls that are the subject of this study. I provide a broad sketch of the history and development of the Girl Guides of Canada, Green Girls and ECO Girls, along with a short description of their mission statements, curricula, and environmental lenses. I draw primarily from their websites and internal documents, which are either available on the web or which they graciously shared with me. Each of the three sketches is accompanied by a short description of the cities and neighbourhoods in which they are located to provide some context for the emergence of the organizations and a snapshot of social inequalities and environmental injustices in which their community is embedded.

Theorizing girls' citizenships

Childhood studies scholars have long pointed out that children are excluded from citizenship. Citizenship, which is broadly understood as the conferral of rights onto the individual in exchange for responsibilities to the state, can hardly be applied to children in the same way it is for adults. Children, after all, lack many of the rights conferred onto adults. Feminist theorists have critiqued how women, along with people of colour, refugees, LGBTQ, First Nations people, people with disabilities and children have been excluded from citizenship. This exclusion is strongly linked to MacGregor's point that I briefly touched on in the previous chapter: that citizens in modern states are conceptualized as male, and that this construction of the male autonomous citizen has been predicated on the separation of the public from the private sphere.

Feminists have critiqued how women are excluded from public power and are relegated to the private, devalued, feminized sphere where they are responsible for the care of others.¹ Because their rights are subsumed under the male head of household, they lack important individual, social and economic rights, including the rights to participation or even their own bodies.

Although it has taken feminism a long time to critique girls' exclusion from citizenship, in the early 1990s, the UN passed several provisions that identified girls along with women as a group that is particularly vulnerable to human rights violations. Some of the factors that the UN identified that exclude girls from human rights include the gender gap in education, high rates of female illiteracy, child labour, violence, sex trafficking, high incidences of HIV/AIDS, early marriage, prenatal sex selection, environmental degradation, high mortality rates, infanticide, poor nutrition and inadequate access to healthcare.² Many girls around the world are burdened with violence, bondage, and family responsibilities that prevent them from enjoying even basic human rights, and with the globalization of capitalism, girls have become more vulnerable to exploitation by transnational corporations and international crime rings. In Canada, Indigenous girls have been identified as one of the most invisible groups. Due to a legacy of colonialism and state violence towards Indigenous peoples, many communities contend with underfunded schools and infrastructure, poverty, addiction, a lack of basic healthcare services, overcrowding in homes, and the destruction of their lands. Consequently, many Indigenous girls are vulnerable to sexual exploitation, poverty, homelessness, addiction, teen pregnancy and premature death. A disproportionately high number of Indigenous women and girls in Canada are missing and murdered, which points to the state's failure to lead an inquiry and to institute changes that could prevent such violence from taking place.³

Girls of colour also experience racialized violence in multicultural nations. Girlhood scholar Yasmin Jiwani has explored how racism in multicultural nations plays out on the bodies of girls of colour, which come to be seen as “signifiers of culture” by a dominant racist society and by communities of colour that are trying to shield themselves from that racism. Many girls of colour are doubly burdened by their vulnerability to racist violence in a white supremacist society, which sees them as essentialized and oppressed cultural “Others,” and also to the protectionist measures/violences within some racialized families that curtail their freedom and limit their rights.⁴ Furthermore, girls with disabilities and queer and trans girls are also impacted by sexual violence, poverty and social exclusion. Queer and trans girls experience discrimination in accessing social services and they contend with homophobic teachers/administrators and heteronormative school policies.⁵

Despite the fact that girls worldwide face troubling gender-based inequalities that pose serious limitations on their rights and freedoms, popular discourses about girls have often occluded their oppressions or silenced and stigmatized them. Since the 1990s, girls have been portrayed in best-selling psychology books and other forms of popular media in Canada and the U.S. as “mean girls” who perpetrate relational aggression onto one another; Ophelia girls who lose their voices and “authentic selves” in their teen years, becoming depressed, self-destructive and even suicidal; and hypersexualized or empowered “girl power” girls who own their sexualities, have purchasing power and wear lipstick.⁶ Girlhood scholar Anita Harris suggests that girls in our neoliberal capitalist age have been separated into the categories of the “can-do” and “at-risk” girls. Western neoliberalism valorizes the hardworking, school-driven, disciplined can-do girls who delay sex and motherhood until their adult years, and punishes and blames at-risk girls who, by a wider public, are seen to be making “bad choices” by consuming the

“wrong” things, such as sex and drugs, and who end up becoming teen mothers. Girlhood studies scholar Christine Griffin argues that these girls and young people are subsequently positioned as “disordered consumers,” and as Harris adds, their circumstances are rarely ever considered to be a result of structural disadvantage.⁷ Girls today are supposedly over-excelling at school in Canada and the United States at the expense of boys, are the victims of culture and sharia law in Muslim communities in Canada, and more recently hold the promise, with an investment in their education, of improving the future of their communities in developing Third World countries.⁸ Girls, according to TIME and Forbes magazine, are uninterested in politics, and in the feminist generational debates, people like Anne Summers have concluded that the “grrrrl” politics of third wave feminism are just not that political.⁹

Girlhood Studies scholars have been noting for the past decade that girls in our globalized neoliberal society have become metaphors for social change.¹⁰ In a similar way that children in the New Nature Movement have come to represent the future of the environment, girls today represent current social anxieties and offer hope for salvation. They are, in Harris’s words, “the carriers of and defenders against social change.”¹¹ The concern about girls’ civic identities has generated a plethora of different programs around the world geared specifically to girls, from corporate campaigns by Nike equipment, to not-for-profit organizations such as Girls Action Foundation, to local after-school programs.¹² In the midst of this flurry of excitement about girls, it is critical to pay attention to the discourses these different actors are using to talk about them because they impact policy decisions and shape how individual organizations work with girls. Jessica Taft notes that as “girls’ organizations develop their programs and decide what activities the girls will do, they are not only constructing models of girlhood, but are also defining the problems that face girls and considering how girls should deal with them.”¹³ Girls’ programs

therefore make assumptions about girls as political subjects and determine how they should engage with the community. They actively shape their experiences of civic engagement.

Taft argues that contemporary girls' organizations typically take one of two approaches. The first is regulatory in nature and embraces the psychological perspective of girl empowerment. Its intentions are to shield girls from the dangers of public space, as evidenced by early girls' organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), which emerged with nineteenth century urban industrialization to protect single urban girls against the lure of the dance hall, the theatre, premarital sex and other forms of so-called "disordered" forms of consumption.¹⁴ Protectionist approaches to working with girls have since shifted to focus on self-esteem. In the feminist psychologies of Carol Gilligan and Mary Pipher, girls are portrayed as losing their voices and, to use Pipher's metaphor, are "saplings in the storm": young, vulnerable trees that are easily blown around and uprooted by a girl-negating culture.

Organizations such as the Girl Scouts and Girls Inc. have absorbed these discourses about girls in recent decades and have constructed programs focused on teaching girls how to love themselves, develop resilience and be strong leaders. Taft argues that such protectionist approaches to working with girls aim to empower them with the tools to meet the challenges of contemporary society, which problematically encourages girls to individualize their problems and corroborates neoliberal ideologies of self-production that place responsibility on girls to take charge of their own problems and their own success.¹⁵ Protectionist approaches rooted in personal responsibility can also lead to self-blame and feelings of failure if a girl is unsuccessful in overcoming the challenges in her life. While Taft argues that there is value to teaching girls about empowerment and equipping them with the skills to meet the challenges of modern society, she argues that this approach alone is insufficient because it leaves structural barriers

and inequalities unchallenged. The focus on individual girls ultimately comes at the expense of examining the social conditions that shape their circumstances and curb their rights. By placing girls' experiences outside the realm of the public, Taft notes that this model "implies that society, the public, and the community are unchanging arenas. Girls are taught only skills for dealing with problems as they exist and are not exposed to the possibilities of social transformation."¹⁶

Taft identifies the Girl Scouts as an organization that falls into this approach. The Girl Scouts today focuses on self-esteem, leadership development, crafting, science learning, friendship and fun. The organization stresses community service and service learning. However, this form of civic engagement is not practiced as politics or geared to social change. Taft notes that while some feminist scholars consider service to be political, it can often reinforce gendered roles, particularly if its emphasis is on community care. Regulatory girls' organizations are similar to the behaviouralist environmental education discussed in the previous chapter in that the educators believe themselves to have the requisite knowledge to teach girls and therefore impose a curriculum on them that leaves little, if any, flexibility for the girls to select what they want to learn. Although the Girl Scouts gives girls opportunities to have input and take a leadership role, the organization is adult-run and the adults lobby on girls' behalf.¹⁷

The Girl Scouts is not the only outdoor education program that uses a regulatory approach; many outdoor experiential education programs also fall into this mould. They are aimed primarily at girls who are at risk for incarceration, school dropout, or substance abuse, or girls believed to have socio-emotional development problems that affect their mental health, body image, or self-esteem. Outdoor experiential education programs for girls became popular in the 1990s at the same time that Gilligan and Pipher's clinical research was published, and the programs reflect the same discourses of voice and empowerment that are found in this literature.

Outdoor education programs tend to be focused on behavioural and attitudinal change and they use challenges in the outdoors, like rope climbing and canoe trips, to teach girls about trust, teamwork, and self-confidence.¹⁸ For instance, the program Connecting with Courage, which takes place just outside of Boston, is a fourteen-day course in which girls experience outdoor challenges and connect with other girls and women in a supportive environment that helps them “amplify rather than stifle their personal voices.”¹⁹ The service providers of experiential education courses such as Connecting with Courage insist on the necessity of single-sex learning environments for girls, as some have reported instances where girls in mixed-gender settings were less assertive and experienced feelings of inferiority. They generally see single-gender environments as “safe” and less inhibiting and envision the outdoors to be the ideal learning environment because it presents girls with the opportunity to experience success in what has otherwise been a male-dominated arena.²⁰

The second approach to working with girls that Taft identifies is transformative in nature. It fosters girls’ critical thinking by encouraging them to identify the root causes of the oppressions that they face and creates a forum for empowering girls as agents of social change through participation in the public sphere and the development of their political voices. Taft explains that girls in transformative organizations “come to see their problems not merely as private troubles, but as socially constructed and understand that their lives are not isolated from the community and social forces, but shaped by them,” all of which are important for teaching them about critique and deliberation, which are important features of democracy.²¹

Transformative organizations are a more recent phenomenon and include programs such as Ms.’s Teen Women’s Action Program (TWAP) and youth environmental justice programs such as HOPE, which I discussed in the previous chapter. They politicize race, class, and gender as

categories that shape girls' lives and furnish girls with the tools to organize collectively and struggle for change in their communities.

Organizations for girls that politicize gender, race, and class do not only politicize girls' citizenships, they also open them to creative redefinition. Ruth Nicole Brown's work with girls illustrates how such work can take place. Brown, like Taft, argues that programs focused on mentoring, volunteering, and girl empowerment typically approach girls from a regulatory perspective. In fact, she rejects the label "program" altogether because:

Programming for programming's sake attempts to manage young people's lives. Programming for programming's sake defines young people as the problem. For example, although girl empowerment is the professed goal of many gender-specific programs, power is rarely considered, and when left to function without question, many program processes marginalize some of the same young people they claim to be "empowering." Without analyzing power within and outside of the program context, empowerment is translated into patronizing do-gooderism that fails to empower anyone, in the best sense of the word.²²

Brown argues that the discourses of empowerment that are typically found in girls' organizations not only reproduce an ethic of "do-goodism," but they also regulate the bodies of Black girls and reproduce "White, middle-class girl subjectivities."²³ The theory and methodology that she develops originates from a critique of the racism, heterosexism, sexuality and class-based oppressions in Black girls' lives that silence them and shame their bodies. To counter the regulatory effects of programs in the lives of Black girls, Brown deploys a hip-hop feminist pedagogy in her work, combining hip hop culture with feminist methodology to celebrate the different and contradictory ways of being Black, young and female. She argues that a hip-hop feminist pedagogy is a "socially constructed and political intervention in the lives of Black women becoming," "a political act of resistance that values Black girls' ways of being," and an "organizing construct, which allows for a production of citizenship that presumes the inclusion and active participation of Black girls and women and interrogates the process of marginalization

as it relates to race, gender, class, sexuality, and age.”²⁴ Brown has created a name for this pedagogy: Saving Our Lives Hear Our Truths, or SOLHOT. Practiced within the context of an after-school “program,” SOLHOT allows Brown and the girls that she works with to “discuss, dance, reenact, shape, reshape, and reform the politics of Black girlhood.”²⁵ What strikes me about Brown’s approach to working with girls is that it is based in a politicized understanding of citizenship that actively questions the oppressive relations that constrain Black girls. As Brown notes, Black girls are often seen as “too loud, too much, too sexual, too disruptive.”²⁶ Her goal in working with Black girls is to give them space to expand the boundaries of their subjectivities, to be creative, and to rearticulate Black girlhood in ways that exceed essentialized or static definition.

The citizenship that Brown imagines for girls through SOLHOT is also based in the critique of power and invention of new kinds of power. Rather than reproducing the hierarchical power structures typical of most educational programs, SOLHOT troubles them. The program participants do so by critiquing the social structures that oppress them, talking about the failures of the education system, difficult family situations, everyday interactions, norms, policies, and peer relationships. SOLHOT also troubles hierarchical power relations by challenging traditional pedagogical approaches to working with girls. Brown describes how her team of girl-serving adults does not reprimand girls who “act up.” In fact, as part of their training they have to “unlearn the need to control the girls.”²⁷ Brown argues that this approach is based on the reality that the bodies of Black girls, to navigate the space of mainstream education institutions successfully, need to be docile, disciplined, and undistruptive. She argues therefore that “the actions of the program participants are not interpreted as disruptive to the goals of the program but indicative of the program’s program and our potential to make power.”²⁸ Challenging the

view held by most educational programs that politics should not infect adults' work with children, Brown argues that girls are political actors who not only critique but also create new social practices. SOLHOT thus begins from the perspective of marginalized girls, questioning the boundaries of citizenship and creatively envisioning new ways of being. Programs such as HOPE and SOLHOT (if the latter can be called a program) show promising advances in providing a methodology for destabilizing the racist, sexist boundaries that seek to put girls in "their place." They also provide girls with a framework for analyzing and challenging power and for opening their citizenships to creative (and non-essentialized) redefinition.

Toward a feminist ecological citizenship for girls

In the previous chapter, I explored how environmental politics are rooted in assumptions about citizenship and community engagement. I showed how environmental education presumes to teach a homogenized white, middle-class student body, and how the structure of schooling has not been amenable to politicizing environmental issues, choosing instead to focus on "safe" environmental projects that involve service learning activities like shoreline cleanups. A central concern to my project then becomes how citizenship is conceptualized in environmental organizations that have made the choice to work with girls in a single-sex context. Did the choice to work with girls originate from a concern over girls' citizenship? If so, do the organizations attend to the power relations that inhibit girls' access to citizenship? What are the groups' environmental concerns and do they reflect girls' positionalities? And finally, what strategies do they propose the girls use to address these problems?

Sherilyn MacGregor's work on feminist ecological citizenship sheds some welcome light on the complexities of theorizing gender and citizenship. Although MacGregor does not write

about girls or education, her research on the environmental activist work of thirty women, published in *Beyond Mothering Earth* (2006), explores how gendered inequalities marginalize women from full citizenship. MacGregor's research stems from her desire to find out whether care is the dominant framework through which women conceptualize their ecological politics. In the 1990s, postmodern feminists critiqued how the politics of care on which much ecofeminist politics and philosophy is based problematically essentializes women (see Chapter Two). Statements so dear to some ecofeminists such as "It's time for women to mother earth" or that compel women to "clean up" the earth positioned women in relationship to the public and to politics through their naturalized roles as mothers/nurturers.²⁹ Although ecofeminists have been visible in politics, lobbying against important issues of public concern such as militarization, nuclear armament and chemical pesticides, the justification for their politics in many cases relied on their assertion of difference, on the special relationship and knowledge that they supposedly had to nature as women.³⁰ Specifically, ecofeminists such as Vandana Shiva, Bina Agarwal, and Carolyn Merchant have argued that it is women's ability to care, learned and practiced in the private realm, that furnished them with the epistemological privilege to fight for environmental quality issues.

While essentialism is perhaps the most obvious problem in this literature, MacGregor argues that an equally important problem is that ecofeminism's reliance on the politics of care also ironically re-ascribes women to the realm of the private and "narrows our understanding of women as political actors."³¹ Furthermore, MacGregor argues that the celebration of women's "natural" inclination to care incidentally coincides with neoliberal right-wing agendas. In an effort to cut public spending, right wing governments in industrialized countries such as Canada have been privatizing social services and relying on volunteerism, community responsibility, and

women's unpaid domestic caring labour in the home to fill in the gaps. This neoliberal assault on social services places a double burden on women who have to "struggle to juggle" paid employment and unpaid responsibilities in the home. MacGregor concludes that it is a better approach to politicize care rather than naturalize it.

The second problem that MacGregor identifies concerning gender and citizenship is the point I briefly touched on in the previous chapter about the Greens. Because Greens have not adequately constructed a theory of environmental citizenship that politicizes the caring labour that is performed in the private sphere, for the most part their visions for environmental sustainability rest on a citizenship that is unhampered by the private caring responsibilities of childcare and domestic work and privileged with the free time to engage in community work and democratic deliberation with other citizens.³² However, rather than reject citizenship as hopelessly male, patriarchal, and privileged, MacGregor argues that a feminist analysis of citizenship has the potential to analyze women's subordination and to provide the tools for challenging the oppressive social structures that exploit their caring labour. She also argues that citizenship participation is a necessary condition for democracy and that part of its democratic potential lies in its disruption of a politics based in monolithic identity: "the language of citizenship offers a way to develop ecofeminist positions that are both *feminist* and *democratic* because it provides a space for the public performance of the multiple and shifting identities that women simultaneously hold."³³ Citizenship thus effectively turns the focus away from questions about one's essence to one's role as an actor in a public sphere, and investigates the conditions that enable or prohibit women's participation in citizen activities.³⁴

MacGregor's analysis of women's gendered ecological citizenship and their relationship to politics, and her point that the false separation between the public and private harms women,

can be further extended to include girls. Structural gender inequalities stand in the way of girls asserting their politics and exercising their citizenship rights. In her study of girls' hypersexualization at a school in Quebec, Caroline Caron found that girls were punished for wearing sexy clothing, an attempt on the part of the school to erase girls' sexualities.³⁵ Taking a punitive stance, the school refused to hear the girls' complaints and thus denied them participation in the democratic process. As Caron notes, "because they are neither legal citizens (as minors) nor fully political subjects in school settings ... little room has been made to allow adolescent females to counter the public blaming of those who are thought of as sexy girls, and to voice their thoughts and perspectives about schools' dress code reforms."³⁶

Ironically, Canadian schools, like those of many industrialized Western nations, teach citizenship education courses to young people. However, in Canada, citizenship education is focused on educating young people about how to be responsible (obedient) citizens by learning about the mechanisms of governance rather than equipping them with the knowledge to be reflexive actors in the public sphere.³⁷ Civic education courses usually require students to complete a certain amount of community service performed through volunteer hours, and rarely introduces them to more rebellious forms of political activity. As Taft argues, "youth participation programs can act as a form of regulation, encouraging particular forms of civic engagement and particular kinds of political expression, all under the watchful eye of the state."³⁸ Schooling also deepens gender inequalities by reproducing normative understandings of gender, race and sexuality and excluding girls from the "public" realm of civics education. While young people learn about the structure and function of the Canadian government, Canadian citizenship education fails to politicize gendered inequalities by excluding issues such as sexuality, violence, and the family, which reinforces the public/private divide and attributes a

lack of importance to “private” and “domestic” concerns. Because “private” inequalities permeate girls’ everyday lives, the failure to address them perpetuates their marginalization.³⁹

Girls’ civic identities are also controlled and depoliticized through other avenues, including public policy and consumer capitalism. Girls in neoliberal capitalism are first and foremost positioned as consumers whose empowerment rests in their expression of identity through their purchasing power. To add insult to injury, several large corporations, in an attempt to appear socially responsible, have jumped on the girl empowerment bandwagon and established programs to help lift girls in the Third World out of poverty. In campaigns such as the Girl Effect founded by the Nike Foundation and the NoVo Foundation (a philanthropic organization for the empowerment of girls and women), western audiences and more specifically western girls are being targeted to donate money to change the lives of girls in Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Nigeria, which Emily Bent argues maintains “colonialist power structures and divides” and reinforces the idea that they are advocating “for *other* girls’ rights and concerns, as different from their own.”⁴⁰ This campaign is disturbing not only on the level of celebrating western values of freedom that supposedly accompany capitalism, but also in light of Nike’s poor human rights track record and its use of child labour, including girls’ labour, which is a source of oppression and poverty in places like Cambodia and Indonesia.

Girls are also de-politicized at the level of research. Several studies on young people’s interest in politics have concluded that girls are less interested in formal politics than boys.⁴¹ This finding is problematic because the definition of politics on which it rests is narrowed to the formal sphere of policy and governance and therefore does not capture the diversity of girls’ political activities.⁴² In her research with girls, Taft describes a remarkable range of activist issues on which girls organize: racial equity in education, safer schools, accessible student

transportation, the privatization of public education, reproductive rights, health care, labour organizing, gentrification, unemployment, development and infrastructure projects that disrupt communities, ecological destruction, animal rights, environmental justice, free trade agreements, neoliberal economic policies, anti-war demonstrations, refugee rights, juvenile justice, and many more. Taft notes that girls' activism has taken many different shapes, including political education, protest and demonstration, media work (including the creation of radio programs and newspapers), political street theatre, lobbying, petition drives, strikes and walkouts, encampments, building alternative communities, volunteering, raising money for international organizations, and individualized acts like recycling and purchasing local and fair trade products.⁴³

Girlhood studies scholars have also explored media as a critical site of political activism for girls and young women, such as young feminists' use of blogs, Tumblr, video, or Google mapping to document rape culture, street harassment and sexualized violence in their communities.⁴⁴ These examples gesture to the fact that girls, against all odds, still manage to carve out space for themselves as political agents who care about social justice and oppressive governance. While feminism has done a wonderful job of critiquing women's exclusions from citizenship, it has certainly not done enough to critique girls' even greater marginalization, and has failed to adequately politicize their concerns.⁴⁵ Too little is known about the shape, quality, and meaning of girls' civic identities and political struggles.

How, then, can citizenship be used in research to politicize gender inequalities and call for the full inclusion of women and girls in political life? MacGregor again offers some insights. She argues that empirical research presents an opportunity to disrupt problematic or essentializing discourses about women's lives by offering a counter-narrative. Rather than make

sweeping generalizations about women's relations to the environment as mothers and carers, claims which are often based in abstract theorizing or handpicked examples of women's activism, MacGregor argues that empirical research should treat women as "complex knowing subjects."⁴⁶ MacGregor engages women as complex knowing subjects first by refusing to make assumptions about their political identifications and experiences. Second, by using an intersectional feminist analysis that considers how women are differently located according to class, race, family, and citizenship status, she pays attention to their complexity and diversity.⁴⁷

Through this methodology, MacGregor discovers that while a significant number of women (about half) did identify their role as mother as an important reason for becoming involved in environmental activism, it was only one reason among many. The women she interviewed also attributed their involvement to their culture and religion, to a commitment to social justice and to community, to their professional lives, and to their desire to counter isolation.⁴⁸ For several women raising children at home, environmental activism was a way for them to resist being narrowly defined by their identities as mothers and to escape the boredom, sadness, isolation, and frustrations that are common, yet frequently unacknowledged, experiences of being a mother.⁴⁹ In instances where women identified motherhood as an important factor shaping their politics, they nevertheless described motherhood in different ways; MacGregor thus concludes that we need to "acknowledge women's roles in actively constructing, interpreting, and practicing their own motherhood" rather than seeing motherhood as an assumed, universalized experience.⁵⁰ Furthermore, women's ability to cope with the multiple burdens of domestic work, paid work, and activism has much to do with their particular class position and income, their family composition, their access to a support network, and their

available time, factors which made generalizable conclusions about women's activism impossible.⁵¹

MacGregor's methodology opens activist women's citizenships for examination and acknowledges their *contradictions*. For example, MacGregor notes that "motherhood and caring responsibilities become both resources and constraints upon women's activism" and that "this paradox is something that ought to be addressed rather than obscured or avoided both in ecological citizenship discourse and in ecofeminist discussions of women's grassroots activism."⁵² In addition, while many of the women found that activism allowed them to express care for children and community, they also expressed ambivalence about "their own socialized tendencies to care too much and to neglect the quality of their own lives (i.e., their personal health and well-being) in the process."⁵³ For MacGregor, this poses the challenge of interpreting women's contradictory narratives and exploring how they make sense in relation to the story about gendered citizenship she is setting out to tell. On the one hand, MacGregor does not want to make the same mistake that many ecofeminists have made by simply taking women's experiences as uncontested truth. On the other, empirical research is an important part of her project because she believes that women's narratives of their experiences help correct their exclusion and omission.

MacGregor proposes that deliberation and debate are both suitable approaches to dealing with this dilemma. She argues that,

There is a need to employ research methods whereby ecofeminists can listen to the voices of non-academic women engaged in local campaigns, to ask for their interpretations while retaining the option of respectfully offering their own arguments and alternative interpretations. Taking this notion seriously, Jackson (1993, 1953) presents what I think is a very important suggestion to ecofeminists: that instead of taking women's experiences as "truth," they need to rely on standard techniques of social research such as "skepticism, 'triangulation,' ... secondary sources, and objective [quantitative] indicators." In this way, they may

be able to represent the women with whom they conduct research in a more honest way: to co-theorize rather than reify their experiences, and avoid the temptation to draw firm conclusions that help to support their theoretical aims.⁵⁴

Although exploring tensions “makes for a much messier narrative,” MacGregor hopes that her account is more useful. Her narrative is not, as she describes it, a “recipe” for the project of feminist ecological citizenship, but rather a mapping that suggests “possible directions for new ecofeminist explorations.”⁵⁵ It is this feminist methodology of openness to the tensions and contradictions of experience in research that I hope to highlight in my own mapping of girls’ ecological citizenships. A crucial part of the work of theorizing also involves reflecting on the differences in interpretation between my participants and me, and so at the end of this chapter, I reflect on how I navigated some of these theoretical differences.

The study and the process

In order to learn about how environmental organizations for girls imagine their citizenships and connect them to the environment, I decided that the best way to do so was to conduct qualitative research with three girl-serving organizations, which I would then present as “case studies” for comparison and analysis. Because this research was destined to be exploratory and my goals were to examine each organization with an attention to its unique structure, set of relationships, and individual members’ experiences, I decided that qualitative methods were most suitable to the task. I proposed to use a combination of five methods, namely documentary analysis, literature review, participant observation, qualitative interviews, and focus groups, to provide as wide of a snapshot as possible for each organization.

These five methods were intended to gather different kinds of information. The documents, including the material on each organization’s website, internal forms and reports, videos, blogs, and newspaper articles served as my first introduction to each organization, and

allowed me to amass enough information to create short sketches to introduce them, which I present in the section below. As I will show in the next three chapters, the documents also helped to analyze the stated goals and mandate of each program in relation to its praxis. The participant observation, which was immersive and based in watching, participating in events, and assisting with tasks such as event set-up and cleanup, was intended provide me with a glimpse into the day-to-day activities, pedagogies, and ways of relating that occurred in the context of each organization. The participant observation assisted me with developing my interview questions and gave me the opportunity to take fieldnotes on each visit to reflect on what I was seeing, which proved useful in jogging my memory later on as I embarked on the writing phase of the research.

Finally, I also conducted one-to-one interviews with the service providers of each organization, and focus groups with participating girls. My goals in carrying out the interviews were to find out about how individual girl-serving professionals made sense of the program's history and goals, to tell me about their personal environmental politics, and to speak about the approaches, rewards and challenges of working with girls. In a different vein, the purpose of the focus groups with the girls was to furnish me with a glimpse into the meanings they make of the program as participants. I invited them to assess what they enjoyed and did not enjoy about the program, and to talk about activities in which they participated and the things that they learned.

I set out to study five organizations in this research, and I established that I would seek out organizations that were for girls only, urban, and for which ecological citizenship or environmental justice was their focus. I also decided to select organizations on the basis that they had some longevity over time, an organizational structure, and were formally constituted with mission statements, scheduled activities, and enrolments. I already had previous knowledge of

GGC, seeing as it is a large and prominent organization in Canada, and I had already been in contact with ECO Girls' founding director, Tiya Miles, before I began this study. In our initial conversation, Tiya told me about Green Girls, an organization that she had been in touch with as she was developing the idea for ECO Girls, and shortly thereafter I contacted Debra Sue Lorenzen, Green Girls' Director of Education, with an invitation to participate. After additional searches online, I attempted to recruit a Toronto-based program called Girls Taking Green Roots offered by Culture Link, an immigration and settlement organization, which, to my disappointment, proved unsuccessful because of a change in staff. I reached out to another organization, the Lower East Side Girls' Club in New York, but did not receive a response. The invitation to participate, which I sent to all of the organizations that I reached out to, is reproduced in appendix A.

For GGC, there was an element of self-selection on the part of the individual units that participated in this research. Since the GGC is a large national organization, I put a call out for participation on the Guiding listserv, and I received responses from all over Canada, including from a unit in Vancouver. As the ethnographic approach to this research demanded close and regular contact with the units in question, and because units typically only met once a week for a couple of hours, it was not feasible to carry out the research with units outside my immediate area. I narrowed the geographical area down to Toronto and my call was posted on the Guiding blog. One of the Guide units in this study, the Wychwood Barns unit, reached out to me following the blog post, and I recruited another, the Malvern unit, by word of mouth. In Toronto, a third unit had also contacted me and I even attended two meetings, intent on pursuing research with the girls and the Guiders. However, the lead Guider was unfortunately injured in an accident and the unit's communication with me broke down.

The field work for this research occurred from June 2013 to April 2015 and involved visits to the programs and extensive participation in their events. I quickly discovered that accessing the programs and participants was not without its challenges. In order to conduct research with the GGC, I was asked to sign a research agreement. The agreement, written in legal language that I found complicated to decipher, posed some concerns for me around academic freedom and confidentiality, stipulating as it did that any research I intended to publish be submitted for approval by GGC before publication, and noting additional rules about confidentiality beyond those outlined by the Tri-council Policy Statement (TCPS). What ensued was a lengthy correspondence that lasted four months with a GGC representative, the members of the Office of Research Ethics at York's Faculty of Graduate Studies, and York's legal counsel. The research agreement underwent many drafts until it satisfied the TCPS, GGC, and me, and I signed it in March 2014. During my fieldwork, one GGC Guider noted with humour that there is a lot of "blue tape" in the organization – blue being its official colour right down to the logo and uniforms – that required Guiders to follow an approved process and fill out paperwork for field trips, medical emergencies or injuries.

Accessing ECO Girls was also challenging for different reasons. In spring 2015, Tiya announced on the organization's blog that it was going into a period of hibernation because several core staff members were leaving for other job opportunities and Tiya was going on sabbatical leave from her position as faculty member and chair of the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies (DAAS) at the University of Michigan.⁵⁶ I was concerned about this news, as my plans had been to conduct focus groups with the girls at the upcoming summer camp. I learned soon after this announcement that ECO Girls was planning an Earth Day event and that the event would be their last for the year. With only two weeks' notice, I made my

travel plans. This event was far from ideal for conducting focus groups because it was a day-long event that attracted many girls who were not core ECO Girls participants. I did not have the benefit of being able to circulate my consent forms in advance to the parents and perhaps have a conversation with them about the research at the time that they would be dropping the girls off for camp. Nor did I have the luxury of time to build relationships with the girls over a few days before inviting them to participate in my focus groups. As a result, I was only able to conduct focus groups with seven girls. Under the circumstances, I was thankful that these seven girls were trusting enough to share their stories with me.

An important factor that may have also impacted girls' willingness to participate in this research is my own social location. When I visited Green Girls, ECO Girls, and the Malvern Brownies unit, which are majority African-American/Black, South Asian, and Latina racialized spaces, I did so as a white, adult, Canadian citizen, and privileged academic researcher. My age and my affiliation with a university likely positioned me as an authority figure, something that I tried to diminish by participating in activities and talking with the girls when they invited me into their conversations. In the day-to-day activities in Green Girls, I heard stories in girls' conversations with one another that spoke to their marginalization. One girl told me that she very much wanted to participate in one of my focus groups but that her mom would not give her permission to do so because she was suspicious of how people such as researchers can "use your words against you." I learned that this girl was in foster care, which curtailed the girl from engaging in the risk-taking that comes with more privileged forms of citizenship. Although I never met her mother, I sympathized with why she might be mistrustful and understood that her responsibility as a custodian was to ensure her foster daughter's safety. This reminded me that as

a researcher, there was a significant power difference between the girls and me and that these power imbalances are present no matter how careful I am in approaching my work with them.

Collecting data for this research was challenging because most of the programs are seasonal and their meetings take place once a week or even once a month during the school year. Although I attended some of the school year events in New York City and Ann Arbor, it was more difficult to travel to these locations for such short meet-ups, some of which only lasted between two to six hours and were separated sometimes by several weeks. Most of the data for Green Girls and ECO Girls were therefore collected over their summer institute and camp, which afforded a larger block of time of up to five days to observe and conduct interviews and focus groups. Given that I reside in Toronto, I was easily able to travel to different areas within the city to attend a Girl Guides' day-long activity or evening meet-up and thus had the benefit of more frequent visits to the field. After each visit, I completed fieldnotes, noting interesting exchanges or events that occurred at the meeting and reflecting on their significance vis-à-vis the mission of the organization.

After I made contact with the groups and began participant observation in the field, the point women in the organizations passed me some of their internal documents. ECO Girls and Green Girls, being small organizations that collect detailed demographic data for participating girls, shared their demographic documents with me. Green Girls provided me with a diverse range of materials, including funding applications, program reports, photographs, videos, and curriculum documents, which was helpful because this organization does not have its own website and the information listed about it online is very limited. GGC and ECO Girls both have a strong online presence and so I was able to locate many of their materials through their

website, including their curricula, mission statement, enrolment information, past events, and photos.

In total, I interviewed eighteen women in one-to-one interviews and forty girls in small focus groups. As noted in the introduction, I approached “girl” and “woman” with the recognition that there are no clear-cut boundaries between the two categories, a point that was reinforced in my experiences of being occasionally named as a “girl” on my field visits by some of the young women participating in the programs, and by the presence of paid interns in Green Girls that were still girls themselves but assigned roles that could be considered more “adult.” The girls participating in the programs ranged in age from seven to fourteen, and the youngest service provider that I interviewed was twenty and the oldest was in her sixties. Because the service providers were often quite busy during the camps and activities, most of our interviews took place after the events and in person or by phone, whereas the focus groups with the girls happened on site at the camp or in the event space.

My interview questions for service providers, which are reprinted in appendix B, were semi-structured and open-ended to leave room for them to digress and for spontaneity. For the service providers, the interview consisted of several parts. I asked them about 1) their reasons for getting involved, 2) their personal views about environmentalism, including whether they thought race, class, and gender had anything to do with environmentalism, 3) the work of the organization in relation to the girls 4) details about the organization and how they would describe its environmental perspective, 5) and whether they thought citizenship and/or environmental justice were important aspects of their organization’s environmentalism. The focus groups were different from the interviews in that I adhered to a set of structured, open-ended questions that asked girls about their views on the environment, their general experiences in the program, and

questions relating to specific activities (appendix C). While I assigned all of the girls pseudonyms and removed any information that could potentially identify them, I gave the service providers the option to self-identify or be assigned a pseudonym. I did so on the assumption that the service providers might want to have their work recognized. In most instances, the service providers chose to be identified, but for those that did not I assigned them a pseudonym, which is indicated by way of an asterisk beside their name. All of the interviews and focus groups were audio taped, transcribed, and the data coded using the program NVivo.

In analyzing each organization in the chapters that follow, I use many direct quotations. In the service providers' quotations, I removed unnecessary filler words such as "like" and "um" that I thought detract from the flow of ideas without compromising their integrity. The decision to do so was motivated by one service provider's concern for the number of filler words that she used in her interview, which she worried might take away from her stories. This was quite reasonable considering that she (along with most other service providers) had chosen to use her real name. I did, however, limit my edits to filler words only and preserved them in instances where they did add emphasis to a story or where they were followed by a long pause. The quotations from the girls, however, are reproduced verbatim because I felt that their conversational speech, which includes filler words, was an organic part of the dynamic exchanges that they had with each other and that any concerns they might have about their speech would be eased by their anonymity.

Finally, in this research I have allocated significantly more space to the voices of the service providers than to the voices of the girls. As indicated by my research questions, the goal of this dissertation is to explore how the organizations frame the environment and how they theorize girls' citizenships and their gendered relations to the environment. Because it has been

the role of education institutions to define what knowledge is worthy of teaching and to mould young people into particular kinds of citizens, my aim in this dissertation is to consider how environmental organizations for girls might reproduce these norms of knowledge and citizenship or challenge them. While girls are always agents and knowledge producers in their own right, their capacity to shape an organization will be limited by its structure and how much agency the service providers accord them. Because the service providers were the active agents in shaping the goals and making curricular decisions within the organizations, their voices subsequently have more prominence. A second reason for this choice is that the quality of information I received from the girls was less consistent than what I received from the service providers. While some of the girls related exceptional stories about their experiences and offered incisive, thoughtful reflections, for other girls the interviews meant time away from fun and friends. I believe that the focus group format was a better choice for collecting information from the girls because they were more relaxed in this setting and were able to reflect on their friends' answers and even debate issues with them. On the flipside, sometimes the conversations among the girls veered far off course from my questions and, while I appreciated these moments as an expression of their agency, they did not always yield relevant information for the research.

Further, I discovered that co-theorizing was really not possible for this research under the circumstances. Given that ECO Girls went into hibernation, the fieldwork came to an abrupt end and I was not able to engage in any further exchange with the service providers about their work within the program, with the exception of the program founder, Tiya. Many of the service providers in fact had moved on to other projects and taken job opportunities elsewhere. I wanted to have consistency in the data and in my analyses, and because it was impossible to engage in co-theorizing with ECO Girls, I subsequently did not pursue it with any of the organizations.

Further, co-theorizing was also not possible due to some of the challenges I faced in accessing the other programs, particularly GGC. As I have already noted, gaining admission into the field in GGC and access to the service providers and the girls was a complicated process. For these reasons, I resolved that I would explore the work of the three girls' organizations with the recognition that this research is limited by the fact that I could not facilitate a more collaborative project. Whenever it was possible, however, I sought clarification from the service providers and the girls about their insights during our focus groups and interviews when they were unclear.

Girl Guides of Canada

The Girl Guides of Canada is the oldest and largest organization of the three featured in this research. Robert Baden-Powell, as the official origin story goes, created the organization in 1909 in Britain after a small crowd of girls attired in homemade Scouts uniforms showed up at a Boy Scouts parade held at Crystal Palace in London. Baden-Powell, who had created the Boy Scouts two years earlier, had served in the Boer War in South Africa and founded the organization for boys upon his return to Britain to build up the characters of young men (see Chapter One).⁵⁷ Seeing the demand for a similar organization for girls, Baden-Powell created the Girl Guides of Great Britain and charged his sister, Agnes, with the task of overseeing it. Begun at a time when there was a dearth of programs for girls, the Guides grew rapidly and spread internationally through the colonial pathways of the British Dominions into Africa, Asia, and the Americas. In fact, the Guiding movement had an international presence even before the inception of an official Guiding Association in 1910, as girls had already been practicing scouting in India, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, and New Zealand before Guide units were officially established. In 1910, Mary Malcomson officially established the Guiding movement in Canada when she set up

the first unit in St. Catharines, Ontario, which was precipitated by the establishment of units in Toronto, Moose Jaw and Winnipeg that same year.⁵⁸

The aim of the organization is to foster citizenship for girls. In the early years of the organization, the Guiding motto, “Be Prepared,” was borrowed from the Boy Scouts and adapted to conform to a more gender-appropriate vision of citizenship for girls. According to the early manual *How Girls Can Help to Build Up the Empire* (1912), the goal was to show girls how they could train themselves in the domestic arts and strengthen their minds and bodies to be prepared for war, disaster, or life on Britain’s imperial frontiers. With the responsibility of “Guiding,” girls were expected to be prepared not for battle as the boys were, but to support the men on the front lines by caring for the sick and keeping home and hearth clean and organized. According to the manual, the goal was “to get girls to learn how to be women – self-helpful, happy, prosperous, and capable of keeping good homes and bringing up good children.”⁵⁹ From its inception, the Girl Guides envisioned itself as a supplement to formal instruction and professed to educate girls through amusing and instructive games. To quote directly from the manual:

1. CHARACTER AND INTELLIGENCE, through games, practices and activities, and honours tests for promotions.
2. SKILL AND HANDCRAFT, encouraged through badges for proficiency.
3. PHYSICAL HEALTH and HYGIENE, through development up to the standard by games and exercises designed for the purpose.
4. SERVICE FOR OTHERS and FELLOWSHIP, through daily good turns, organized public service, etc.⁶⁰

Early Guiding activities were focused on fostering good citizenship. In Toronto, some of the activities in which the girls participated included camping trips, rallies where guides marched, danced, played games and attended tea parties, and performed an honour guard for dignitaries.⁶¹ Girl Guides in Britain’s Dominions during the First World War supported the war effort by selling bonds, and the Toronto Guides participated by raising money at fairs and by

performing skits about Canada's role in the war. During the Second World War, Toronto Girl Guides again assisted by making bandages, sewing uniforms, and raising funds for the Red Cross.⁶² The early Girl Guide curriculum also emphasized woodcraft as an important element of girls' character development just as it did in the Scouts. Badges, offered as "continual inducements for girls to further improve themselves," were a central part of the program, and many of them were oriented toward the natural environment.⁶³ Nature-oriented badges included Bird Lover, Naturalist, Astronomer, Bee Farmer, Gardener, Poultry Farmer, and Dairymaid.⁶⁴ The early Girl Guides' manuals have a dedicated section for nature study and natural history activities for girls, and suggest that Guiders take their girls outside to study the leaves, berries, fruits and blossoms of trees and shrubs, monitor the growth of a crop, learn about agriculture and husbandry by assisting a farmer, start a garden and sell its produce, and visit local zoological gardens.⁶⁵ Like the Boy Scouts, camping was, from the organization's inception, a critical component of the character-building aims of the Girl Guide program. An early 1921 Girl Guiding manual explains that camp taught girls how to be resourceful: "in camp life we learn to do without so many things which while we are in houses we think are necessary, and find that we can do for ourselves many things where we used to think ourselves helpless."⁶⁶

During the First World War, the Guides emphasized patriotism, duty to country, and preparedness for times of war. In the interwar period, the Guides adopted a language of global citizenship and international sisterhood. As part of the organization's global presence and goal of Empire building, Guides were not uncommonly sent to Britain's Dominions and encouraged to attend international conferences that brought Guides together from many parts of the world. Although GGC has Christian roots, the organization is nondenominational and early on built in flexibility for individual units to tailor the Guiding Promise and program to their particular faith.

In line with its vision for international sisterhood and equality, the World Association for Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) in 1936 stated that a facet of its mission was to have “a movement open to all girls without distinction of creed, race, class or nationality,” goals, however, that were challenged by the racial segregation in units in South Africa and the United States and by racist comments expressed by movement leaders.⁶⁷

Since 1910, the GGC has instituted changes, but as a recent promotional video marking the organization’s 100th birthday argues, its spirit is largely unchanged as the organization continues to emphasize friendship and service.⁶⁸ There are, however, notable changes to the GGC’s Promise and Law. The Promise and Law are sets of shared values that unite Girl Guides worldwide and that are recited at meeting openings and/or closings through song and ceremonies, or during special events like Thinking Day or at camp.⁶⁹ The 1910 lines in the Promise that pledged to “do your duty to God and the King” and “obey the law of the Guides” have since been changed so that the Promise reads: “I promise to do my best / To be true to myself, my beliefs and Canada / I will take action for a better world / And respect the Guiding [or Brownie] Law.”⁷⁰ In the Guide Law, the 1912 references to girls being “loyal,” “pure in thought, words, and deeds,” obedient, “cheery,” and smiling at all times have also been dropped, while the language around being “thrifty” and “a friend to all” have been modernized to reflect the current concerns about using our “resources wisely” and promoting the values of “sisterhood.”⁷¹

The overall mission of the organization according to its most recent formulation is that “Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada enables girls to be confident, resourceful and courageous, and to make a difference in the world,” and the guiding principles state that:

Guiding is based on the ideals of the Promise and Law.
Guiding develops personal values and well-being, self-respect and respect for others.

Guiding promotes fun, friendship, adventures and challenges through new experiences.
Guiding celebrates pride in accomplishment.
Guiding develops leadership and decision-making skills.
Guiding teaches practical skills and teamwork.
Guiding gives service.
Guiding values the natural environment.
Guiding develops an appreciation of Canada and its diversity.
Guiding fosters cultural understanding and knowledge of the global community.
Guiding actively supports the worldwide sisterhood of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts.⁷²

Although the references to character development have been deleted from the manuals, GGC emphasizes self-improvement and helpfulness toward others, particularly through friendship and service, and encourages girls to become “better global citizens” by engaging in community service at home and abroad.⁷³ With respect to environmentalism and the natural environment, GGC espouses an environmental ethic rooted in respect for nature:

Since its inception, Girl Guides of Canada has been at the forefront of raising awareness about environmental issues and offering programs that inspire girls to explore the natural world. In a world where it seems that youth have fewer opportunities to explore and discover, Guiding offers girls accessible, hands-on opportunities to experience adventure. Whether it’s Sparks exploring the hidden beauty of an urban park or Pathfinders planning their first overnight canoe trip, Guiding gives girls and young women the chance to explore the natural world in whatever way that interests them. And while society is slowly discovering the imperative of being eco-savvy, it’s not just a trend at Girl Guides of Canada – it’s at the core of what we’ve always done.⁷⁴

The desire to become “eco-savvy” has induced the organization to add environmental badges such as Ecology, Conservation, Endangered Species, and Water to its curriculum.

Today, there are units in every Canadian province, and membership sits at 90,000. While GGC is a national organization with a national curriculum, it is subdivided into provincial councils for administrative purposes and is often further subdivided into areas, districts, and communities.⁷⁵ The Guides, along with its American counterpart, the Girl Scouts, make up the largest voluntary organization for girls in the world. The Guides internationally recognizes

several different age groupings, including Sparks (girls aged five to seven), Brownies (seven to eight), Guides (nine to eleven), Pathfinders (twelve to fourteen), and Rangers (fifteen to seventeen and older). The women who volunteer in the units are referred to as “Guiders,” and are often mothers to one or several girls in their unit or former Guides themselves. While units vary in size from just a few girls to thirty in a single unit, Brownies and Guides are by far the most popular age ranges. However, there are local variances that manifest in unit size. The two units in this study, the Wychwood Guides and the Malvern Brownies, are dissimilar to one another in size and composition. While the Wychwood Guides unit is at capacity every year with its enrolment of thirty girls and still more girls on their waitlist, the Malvern Brownie unit consistently demonstrates an average of eight to twelve girls each year. For both units, meetings run throughout the school year and consist of a two hour weekly gathering that takes place on a weeknight evening, the occasional full-day weekend activity or sleep over, and the occasional camping trip, typically once or twice a year.⁷⁶ To participate in the program, girls must apply, pay an enrolment fee of approximately \$160 and over the course of the Guiding season, sell cookies to help raise funds for unit activities and field trips. In addition, it is standard for units to collect weekly dues from individual girls, which typically range from \$0.50 to \$1.50. To defray the costs for enrolment fees for low-income girls, GGC makes subsidies available to girls in need of financial assistance and offers “Camperships” that help alleviate the cost of camping trips.

Unlike the other two organizations in this study, GGC does not collect demographic information from the girls who enroll in their programs. However, anecdotal observation from Guiders, although imperfect, was helpful to give a broad sketch of the demographic patterns within individual units and in the organization as a whole. Two of the Guiders that I interviewed described the organization on a national level as a “very white organization” or at least an

organization that carries the stereotype of being a “white girl program,” a label which the organization is trying to shed in recent marketing campaigns that promote diversity and inclusion. Two Guiders attributed the organization’s whiteness to the fact that it was historically Christian and British and that most of the small towns and rural communities in Canada where many of the units are located are predominantly white. Despite the overall higher representation of white girls in the organization at a national level, some urban units demonstrate local variances in racial and class composition that may shift from one year to another. Nikki, for instance, described her Scarborough unit from 2013-2014 as being 50 percent white, a demographic which shifted in the 2014-2015 cycle to being predominantly Black and South Asian. In another interview that I conducted with Shannon*, a Guider from Vancouver, BC, I was told that one year the girls in her unit might be “all blonde kids” and the next year, half of Asian heritage. Recently in London, Ontario, a Somalian mom founded a Muslim Girl Guides unit that incorporates Islam into guiding activities while still remaining open to girls of all races and faiths, a unit that is the first of its kind in Canada.⁷⁷ While these local variances are an effect of the urban location of some units, they are not a determining factor, seeing as there are neighborhoods and units in Toronto that are predominantly white.

The two units with which I carried out my fieldwork are a Brownies unit in Malvern (Scarborough) and a Guide unit in Wychwood (midtown Toronto). Although they belong to the same organization, the units are very different, and in fact their differences attest to the spatial inequalities that characterize the city. The Wychwood Guides unit meets in a church basement in a neighbourhood formerly known as Bracondale Hill, a historical area of Toronto that was first established as a gated community by a landscape painter in the late nineteenth century.⁷⁸ Now called Hillcrest or more commonly, Wychwood, the neighbourhood is upper-middle class and

predominantly white, with only 28 percent of residents belonging to a visible minority group.⁷⁹ Because there is a scarcity of Guiding units in this area of the city, the Wychwood unit draws girls not only from the immediate neighbourhood but also from surrounding areas as far south as Bloor Street and as far north as Eglinton Ave. Despite its large catchment area, the Wychwood unit is predominantly white and does not reflect the racial and income diversity of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). It does, however, reflect a demographic shift that has been taking place in the inner-city core. Although Toronto is recognized as one of the most multicultural cities in the world that purportedly embraces racial diversity, the city core is becoming increasingly white and affluent. The number of middle-income (mixed-income) neighbourhoods has shrunk from 66 percent to 29 percent between 1970 and 2005, while the proportion of low-income neighborhoods has jumped from 19 percent to 53 percent.⁸⁰ Poverty in Toronto has been growing and it has become increasingly segregated away from the inner-city core. In the 1970s, the largest concentrations of low-income communities in Toronto were downtown, and with gentrification, they have been pushed to the perimeters of the city, mainly into the inner suburbs in its northeastern and northwestern corners: Etobicoke, East York, North York, and Scarborough.⁸¹

This spatial demographic reversal is the product of changes in the global economy and at the local city level. Geographer Jason Hackworth has written about the neoliberal city trend and has observed a pattern that he refers to as the “neoliberal spatial fix” whereby cities are continuing to develop outer suburbs and are re-investing in downtown city cores while disinvesting in older suburban cores.⁸² Since the 1970s, Toronto has transformed itself from a manufacturing city to a world financial centre and has grown its knowledge and service industries in order to mitigate the effects of decreased government funding and keep pace with

an increasingly internationalizing economy. To position itself as a leader in the competitive global economy, the City developed new vision statements and policies in the early 2000s that reoriented investment toward the city centre and encouraged residential and commercial intensification in the city core, which caused it to gentrify. The City's vision statements specifically singled out the arts and culture sector as an effective means to attract knowledge economy workers and private investors to live, work in and develop the city centre, which Toronto planners hoped would transform Toronto into a city renowned for its beautiful public spaces, culture, and entrepreneurialism for new economy workers. However, as environmental justice scholar Cheryl Teelucksingh points out, the gentrification of downtown Toronto to welcome new economy workers has also created a need for unskilled, cheap labour to meet the demand of its growing service economy. Toronto's internationalization has in some instances created and in others exacerbated a racialized division of labour between highly paid professional workers and unskilled, minimum-wage earning workers, the latter, for the most part, being new immigrants to Canada.⁸³

In light of the rising levels of poverty in Toronto's inner suburbs and in the cores of some outer suburbs, the City in 2004 in collaboration with The United Way has identified "Priority Communities" and "Neighborhood Improvement Areas" (NIA) in the GTA for "targeted investment." With the development of neoliberal policies that favour business development over sustained investment in social welfare, Toronto has pushed low-income communities and communities of colour (including new immigrants) into the city's dilapidated suburbs where there is inadequate access to health care facilities, educational and training opportunities, public transportation, and even basic amenities such as grocery stores, all of which present serious environmental justice issues for the people who live there. The program identifying Priority

Communities brings together different levels of government, the business community, community service providers and researchers to revitalize the inner-city suburbs through funding grants. However, it has been criticized for stigmatizing poor, racialized communities and their spaces in the city and for failing to account adequately for the ways in which the increasingly dilapidated infrastructure of the city's inner suburbs is a product of the city's neoliberal planning policies. In fact, a City of Toronto report warned in 1971 what would happen to suburbs with continued disinvestment, an observation that was ignored in future planning reports.

Malvern, the community to which the Brownie unit that participated in this research belongs, was identified as a Priority Community in 2005. Like many of Toronto's suburbs, Malvern, which is a community of around 50,000 people in the northeastern reaches of the GTA, has a very high immigrant population (61.7 percent according to 2006 census data) that is predominantly Chinese, South Asian, Black, and Filipino. Malvern also has an unusually high youth population and higher than average rates of poverty, unemployment, single-parent households, gun violence, crime, and domestic violence, problems that are generated and exacerbated by the shortage of social services in the community.⁸⁴ Since its designation as a Priority Community, some gains have been made in the form of a new youth centre, community gardening projects, a community market, and youth training programs through Ontario College of Art and Design and George Brown College to address the educational attainment gaps and the food security issues in the neighbourhood. One beneficial outcome of this program for the Brownie unit has been their ability to access the school in which they meet free of charge.

However, Malvern lost its priority status in the 2014 city rankings, despite the continuing high rates of unemployment and lower levels of youth educational attainment, because it scored one point over the "priority" threshold which put it into the category of "Neighborhood

Improvement Area.”⁸⁵ This new designation means that Malvern is no longer entitled to the same level of funding that would otherwise provide the community with much needed services. While Nikki, the lead Guider in the Brownie unit, did not indicate whether this change would affect her unit, she did mention that the girls are mixed income, which reflects the diversity of Malvern, and that the financial costs of activities were a concern for several participating girls.

Green Girls

The private nonprofit organization City Parks Foundation (CPF) founded Green Girls in 2002 in New York City. CPF created Green Girls out of concern for the underrepresentation of girls in science careers and lack of science programming for girls. Aimed at girls ten to thirteen years of age living in the boroughs outside of Manhattan – Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island and the Bronx – Green Girls’ mandate is “to excite middle school girls of colour, living in high-needs neighborhoods, about environmental science.”⁸⁶ With its particular focus on environmental science, Green Girls serves girls to meet the following objectives:

- To increase young women’s knowledge and interest in science and environmental issues that concern their communities;
- To foster confidence and skills in sciences, particularly around the scientific process and problem-solving;
- To expose young women to careers in the sciences;
- To provide young women from low-income areas of NYC with access to nature and green spaces; and,
- To inspire young women to build the science skills necessary to become the problem solvers of tomorrow.⁸⁷

Over the course of its lifespan, Green Girls has made its home base in Young Women’s Leadership Schools, public middle schools and a local YMCA in different areas of the city’s five boroughs. In the last few years, the program has given preference to girls living in Long Island City (L.I.C.), Queens, the Bronx, and Brooklyn to ensure that it is reaching girls of colour in

underserved areas. Using New York's city parks and urban green spaces as "learning laboratories," Green Girls has based its curriculum in hands-on learning that takes the girls all over the city on field trips. The girls have gone on excursions to test the water quality at Kaiser Park in Brooklyn, they have been canoeing in the Bronx River, they have developed environmental action plans, and they have learned bird identification in Forest Park Overlook in Queens.

The environmental learning that is so central to Green Girls is reflective of the overall mandate of CPF. A private nonprofit established in 1989, CPF offers programs that aim to connect people with their community parks in all five boroughs of New York through education, sport and recreation, culture, and the arts. Serving over 600 parks, CPF strives to get people involved with their parks, generate a sense of community, and encourage stewardship. CPF focuses especially on parks in low- to moderate-income areas of the city where green spaces tend to be underfunded and underserved. It offers free performance events such as *SummerStage* and fitness programs for youth and seniors; it also provides funding and skills training through Partnerships for Parks, a public-private partnership with the City's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) which funds projects and recruits volunteers and community groups to improve NYC parks. Most important to this research, CPF offers a number of education programs for youth such as Coastal Classroom, Seeds to Trees, Learning Garden, and Green Girls, all of which connect young people to their community gardens, forests and waterfronts while providing them with environmental education opportunities.

What differentiates Green Girls from other CPF programs is its gendered approach: Green Girls recognizes that girls, and particularly girls of colour, have fewer opportunities to engage in environmental learning and to pursue careers in the environmental sciences. In

addition to the objectives of the program that I have already outlined, Green Girls seeks to expose girls to women working in the STEM fields of science, engineering, technology and other “green” fields and to provide returning Green Girls with internship opportunities to assist in mentoring girls who are new to the program.

Another important aspect of Green Girls’ mandate is to educate girls about environmental justice issues in their own communities. The CPF blog states that “Green Girls provides middle-school girls with intensive summer experiences that enrich their understanding of science and environmental justice issues, familiarize them with New York City’s vast natural and institutional resources, and promote leadership and life skills.”⁸⁸ Green Girls’ activities “address a variety of science subject matter, including environmental education, ecology, biology, geology, zoology, and botany. Sessions encompass an array of environmental and environmental justice issues that focus on community problems and the need for green spaces, water conservation, air quality and the natural world.”⁸⁹

Like other CPF programs that have the mandate of being accessible for the communities that they serve, Green Girls is free, although girls must apply through the CFP website and preference is given to girls from Astoria, L.I.C. and Queens. The organization has served between fourteen and twenty-six girls each year since its inception, and they are allowed to enroll in the program for up to two years, after which they can apply to participate in the program as paid interns. Green Girls’ commitment to serving girls of colour in low-income communities was reflected in the program’s choice of the Young Women’s Leadership School (YWLS) in Harlem as its partner and host institution in its first years, given that YWLS is dedicated to providing quality single-sex education to low-income girls. In 2014, the program was predominantly represented by African-American (44 percent) and Hispanic/Latina (33

percent) girls, with the remaining girls identified as Nepali, Caribbean-Chinese, white, Black-Latina, and Asian-white.

Given that there have been several Directors of Education at CPF over the years due to changes in staff, Green Girls' structure has also undergone a number of changes. When the program was launched in 2002, it was offered to senior girls enrolled in an environmental science class at the Young Women's Leadership School. The next year, in an attempt to reach girls who have fewer opportunities to study science, Green Girls was offered as a one-week intensive program in the summer and an after-school program in the Fall and Winter in East Harlem. In 2003, it was moved to the Bronx to shift the program's focus away from already well-resourced Manhattan to areas that are underserved. Although Green Girls continued to grow its summer program since 2003, expanding it from a one-week intensive program to a four-week program in July-August, Green Girls ceased its after-school program in 2005 only to reactivate it again in the fall of 2013 at a middle school in Queens.⁹⁰ Currently, Green Girls is running its after-school program on alternating Fridays at a middle school in L.I.C., with each meeting lasting approximately two hours. The summer camp in June has also been expanded by one week to a total of five weeks and runs Mondays to Thursdays from 9am to 3pm.

The Green Girls' team is made up of three core staff members that are hired to work in CPF's Department of Education, and who split their time between CPF's different education programs for youth. This team of three is responsible for planning the curriculum, managing the program, and teaching, and all three are supervised by the Director of Education, who, during the time of this research was Debra Sue Lorenzen. This team does not receive any training. As Debra Sue indicated, she hired them based on their previous teaching experience and comprehension of youth development. The staff, however, act as mentors and supervisors to the team of interns that

CPF hires to work in the Green Girls Summer Institute and its other youth education programs each year. The interns are all paid, and include undergraduate students hired through the City Department of Parks and Recreation and from a pool of Green Girls alumnae.

The school at which Green Girls currently meets, the Oliver Holmes IS 204 School, is located in L.I.C., an area of Queens which borders the neighbourhoods of Astoria and Ravenswood to its northwest. L.I.C., like other boroughs of New York City outside Manhattan, is plagued with significant environmental justice problems that come as a result of local and international policy decisions.

Over most of the twentieth century, local and federal governments developed policies that favoured suburban development and disinvested in inner-city neighbourhoods, leaving countless urban communities to decay without proper amenities and infrastructure to support their poorest residents. As the middle class fled to the less polluted, more sparsely populated suburbs in the mid-century, the decrease in tax revenues, coupled with the lack of federal support and the increasing municipal debt, left the City of New York in financial crisis by the 1970s.⁹¹ In order to pull the city out of debt in the 1980s and 1990s, a succession of mayors instituted neoliberal reforms geared towards urban renewal and redirected spending that was previously earmarked for public services to create tax incentives for businesses, major corporations, and private developers to redevelop the choicest areas of Manhattan.⁹² Manhattan once again has become a space of enormous wealth disparity, but it is now occupied on one hand by a smaller number of highly educated, highly skilled, and highly paid professionals who work and reside in the city core, and on the other by a transient but large number of poorly-paid and unskilled service industry workers who commute from the peripheries of the city to work in the gentrified core.⁹³ An astounding 20.6 percent of New Yorkers currently live below the poverty line and the

income inequality gap is widening.⁹⁴ Furthermore, while the city is racially and ethnically diverse, the reality is that New York City is highly racially segregated. A recent map of the demographic distribution of New York City shows that Manhattan is overwhelmingly white and represented by homeowners, while the more peripheral spaces like Harlem, the Bronx, and some parts of Brooklyn, and L.I.C. are predominantly Black, Latino, and Asian renters.⁹⁵

The racialized and class spatialities of injustice in New York City are also due in large part to the zoning ordinances implemented beginning in 1916. To regulate land use and building density and protect the property values in Manhattan's business, shopping districts, and elite residential enclaves, over the last century, the city implemented zoning designations that effectively relocated manufacturing and crowded low-income housing to other parts of the city. In 1875, the shores of L.I.C. on the East River were lined with oil refineries, turpentine, varnish, dye, and other chemical manufacturers, iron and steel foundries, canning companies, and in the twentieth century, a munitions factory and a gas and electrical plant, the latter which was at the time the largest of its kind in the world.⁹⁶ Manufacturing contaminated the soils and waterways of East River and Newtown Creek and drove the land values down, which made the site affordable for the city to purchase it to build the Queensbridge Houses in 1940, which became the largest public housing project in the United States. Just a few blocks north of the Queensbridge Houses lie the Ravenswood Houses, and to the south of Queensbridge, the Astoria Houses, all of which are low income and predominantly Black and Latino/a.

The Ravenswood Power Plant, located 2.25 kilometres (1.4 miles) from the school, was reported in 2014 to be the dirtiest power plant in the state of New York for its high CO₂ emissions. It is one power plant among the six that stretch from the Bronx down to Astoria which, with the added emissions from highway transportation and the barges that pass along the

East River, have earned this area the title of “asthma alley.” Furthermore, Newtown Creek, which lies to the south of L.I.C., was designated a Superfund site in 2010 by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and is considered to be the nation’s most contaminated waterway.⁹⁷ According to the EPA, scientists have found that the creek is contaminated with pesticides, metals, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), a legacy left by the more than 50 refineries that were sited along the edge of the creek.⁹⁸ L.I.C. also became the destination for the sex industry after Mayor Giuliani passed legislation banning strip joints and sex shops from Manhattan.

Even with the high rates of pollution along asthma alley in L.I.C. today, this landscape is changing. In the 1970s, factories in Queens and in other industrial areas of the city began moving out into the suburbs or offshore, leaving their old sites to decay. In 2001, the New York City Department of City Planning rezoned a thirty-four-block area of L.I.C., Court Square and Queen’s Plaza, to make room for new commercial and residential developments in what was otherwise a brownfield zone comprised of low-rise warehouses, manufacturers, auto repair shops and low-income housing. Desirable for its proximity and easy access to Manhattan, this area of L.I.C. is gentrifying and the high rents are squeezing out both manufacturing and low-income residents.⁹⁹

In 2007, the city instituted a new sustainability plan, PlaNYC, which proposed to use tax credits to give developers incentives to clean up and redevelop contaminated brownfield sites. However, critics have noted that assistance for cleanup is being allocated to areas that already have competitive real estate markets and that the majority of the funds are not going to cleanup but are instead being put to redevelopment costs that ultimately profit developers.¹⁰⁰ L.I.C. is becoming a haven for middle- and upper-income earners of the creative class who desire quick

access to Manhattan's bustling core. This gentrification is pushing communities of colour and low-income communities further into the margins of the sprawling metropolis and re-spatializing entrenched patterns of economic and racial inequalities. Although limited space confines my discussion of environmental justice issues in New York to the area of L.I.C. in Queens, environmental justice scholar Julie Sze, in her book *Noxious New York* (2007), provides an in-depth look at many other significant environmental justice issues that have shaped the city and explores the campaigns that communities of colour have developed in response to them.

ECO Girls

Founded in 2011 by University of Michigan (U of M) professor Tiya Miles, ECO girls is a nonprofit organization based in Ann Arbor, Michigan that links girls to the environment through "culture." Offered as a week-long intensive overnight camp in the month of July and as day-long events held on one Saturday each month throughout the school year, ECO girls serves girls aged seven to twelve years and attracts girls from urban areas in Southeast Michigan, including Detroit, Ann Arbor, and Ypsilanti. The program, anchored in U of M's Department of AfroAmerican and African Studies (DAAS), was created and initiated by Tiya who launched the project using a portion of the MacArthur Fellowship awarded to her in 2011 for her academic research on the intersections of Native-American and African-American history.

The idea for creating ECO girls came to Tiya through a string of experiences that exposed her to environmental justice issues and their impacts on poor communities and communities of colour. In 2005, she witnessed from afar the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina especially on African Americans, and in 2007, Tiya joined a toxic tour of Detroit organized by the organization MELDI, Multicultural Environmental Leadership Development

Initiative, where she saw environmental injustices. These profound environmental injustices, both local and national, in combination with Tiya's personal experience of raising young twin daughters, inspired her to create an organization for girls that promotes environmental thinking, stewardship, and healthy girl identities through ecological learning and cultural programming. Although Tiya came up with the idea for the organization and initially financed it with her own funds, she shaped it with the help of several colleagues in or affiliated with the DAAS at U of M, including professor Elizabeth James, former graduate Alyx Cadotte, in addition to professor Dorceta Taylor, the latter who Tiya subsequently invited to be in ECO Girls' advisory group, comprised of faculty members, researchers, and community organizations. ECO Girls' mission, as outlined on the website, aims

to foster environmental awareness and stewardship, ecological literacy, cultural education, friendship building, self-confidence, and leadership skills for elementary and middle school girls in the southeastern Michigan cities of Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Detroit. ECO Girls has the goal of encouraging girls to integrate environmentalism into their lives, share environmental knowledge with their communities, and contribute to environmental problem solving as future thinkers and leaders. Because cultural practice shapes personal and communal identities and therefore has the power to facilitate social change, ECO Girls treats culture as a critical link in the advancement of ecological consciousness and the vision of a just, sustainable future.¹⁰¹

The program fosters environmental awareness, ecological learning, self-confidence and community through the various activities, workshops, and field trips. Since its inception six years ago, ECO girls has organized events such as apple picking and workshops on cooking healthy, organic food; a sustainable dollhouse event where girls built "green" dollhouses from recycled materials; a trip to a community-run urban garden in Detroit that mobilizes around food security; and an overnight trip to the U of M's biological station to learn about marine ecology. These scheduled events and field trips have been available to girls as half-day events held biweekly through September to March, and in a concentrated week of camp in June known as "Camp

Bluestem,” where the girls stay in a U of M dorm for five days packed with activities, workshops, and field trips.

The organization is run and operated by a racially diverse group of three paid staff members and eight-to-ten long-term and short-term unpaid volunteers, some of which are undergraduate student interns, who work collaboratively to facilitate both the half-day events and camp week. A unique feature of this program is that the internships are built into three courses, each belonging to the U of M departments of Sociology, DAAS, and Women’s Studies, which are designed to furnish undergraduate students with community service experience to complement their coursework. The undergraduate students are supervised by Elizabeth James, who is a professor in DAAS and doubles as the department’s outreach coordinator. Elizabeth provides the students with critical feedback on their reflexive papers and assignments that allows them to develop the pedagogical building blocks for working with girls. All other staff members and volunteers receive training from more senior staff members, from invited speakers, and from regular program planning meetings in which the team does “check-ins” and plans events. The organization also has an advisory board made up of faculty and community partners who have expertise in a wide variety of fields.

The program is targeted to girls in grades two to seven, divided into two groups: the “Roots” group, which includes girls seven to nine years of age, and the “Shoots” group comprised of girls aged ten to twelve years. Both Roots and Shoots can participate in the school year program, however the camp is only offered to the older group. Girls, with the help of their parents, are required to apply to the program, and preference is given “to girls with less access to green spaces and/or environmental education opportunities.”¹⁰² The organization serves twenty-seven to thirty girls every year and demonstrates a commitment to diversity. Not only are most of

the staff members women of colour, but also the girls participating in the program between 2011 and 2013 were ethnically and racially diverse with 57 percent of them identified as African/African American, 11 percent Afro Native, and 7.14 percent as Hispanic or Caucasian. In addition to the grant funds from the McArthur Fellowship that Tiya put toward the program, ECO Girls is funded by grants from a variety of sources, including local businesses, and from voluntary family contributions from enrolment. The cost for a full-day event (three to six hours, once a month) in ECO Girls is \$20. The program offers scholarships on a sliding scale for girls from families with financial need, which parents can identify by noting their average household income on the enrolment form.

Culture is at the heart of the program's mandate. The "ECO" of ECO Girls stands for "Environmental and Cultural Opportunities for Girls." In the origin story that she wrote for the program, Tiya notes that

I always imagined ECO Girls as an environmental humanities project that linked nature with creative expression and the cultural aspects of our daily lives. I am convinced that people relate to nature through cultural values and stories—things that their families did or their communities cherished. In order to teach about environmental issues, I felt we needed to include story, creativity, and cultural values as a major component of the project.¹⁰³

Culture, then, refers both to seeing environmentalism through racial diversity and through the arts and creative practice. The ECO Girls website provides a conceptual description of the organization's "eco-cultural" curriculum and philosophies, which are organized under the "Five Pines," and include Ecological Literacy, Water, Food, Energy, and Sustainability. ECO Girls' curricular pillars, according to the website, form a kind of grove or forest modeled on the ecological values of interdependence, diversity and community.¹⁰⁴

In addition to the five themes, the organization has four curricular layers, which include: 1) connecting with the natural world; building confidence and community across cultures; 2)

experiencing neighbouring wild places, communities and cities through different cultural lenses; acquiring knowledge about how natural systems work and how humans are connected to them; 3) learning useful skills, problem solving; and 4) developing a critical consciousness about consumption and waste production, about imagining creative alternatives through a range of cultural experiences that foster “stewardship, sustainable and resilient life habits,” and building community citizenship through participation and service.¹⁰⁵ The curricular layers reflect ECO Girls’ view that creating opportunities to connect with nature, in addition to learning about a diversity of cultural values and community strengths, will help girls develop a sense of place in the world and a sense of empowerment that comes with having a secure grounding in one’s place. These things combined can help girls make positive changes in their community environments.

ECO Girls’ overarching philosophies are those of environmental justice and ecofeminism. To quote again from the website:

With an environmental justice commitment at its center, ECO Girls especially aims to reach girls of colour and girls in economically challenged areas who have less access to green spaces, whose neighborhoods too often become dumping grounds for pollution, and whose communities are under-informed about the effects and risks of global climate change and natural resource depletion. The conceptualization of ECO Girls also accepts the thesis of ecofeminist scholars that environmental issues profoundly affect women and girls. All over the world (with variations in definition and degree depending on geography and wealth) women and girls carry out domestic and community activities (such as gathering water & biomass for fuel, nursing babies, feeding families) that are dependent on natural resources within degraded environmental contexts. In economically privileged nations like the U.S., women frequently direct household shopping and consumption norms; they are therefore situated at the cross-roads of culture change for families and communities regarding the creation (and recovery) of sustainable life ways.¹⁰⁶

At the conclusion of ECO Girls events, the girls collectively say a recitation to “focus our thoughts and gather a shared sense of purpose at the end of our time together” (appendix D).¹⁰⁷

The decay that Tiya witnessed on the toxic tour she took in Detroit speaks to the spatial inequalities that render the city and its environs a space of environmental injustice for its poor and African-American residents. Southeast Michigan, which is part of America's Rust Belt, once had a thriving manufacturing economy that made this area the automotive production centre of the United States and the nation's most important economic driver in the early- to mid-twentieth century. Detroit, which was the capital of the automotive industry, supported a network of manufacturing in Chicago, Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Akron, Cincinnati, Toledo, Dayton, Cleveland, and Milwaukee, and when Detroit began to decline after auto and munitions manufacturing peaked in the 1940s and 1950s and companies like Ford began relocating their factories to reduce production costs, many cities followed Detroit in its decline.¹⁰⁸ Deindustrialization caused unemployment, poverty, disinvestment in the city core and subsequently, white flight to the suburbs.

Early industrialization in the north and the promise of jobs had attracted African Americans from the south in the early twentieth century, and deindustrialization in these regions has without a doubt hit these communities the hardest, creating some of the largest pockets of poverty today for African Americans in the United States. Detroit in particular has since the 1950s transformed from a majority white city (83.58 percent) to a majority African-American one (82.7 percent) and the median income currently sits at \$26,325, which is about half of the state average.¹⁰⁹ Detroit's population continues a steady decline and has witnessed a reduction in population from 1.85 million in 1950 to 677,116 in 2015, along with two-thirds of its businesses between the years of 1972-2002.¹¹⁰ Formerly known as Motor City, Detroit is now renowned for its entire neighbourhoods of crumbling, burnt-out houses, home foreclosures, and its ever growing number of vacant lots which are gradually being reclaimed by nature.

The flight of the auto plants and of working-class and middle-income earners into the suburbs resulted in the creation of a class of “long-term unemployed” workers, most of which were African American. As Detroit’s population continued to plummet from outmigration, exacerbated further by the 2008 recession that caused a further drop in incomes, jobs, and property values, the city’s tax base eroded so significantly that Detroit filed for municipal bankruptcy in 2013. In certain areas, the vacant lots outnumber the properties that are inhabited, and the city of Detroit, with its diminished tax base, has been unable meet the infrastructural needs of its sparsely distributed population. In order bolster its tax base, the city’s emergency manager has implemented austerity measures to cut spending by reducing city services, and to increase revenues by raising property taxes and utility rates.

Currently, Detroit has the highest property taxes in the country, even surpassing those of New York City, and has the highest income taxes in the state of Michigan. However, the high taxes in Detroit are incommensurate with the quality of services offered to its residents and further abet the high levels of poverty and unemployment. With soaring rates of unemployment and underemployment, many of Detroit’s poorest residents are unable to pay the high taxes and utility rates and have subsequently had their water shut off. In 2014 and 2015, the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department cut off water to thousands of homes, which sparked protests among city residents and garnered the attention of the UN, which condemned the shutoffs as a “violation of the human right to water.”¹¹¹ As the Detroit People’s Water Board has noted, “the case of water cut-offs in the City of Detroit speaks to the deep racial divides and intractable economic and social inequality in access to services within the United States. The burden of paying for city services has fallen onto the residents who have stayed within the economically depressed city, most of whom are African American.”¹¹²

In addition to the high utility rates, many of Detroit's underemployed, unemployed, and/or disabled homeowners are dealing with the burdens of high property taxes and are losing their homes to foreclosures. Due to educational budget cuts, they are also losing their local schools, which are being consolidated or shut down only to be replaced with market-driven and non-unionized public charter schools.¹¹³ In an effort to reduce infrastructure spending, the city has developed a plan to shrink its services and relocate residents to a smaller geographical area of the city, a plan which has been met with resistance from long-time residents who recall a history of forced removals in places like Black Bottom and Poletown that have displaced entire communities, many of them African American, and contributed to their poverty.¹¹⁴ With an estimated 59 percent of Detroit's children in living in poverty and two-thirds of Detroit's population without access to basic housing and health care, the shrinking city plan does not hold much promise to alleviate the environmental injustice problems facing its residents.¹¹⁵

According to a report released by the Center for Labor and Community Studies at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, the area of Washtenaw County of Southeast Michigan, which includes Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, has weathered the economic depression associated with the Rust Belt's deindustrialization quite well because, with public universities located in each of these cities along with regional health centers and tech firms in Ann Arbor, it has developed and sustained a knowledge economy that has resulted in job growth.¹¹⁶ Ann Arbor, only a forty-five minute drive from Detroit, has been prospering. A small but affluent city of 117,770 people, Ann Arbor's population of African-American residents is a mere 7.7 percent compared to Detroit's 82 percent. Housing prices are high as are levels of educational attainment, and the city has good public schools and enjoys a high standard of living.

Ann Arbor's smaller neighbor, Ypsilanti, has in some ways suffered a similar fate to Detroit. Ypsilanti is a small township (population 19,435) that had been an important player in the automotive industry. Since 2000, Ypsilanti has had a number of automotive plant closures and, like Detroit, has suffered the consequences from a declining manufacturing base. Ypsilanti has a high concentration of low-income housing and a poverty rate of 30 percent. The flipside of the growth of knowledge high-skilled economy jobs in Ann Arbor is that there has been a growth in low-skilled service jobs, which widens the cleavage between high- and low-income earners. The Center for Labor report finds that while higher income earners' wages have increased slightly, low-wage jobs are increasing in number and low wages are dropping even further.¹¹⁷ Given that Ann Arbor lacks affordable housing, many of its service workers must commute from their homes in Ypsilanti, where rents and housing values are much more affordable.¹¹⁸

Theorizing girls' citizenships

My discussion of girls' citizenships and the environmental problems local to each city in which the organizations are anchored foregrounds the lens through which I analyze each organization and the conversations I had with the women and girls. I examine girls' citizenships through a feminist lens that understands that girls, because of their gender and age, are often positioned as citizens-in-the-making, while being denied many of the privileges accorded to "adult" citizens. Because of their status as not-quite-citizens in a society permeated by racism, sexism, homophobia, income inequality, and ableism, and because girls come of age in a capitalist society that sexualizes and eroticizes them, they are particularly vulnerable to violence. I approached this research with the same assumption that Brown and Taft make about girls'

organizations generally: that the purpose of many programs is to regulate them and to articulate their citizenships away from the realm of politics and public engagement.

The second important theoretical lens that informs this research is that of ecological feminist environmental justice. I see the environment as deeply embedded in cultural practices and identities. As shown in Chapters One and Two, how we define the “environment” and what counts as an environmental problem are very much connected to our social locations, our cultural milieu, and the kinds of environments we spend (or don’t spend) our time in. Public policy decisions about where to site an industrial facility, where to build a park, and which neighbourhoods should be the focus of cleanup, remediation, and renewal are all bound up in relationships of power and systemic inequalities rooted in race, class, gender, and income inequality.

Despite the fact that the environmental justice movement originated in the United States and is shaped by American race, gender, class, and environmental politics, the lens of environmental justice is relevant to the Canadian context as well. As Julian Agyeman, Peter Cole, Randolph Haluza-Delay and Pat O’Riley argue in *Speaking for Ourselves* (2009), there “have been environmental justice movements in Canada for centuries (if not millennia),” but that they have not been labeled as such because they have been taken up within social justice and human rights movements, nor have environmental justice concerns in Canada garnered significant media attention.¹¹⁹ Agyeman and his colleagues observe that the colonization of Indigenous peoples in Canada and the theft of their lands marks one of the oldest instances of environmental injustice in Canadian history. Indigenous peoples in Canada are the most impacted by environmental injustice, bearing the burden of economic development and resource extraction that often decimates their lands at a great cost but with little benefit to their

communities, and the costs of toxic accumulation in their bodies from local and international pollution sources. Indigenous peoples have been at the forefront of environmental justice campaigns in Canada in calling for the protection of their ancestral lands and for environmental measures that can ensure the health of the land and their communities, as evidenced in the marches led by the community of Grassy Narrows in response to the decades of mercury poisoning that has affected the health and well-being of their community.¹²⁰

Small local campaigns have emerged in urban Canadian cities as well. In Toronto in the 1970s, the predominantly white, working class residents of South Riverdale lobbied for the closure of industrial facilities in their neighborhood and for better protective standards after the discovery that a high number of children were experiencing lead poisoning, and in the 1990s, a group of residents in the junction area of the city formed the Junction Anti-Pollution Group and the Bloor Junction Neighborhood Coalition in response to health problems that were linked to the persistent contaminants in the soil left from earlier industrial activities.¹²¹ By providing the three short sketches of the neighborhoods and cities in which each of the three programs are located, my aim in this chapter was to highlight that race, class, and gender-based environmental justice issues exist in each city.

Because my theoretical grounding is in feminism and environmental justice, I did experience an ethical dilemma about how to interpret some of my interview data and fieldnotes. In my interviews and during participant observation, I encountered instances where my own analysis of environmentalism, power, and politics differed from those of the service providers. Although I encountered this dilemma throughout the research process, it was particularly apparent during my data collection and analysis of the work of GGC and Green Girls, given that the organizations' lenses are very different from my own. One problem was that I did not always

see the organization's role or specific moments/activities that they recounted in their interviews in the same light as they did, particularly regarding their views on social justice and their regulatory approaches to working with girls. The GGC units were not familiar with environmental justice and were less likely to think about the environment as produced through structural relations of power. Thus arises the problem of how to analyze and represent the data. As MacGregor argues, to simply take experience as uncontested truth is not a good approach to doing research, because it shelters it from criticism and it obfuscates the fact that knowledge and experience are partial and constructed within a set of social conditions.¹²²

I attempted to address this dilemma first by giving space to the service providers' different accounts of reality, examining the tensions and contradictions amongst individual members of each organization. Secondly, using mixed methods also helped to tease out the gaps and contradictions that permeate narratives based in experience. By using multiple methods (documentary analysis, participant observation, interviews with service providers and focus groups with girls) in this dissertation, I hoped to balance the service providers' narratives with my own observations in the field, with documentary evidence and secondary literature, and with the experiences of the girls to provide as fair a representation as possible for each organization.

The other related dilemma that I encountered is that I did not always share the same vision for an ecological citizenship for girls as the service providers. Here, again, I find MacGregor's view on her own project for developing a feminist ecological citizenship useful. Rather than attempting to provide definite answers about what a project for feminist ecological citizenship should look like, she proposes that such a project must involve "ongoing thought, practice, and debate."¹²³ My hope is that through this research, I can explore the different ways in which organizations connect girls to the environment in order to open up the meanings

attributed to girls' citizenship and to create a dialogue about girls' subjectivities, identities, power, agency, and resistances vis-à-vis social and environmental justice.

CHAPTER FOUR

“What We Can Do to Help”: Citizenship and Service in the Girl Guides of Canada

I promise to do my best,
To be true to myself, my beliefs, and Canada.
I will take action for a better world
And respect the Guiding Law.

- The Girl Guides of Canada *Promise and Law*

Nearly one hundred years ago, Olave Baden-Powell introduced Girl Guiding as a movement that could “make efficient future women citizens, good homekeepers and mothers.”¹ The Girl Guides articulated a citizenship for girls in the British Dominions rooted in the feminine virtues of motherhood and duty to nation, which it did by taking girls on outdoor adventures and in providing them with opportunities to engage in service work. As discussed in Chapter Three, girls were expected to “be prepared” to be of service and provide aid to the sick and injured when accidents occurred or in times of war. While the Guiding movement began with a clear emphasis on training girls to serve and protect the British nation, with the weakening of British power after the First World War it seized on the spirit of internationalism promoted by The Junior League of Nations, the predecessor of the UN, and began promoting the values of sisterhood and benevolence among Guides across borders, imagining itself to be a “Junior League of Nations.”² Robert Baden-Powell argued that the role of the Guiding and Scouting movement is to look beyond patriotism for one’s own country and to “see how we can help in the world to bring about peace,” which is “the responsibility of great nations.”³ Under the language of peace and cooperation, however, the Guiding and Scouting movement was advancing the modern imperial project by spreading white, colonial British values into the Dominions and

asserting its responsibility to “civilize” and “educate” nations over which it claimed superiority.⁴ Yet, the international movement’s language of sisterhood and cooperation, which was accompanied by relief work and other humanitarian and charitable efforts, had, by the middle of the twentieth century, redefined the movement as a leader in working towards global gender equality, a reputation which it celebrates today.

In this chapter, I explore the archival materials, field notes and interviews that I collected from the two GGC units in Toronto, the Malvern Brownie Unit and the Wychwood Guides unit, to argue that while GGC has modernized its understanding of citizenship and the environment to reflect contemporary concerns about girls’ rights, the citizenship that it advocates today continues to stress personal responsibility, service, and sisterhood, qualities derived from its imperial origins within the British Girl Guides. I argue that GGC, like the wider Guiding movement, in fact promotes a white, Western, middle-class citizenship for girls. While GGC and the Guiding movement claim to be inclusive of all girls and to celebrate difference, I suggest that there is no space in the program for real discussions about difference or for the systemic inequalities that produce relationships of power and oppression. As such, GGC approaches its work with girls through a liberal pluralist perspective operating under the guise of sisterhood that fails to meaningfully engage with the real oppressions that structure girls’ lives at home and abroad.

In the first section of this chapter, I focus primarily on the interviews that I conducted with the Guiders, the women volunteers who work with the Girl Guides. Through their voices, and with the help of GGC’s policy documents, I outline the organization’s multiscaled and gendered approach for thinking about girls’ citizenship, which spans the individual, local, national, and global. Following that discussion, I situate GGC’s work of “empowering girls,”

exploring how the organization subscribes to a liberal and individual understanding of empowerment that does not adequately consider how systemic inequalities structure girls' experiences. GGC, as I explain, focuses on self-esteem and empowerment to the exclusion of other vectors of power, thus reproducing a white, middle-class approach to understanding and producing girlhood that is typical of girl empowerment organizations. In the next two sections, I turn to more environmental concerns, where I explore the significance of camping, individual action, and environmental service in cultivating environmental citizenship, arguing that these activities fit into GGC's vision for being a good citizen. I explore how GGC's environmentalism is located in the Guiding movement's overarching framework of global sisterhood and humanitarianism, and I argue that GGC and WAGGGS' humanitarian vision is undermined by its unwillingness to explore meaningfully the race, class, sexuality, and ability-based differences among girls. The final section of this chapter considers with more depth how the girls make sense of the citizenship work of the program, which leads into a discussion of the lack of agency accorded to the girls and the problems associated with promoting service and volunteerism.

Throughout this chapter, I explore both the Malvern and the Wychwood units together due to their ideological and structural similarities, although I note where appropriate where there are differences between the two. In addition to the backgrounder that I provided for GGC in Chapter Three, I have also included a quick reference sheet in appendix E that summarizes elemental details regarding the size of the two units in this study, the volunteers and their backgrounds, the demographics of participating girls, and other relevant information about the program.

Citizenship for girl empowerment

Citizenship is core to the Guiding movement generally and to GGC particularly. In my interviews with the Guiders from the Malvern Brownies and Wychwood Guides units, the women discussed the environment and the program activities primarily through the lens of citizenship. With only one exception, the Guiders demonstrated a strong familiarity and identification with the brand of citizenship found in Guiding, which can be attributed to the fact that they have had life-long training in the organization. Because they had joined the organization when they were girls, many beginning with Sparks (ages five to six), the Guiders have subsequently developed a deep commitment to the organization that has been cemented over time through the positive experiences and memories that they have accumulated from the program over the years.⁵

When they described GGC's particular brand of citizenship, they invoked an environmentalism rooted in individual action, community participation, Canadian nationhood, and a global citizenship that comes with being part of the international sisterhood of Guiding. Amy*, who is a Guider in the Wychwood unit, stated this point overtly when she remarked that, "If I had to give an elevator pitch for what we do in Guides, I would start by saying that we're trying to turn girls into good citizens. And personally, part of that citizenship that we're aiming for is a sense of environmentalism and a sense of looking after our country and its environment." Elaborating further, Amy identified several layers of citizenship that the program addresses: "I think it's kind of balanced between being a citizen of your community, of your province, of your country, and then of the world." Amy was not alone in characterizing the program in this way; there was a very strong consensus among the Guiders that GGC's goals were to instill these different layers of citizenship. Allye, another Guider in the Wychwood unit, explained that:

We do have newcomers [immigrant] girls into the unit all the time, and so it's nice to have them, even if they're not citizens of Canada, to discuss what it means to be a part of a community, not just Canada, but like we discuss you know, being part of community of Toronto, community of Wychwood specifically and we do a lot of work within the community, so I'd like to think that that's a big part of it, too, is not so much being a citizen. It's being a citizen of the world, it's being a citizen of Canada, and being a citizen of Toronto as well as your specific community. Your school, all of those things. This...our unit. It's being a member of something, really.

While Loretta was the only Guider to object to the term citizen for its possible exclusion of girls who are non-citizens, her preferred term for the girls, which was “participatory community members,” still relied on the responsibilities typically associated with citizenship. She explained that “it's more fostering in the girls a strong sense of community and that they're part of their community and that this is one means of participating. For when they're older, we hope that it fosters volunteerism and you know, being active in their community.”

The first and most fundamental layer of citizenship that undergirds GGC's programming is based on teaching girls to be responsible and self-directed, and to have the social skills to work in groups and be effective leaders. Several Guiders noted that the program helps girls to develop “life skills,” that it teaches them “how to take care of themselves,” and as Amy put it, that camping specifically gets them “into a different environment outside their home where they do have to look after themselves a bit more.” Badge work is an important aspect of this work because, as Rini argued, it provides girls with goals toward which to work in addition to endowing them with a sense of achievement once they have earned them. Rini noted that the badges teach the girls some of the deeper messages that run throughout the program in ways that are fun and engaging. As Baden-Powell noted over a century ago, badges were introduced into Guiding to offer “continual inducements for girls to further improve themselves,” which holds true in the program today.⁶ To earn a badge at the Guides level, girls must complete six out of

eight specified steps outlined in the program book, which are all unique to each badge, and once they have received the badge, they display them on their sashes or their camp blankets.

Confidence and leadership are perhaps the most important elements of the citizenship that GGC fosters. According to Amy, “I think more than anything what we’re trying to do is train them to be leaders,” and that leadership is fostered through the patrol system structure of the program, which encourages girls to take on positions of responsibility within the Guiding hierarchy and to lead by example. As Amy explains,

Right even from Brownies up, the idea of having a patrol and a patrol leader within your patrol and a seconder who helps the patrol leader and a girl who elects their patrol leader each year. There’s a lot of emphasis in the program on things like having a skill that you share with other Guides in the unit. You know, teach a new game or a new craft to everybody else. Or go down to the younger ages, go to Brownies and we call this bridging activities when we have more than one level together and teach them a song or a game.

Nikki, a Guider in the Malvern Brownies unit, echoed this same point, noting that “the underlying goal or theme in all the programs from the Sparks to the Rangers to adults is to build self-esteem, confidence and leadership.” Although Nikki noted that leadership and planning are a bit more evident at the Guide and Pathfinder units, in which girls are a little older (ages nine to fourteen), she remarked that Brownies, as the younger age group (ages seven to eight), still have opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities by helping to plan menus for camp, cook, and do dishes. WAGGGS, the World Association for Girl Guides and Girl Scouts and the international body of the Guiding movement, states on its website that:

In Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting, developing leadership has been at the heart of all our activities. For one hundred years Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting has practiced leadership based on its core values of openness, voluntary commitment, responsibility, equal opportunities, service mindedness, recognition of a spiritual dimension and global commitment. Our approach to leadership focuses on the method that was introduced by Lord Baden-Powell and has been used for decades.⁷

Leadership, as such, is core to the program’s definition of Guiding citizenship.

In addition to being responsible citizens and participants in their patrols and communities, GGC also initiates girls into the global citizenship of Guiding. WAGGGS notes that an important part of Guiding and Scouting internationally is “intercultural learning and international experiences [which] promote respect, mutual understanding and tolerance for others as well as a sense of responsibility for the world in which we live.”⁸ This statement reflects GGC’s view that Guides are citizens of an international community. GGC encourages the girls’ participation in this international community throughout its year-round programming but dedicates a full meeting each year to learning about Guiding internationally in an event called World Thinking Day. Another way in which GGC participates in the international Sisterhood of Guiding is through twinning projects. Twinning involves pairing two national Guiding associations with one another, a partnership lasting several years, which is designed to strengthen the Guiding movement and teach the girls about the culture and traditions of Guides in different parts of the world.⁹ In GGC’s case, partnerships are determined by province, and so Ontario and Nunavut are jointly partnered with The Asociación de Guías y Scouts de Chile. The GGC’s website notes that “through twinning activities, girls will have the opportunity to understand their role in the larger world and become informed and responsible global citizens.”¹⁰

A second element of the international citizenship fostered in Guiding is learning about global inequalities and advocating for human rights. Although only two of the Guiders that I interviewed specifically referenced Guiding’s relationship to the U.N.’s sustainable development agenda, WAGGGS is very much influenced by the U.N.’s international human rights and environmental policy frame. In 2008, WAGGGS launched the Global Action Theme (GAT) to help the U.N. achieve its eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and after the UN convened in its General Assembly in 2015 and released its *2030 Agenda for Sustainable*

Development, WAGGGS released a policy statement in support of the U.N.'s new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It applauded "the importance of gender equality to the success of the goals" but also expressed its concern over the SDG's statement that certain provisions for gender equality should be implemented as "nationally appropriate," which WAGGGS argues undermines the U.N.'s goals of universal equality for women and girls.¹¹

Since 2008, WAGGGS has dedicated each Thinking Day, which is an important international day in Guiding celebrated every February 22, to a different MDG (since 2015 they are now called SDGs in accordance with the change in language in the U.N.) to call on its members "to make a personal commitment to change the world around them and help achieve the MDGs."¹² As Georgina explains, a critical aspect of fostering citizenship for the Girl Guides is to make them socially conscious and to take small actions that can alleviate problems that are of global concern: "we want them to be socially aware and I think that's a huge part, not just aware of what's going on in the community, but just globally aware." Georgina added that "we look at Guiding as a Sisterhood worldwide," and that a key component of international sisterhood is to be aware of social inequality and to encourage girls to take action to empower other girls.

So far, I have described GGC's vision of citizenship for girls as rooted in an ethic of service to community, environmental stewardship, self-discipline, leadership, sisterhood and girl empowerment. These facets of GGC's citizenship for girls will be discussed throughout this chapter. However, I would first like to point out that GGC articulates girl empowerment and girls' citizenships narrowly through a gender lens to the exclusion of examining other forms of inequality based in race and class. When speaking about the gender inequalities that act as a barrier to Canadian girls' self-confidence and future opportunities for success, the Guiders

focused on gender inequalities, especially the gender streaming that occurs in co-ed environments. Amy, for instance, noted that women in co-ed environments are streamed into lower-ranking jobs that require less skill and are not as well compensated, such as quartermaster or cook rather than chef. Similarly, Nikki relayed a story about a girl who transferred out of Scouts Canada after her parents found out that girls at the co-ed camp were being assigned more feminized tasks like cooking while the boys were sent out to collect wood. As Georgina noted, co-ed environments often result in “boys building you [girls] down,” and so the purpose of a girl-only organization like GGC is to build girls up.

As the Guiders suggest, GGC builds girls up by providing them with a “safe space” to learn, take risks, and be themselves. According to several of the Guiders, Guiding frees girls from the gender-based pressures that come along with being educated alongside boys. Georgina, for instance, noted that Guiding provides an environment where girls “can be themselves,” where they do not feel “like they need to put on makeup before they get out of their tents” as they might if boys were around. Loretta and Rini also thought that it provides girls with the space to express themselves more freely. According to Loretta, “it gives them the opportunity to explore new ideas and think and to talk without worrying about [what] the boy next to them thinks about them.” The Guiders also pointed out that an important element of the safe space enabled by Guiding’s single-sex structure was that it provided opportunities for girls to see strong female role models in positions of leadership. As Nikki explained:

I definitely think that having an all-female organization, to be able to talk about female issues and have that safe space and have female empowerment and female role models is really important. Especially with today’s world of social media and bullying and self-esteem issues and appearance and all of that, I think not so much at the Brownie level, but with the older girls it’s really important to see females who are comfortable in their skin.

The Guiders' discussions about the need for strong female role models in girls' lives suggest that they believe that girls in co-ed environments do not have equal opportunities to succeed. On its website and promotional materials, GGC proclaims that it provides a "safe space" for girls to be together where they feel "respected, cherished, included," and "free to be themselves, without judgement," which represents the organization's ideology for single-sex education.¹³

In light of these gender inequalities, GGC, and the Guiding movement more generally challenge sexism through programming that provides girls with an all-female environment in which they can empower themselves and "take action for a better world," as the Guiding Promise proclaims. GGC encourages units across Canada to celebrate the International Day of the Girl and International Women's Day, and one of GGC's International Day of the Girl brochures summarizes the organization's position on gender as the following:

Girls and women encounter many societal barriers that prevent them from reaching their potential. Removing rigid societal stereotypes will help improve gender equality and allow girls and young women to pursue their dreams, become engaged in society and take on leadership positions in their schools, communities and future careers. Girl Guides of Canada–Guides du Canada (GGC) supports girls in exploring what they wish to achieve or experience in their lives, while overcoming societal barriers that inhibit their opportunities and choices.¹⁴

The notion that GGC's goals are oriented to empowering girls with the confidence and skills to succeed now and in the future was a recurrent theme among the Guiders. Speaking generally about the goals of the program, Loretta explained, "I think it's all about girl empowerment. It makes the girls develop and foster competence and interest, and I think that it's girls just being girls. They have a lot of fun, make a lot of friends, they learn life skills, and I think it gives a big boost in confidence for them to face the challenges that are going to be ahead of them as they get older." Nikki similarly noted that "the underlying program is building self-esteem, and confidence, leadership, environmental stewardship, building their own personal skills and self-

confidence with whatever their individual differences are,” and Georgina, concurring, remarked that the goals of the program are to build “self-confidence, self-awareness, it’s a lot of groundwork, because you want to build these girls up. So, when they’re going into the world, they’ve got the confidence that they have to, I mean as much as we’ve become equal in terms of boys-girls, men and women in the workplace and whatnot, in life there’s still a huge difference. So definitely building the girls up.”

The Guiders’ and GGC’s suggestion that girls need the confidence “to face the challenges that are going to be ahead of them” and to be supported in “overcoming societal barriers that inhibit their opportunities and choices” place GGC’s model of citizenship and politics firmly into what Jessica Taft has identified as the individual approach to working with girls. Even as GGC acknowledges the reality of gender inequality, it proposes that girls need to be fortified to go out into the world and overcome the barriers that bar them from full citizenship rather than challenge them. This understanding of citizenship, as I will explore in the rest of this chapter, stems from GGC’s individualist approach to working with girls, which affects not only how the organization understands girls’ citizenships, but also how it crafts their civic identities.

GGC’s gendered work with girls, as I have noted, can be located in a liberal equality framework.¹⁵ Similar to other organizations that embrace a liberal ethos, GGC approaches girls’ citizenships through a lens of equality and inclusion that fails to substantively explore issues of difference and to grasp how systemic inequalities beyond gender alone shape girls’ lives. Although GGC has statements of inclusion built into its policy framework vis-à-vis the participation of women and girls of different races, gender identities, socio-economic statuses, sexualities, and abilities, at the same time, it fails to explore meaningfully the race, gender, class, and ability-based exclusions within the program at the curricular level and within the

organizational structure. GGC's inclusion and diversity policy mandates that Guiding units must provide an environment where "girls and women from all walks of life, identities, and lived experiences feel a sense of belonging and can participate fully," and admonishes any behaviours or actions that are discriminatory.¹⁶ Yet, in its curriculum documents, GGC privileges gender difference above all other forms of difference. For instance, in its curriculum on violence, GGC discusses activities that the Guiders can do with the girls to introduce the topic of gender-based violence, and does not make a single reference to the racial, class, religious, ability- and sexuality-based dimensions of violence.¹⁷

One repercussion of the liberal approach is that the organization reproduces girls' and women's marginalization because it does not address issues of white privilege, racism, class and ability-based discrimination within its own organization. Take, for instance, its approach to sexual diversity. GGC, like the Girl Scouts U.S.A. and Scouts Canada, has in fact taken a much more progressive stance than the Boy Scouts of America on sexual diversity and has even established LGBTQ units in its mandate to be inclusive. It couches its position of inclusion and tolerance as an effect of living in Canada, a multicultural society that celebrates diversity and difference. Yet, as Elizabeth Faingold argues in her study of the Pathfinders, it is not uncommon for lesbian and bisexual members in Girl Guiding to "remain closeted" in their home councils.¹⁸ Furthermore, in 2015, after three years of wrestling with the discussion of whether GGC should admit transgender girls following the decision of a Girl Scout troop in Colorado to do so, GGC released a policy document announcing that transgendered girls are welcome in the organization.¹⁹ The idea of admitting trans-identified girls, however, was not favoured by all Guiders and Guides, some of whom expressed transphobic remarks on a post on GGC's Facebook page.²⁰ Further, while GGC politicizes gender equality and girls' empowerment, it

does not similarly politicize LGBTQ issues in the scope of its mandate as an organization, nor affiliate with LGBTQ organizations.

GGC's equality-based and yet difference-averse liberalism is reflected in the absence of trainings for volunteers to work through issues of privilege, marginalization, and difference in the organization. For new Guiders with minimal or no previous experience with the program, GGC provides a free basic orientation that introduces them to the history, mandate, and rules of the organization, in addition to a mandatory safety training known as "Safe Guide" that all Guiders, regardless of previous experience in the program, must complete within six months of becoming a volunteer. All additional trainings in GGC are voluntary and have a cost associated with them that range from \$5 to \$90. One of the voluntary trainings, the "Bias Awareness/Equity Training," is the only training to address difference, and is supposed to invite the Guiders to become more aware of their own "biases" and to be proactive about making their unit accessible.²¹ However, this training, as well as the curriculum of Guiding more generally, does not engage those critical questions of power and privilege that structure the organization. By not engaging in any substantive way with difference, the organization's culture of whiteness, heterosexuality, able-bodiedness, and middle-classness remains unchallenged, and its membership accordingly is homogenous.

GGC's liberalism also manifests through its "non-political" status. Despite being an organization that advocates for gender equality, GGC represents itself as "non-partisan" and does not affiliate with any political ideology rooted in a politics of difference, including feminism.²² WAGGGS in fact cautions girl and adult members against participating in "political" and "ideological" forms of public engagement, noting that:

advocacy does not have to be confrontational and it does not have to be political. As a responsible citizen it is natural to engage in the democratic processes in your

country and contribute to the community. Girl Guides and Girl Scouts can support an idea without supporting an ideology. The Girl Guiding and Girl Scouting Movement is a non-political organization, but to build a better world you might need to engage with politicians and decision-makers.”²³

While WAGGGS does not explain what “supporting an ideology” means, the GGC website indicates that, as a condition of being a registered charity, its members, including staff, Guiders, and girls, cannot participate in partisan politics while they are in uniform or representing the organization. However, because “education on citizenship and civic engagement for girls has long been integral to the Guiding program,” GGC stipulates that members, volunteers and staff can “attend all-candidates debates, meetings or forums as part of Guiding, to enable girls to learn about the democratic process, as long as impartiality is maintained.”²⁴ GGC, as I will explore at the end of this chapter, defines politics very narrowly as those activities within the formal governmental sphere and therefore at the exclusion of social and rights-based movements. Yet, its disavowal of political ideologies is complicated by its own investment in the ideologies of gender equality and nationalism. To begin, however, I first examine what it means in the GGC to empower girls.

Gender, empowerment, and STEM

Guiding’s early history was based in educating girls according to traditional feminine gender roles. Although Guiding at the beginning of the twentieth century opened up new freedoms for girls and women to participate in activities that were considered to be masculine, such as hiking and camping, for the Guides to maintain the legitimacy of their organization they had to show that it was not their intention to create masculine girls. They had to construct a program for girls that reaffirmed their gender identities as women, as well as their subordination to men. As noted in the previous chapter, early Guiding manuals argued that the role of the Girl Guides was to “get

girls to learn how to be women – self-helpful, happy, prosperous, and capable of keeping good homes and bringing up good children.”²⁵ By arguing that it was the responsibility for women and girls to be the moral “guides” of their sons, brothers, and husbands, Baden-Powell articulated their citizenship as a tool for producing proper male citizens. Girls’ citizenships were thus formative to the creation of boys’ and men’s citizenships, and also unambiguously secondary to them.

In an earlier article on the Girl Scouts from the early 1980s, historian Mary Aickin Rothschild remarks that there have been two constants in the Girl Scouts despite some changes in the program over time: “One is the teaching of traditional domestic tasks for women and the other is a kind of practical feminism which embodies physical fitness, survival skills, camping, citizenship training, and career preparation. Both themes—domesticity and feminism—have always been present, though their relative positions have changed throughout the twentieth century.”²⁶ In an effort to stay modern and to continue to attract members, GGC has over the years redefined its program in ways that respond to changing gender ideologies. Where the early program based itself on cultivating what historian Tammy Proctor calls the “New Mother,” a femininity that reoriented girls towards homemaking while embracing new forms of public activity, and more tangentially, career preparation, GGC today prepares girls to face the challenges of a girl-negating culture and to become self-sufficient workers in the global economy.²⁷

While the Guiders in the Wychwood and Malvern units did not specifically speak about the drop in confidence that girls undergo in their teen years, an idea that was popularized by psychologists Carol Gilligan and Mary Pipher in the 1990s (see Chapter Three), their focus on the girl-negating culture and on developing girls’ self-esteem, confidence, and leadership skills

suggested that they thought that the girls on their own have difficulty developing these aspects of their identities. Loretta, speaking to this point, noted that “we teach them a lot of things and give them the confidence so that they can try new things and that they can succeed, because they need those skills.”

One area in which GGC directs its confidence-building energies to girls is on the issue of developing a healthy body image. GGC recognizes how, in a society in which girls’ and women’s bodies are constantly policed, shamed, sexualized, and devalued, body image is an important issue in girls’ lives that impacts their self-esteem and self-confidence. Subsequently, GGC aims to empower girls by teaching them about loving themselves and cultivating positive attitudes about their bodies. The main avenue for exploring body positivity is through the Be You Challenge (formerly known as the GGC/NEDIC Love Yourself Challenge), which was developed by GGC in partnership with the National Eating Disorder Information Centre (NEDIC) with the intent to “facilitate discussion and skill-building activities on the topics of positive body image, healthy eating and body-based prejudices and bullying.”²⁸ Loretta described how they incorporated this challenge into their Guides unit by educating the girls about nutrition and healthy bodies:

We found that some of the girls were dieting, and we heard this from outside of Guides, it was taking place at their school, and we knew that it affected three or four of the girls. And so we did a number of things about healthy body images, without you know, coming at them wagging our fingers and saying “no, no, no, no.” We did a different approach. We gave them some alternatives and brought in a really neat woman who helped to establish the farmer’s market at the Wychwood Barns and she brought in all these cool foods and talked about recipes, and you know, eating healthy, and that it was not boring, it’s fun. We’ve done a number of, sort of, programs where we’ve talked about healthy bodies and so . . . and then we get all sorts of messages outside of guides that you’ve got to be real thin and beautiful, and you know, look like a model and we talked about being healthy and loving yourself for who you are.

The Wychwood Guides also had an event where they met hockey players from the Ryerson Rams women's team. The girls first had a tour of Ryerson, ate a healthy lunch, heard a talk delivered by a nutritionist about healthy eating, and ended the day by meeting several hockey players. As Loretta noted, the goal of the outing was for the girls to be exposed to women who are "athletes who aren't real thin," but who have "real bodies" that are "muscular and healthy." Nikki also noted that she has done activities around body image with her Brownies and Pathfinder units. With her Brownies, she found that the issue of body image comes up less, but that some of the girls in her unit are frustrated if they are not as physically fit as the other girls, which opened discussions about how "everybody's different, every person's different, and just because you're larger doesn't mean you can't do something and just because you're skinny doesn't mean you can run forever."

Another area of focus in GGC is improving girls' confidence in STEM fields to address the underrepresentation of girls and women in non-traditional fields, which links to the organization's mission of career preparation. The focus on STEM that is so prevalent in contemporary girls' organizations comes from the research in the 1990s, particularly the report *How Schools Shortchange Girls* and Peggy Orenstein's book, *School Girls: Young Women, Self-Esteem and the Confidence Gap*, which revealed that there is a gender gap in self-esteem in formal education that impacts girls' success in math and science.²⁹ GGC uses the UN Women's policy framework on gender inequality to define its own position and curriculum on gender equality. Quoting UN Women, GGC notes in one of its International Day of the Girl activity sheets that "gender stereotypes reinforce norms of gender inequality such as the continued devaluation of 'women's work,' or the belief that women and men should be confined to narrow and segregated social norms."³⁰ GGC connects gender stereotyping to girls' career opportunities

(or lack thereof), noting that “this can influence the choices that girls make when it comes to their futures and their careers.” Girls, consequently, “continue to be underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)” and therefore GGC has taken the initiative in developing programming that encourages girls’ interest in science.³¹ In fact, roughly a quarter of the Girl Guide program addresses STEM in some way.³²

The STEM activities in GGC are wide ranging. Amy noted that cookie sales, while serving the practical purpose of funding their excursions, furnishes girls with skills in accounting, sales, and money management. She observed that “Girl Guides does try and use the fundraising through the cookie sales to teach other skills to the girls, whether it be money management or good sales techniques, and those sorts of more concrete skills.” STEM activities rooted in the sciences are also built into the program. On March 9, 2015, the first day of daylight savings time, the Wychwood Guides unit held a meeting in the dark on the theme of UNESCO’s Year of the Light and Light Technologies. With the lights turned off and with flashlights in hand, the girls were separated into groups and each spent time visiting the three “round robin” stations that were set up. The first station was dedicated to the theme of light bulbs and energy efficiency, the second station was about light pollution, and in the third, the girls made a craft with LED lightbulbs, which consisted of taking an openable plastic egg, connecting a tiny LED lightbulb to a small battery and inserting it into the egg, which they then decorated to make a “glow in the dark buddy.” The Malvern Brownie unit was also particularly strong with the STEM activities. I attended several events in which the girls learned about science and computer technologies. In one meeting, the girls disassembled an old desktop computer tower. The girls sat around Nikki, who asked them about the different components of the computer, together identifying the fan,

CD ROM, motherboard, and floppy disk drive and discussing the function of each of these components.

Furthermore, Nikki explained that as part of the Key to STEM in Brownies, GGC encourages Guiders to discuss women's impact in the sciences and invite female scientists to their units. Nikki relayed how her unit talked about Dr. Roberta Bondar, a neurologist and the first female Canadian astronaut in space. Dr. Bondar is an important figure in GGC not only because her scientific accomplishments make her a role model for girls but also because she was in Guiding herself when she was young. Nikki also invited female scientists to her unit, including her own sister who is a biochemist and works for the water department at the City of Toronto, and another Guider who is a chemist who worked for Lays Chips. In another meeting, she invited six women in non-traditional fields to come to the unit and play a game of twenty questions. The girls, who did not know what each of the women did for a living, could ask up to twenty questions to try and figure out what their professions were. The women who were invited included an accountant from Deloitte and Touche, a lawyer, a pilot, a motorcycle instructor, and a civil engineer working for the City of Durham. Reflecting on the activity, Nikki observed that it is critical for girls to see confident women excelling in fields that are not traditionally female and that the single-sex space of Guiding provides that opportunity:

the girls had the opportunity to talk to them not only about how they come into that job, and education, but how hard it was to get there as a female. So I know my aunt, the civil engineer [for the City of Durham], going through school, she was the only female in her engineering classes. So she, I mean, she can hold her own [laughs], and she's a very self-confident woman and all of that, but there's a lot of females out there unfortunately that would be discouraged if people kept saying, oh you don't belong here or whatever. Whereas other people go, "oh I'm going to prove you wrong." So just being an all-female organization and having to be able to meet those people and see those people, not that it wouldn't be empowering to meet them in a co-ed program, but I think it means more in an all-female environment.

Although Nikki felt that the message that women can achieve success in non-traditional fields might be lost on girls in the younger ages in Brownies, she opined that having female guests is still very important because it is “something that they relate to growing up.” The assumption, therefore, is that in seeing strong female role models excelling in the sciences, girls will be more likely to build the confidence to pursue STEM fields.

By encouraging girls to explore their interests and discover their strengths through a sampling of different activities, and particularly through STEM, GGC aims to furnish girls with the confidence to explore and excel in whatever fields they choose later in their careers. As the GGC website notes, “Our core programming allows girls to develop life and career skills in age appropriate groups, where they participate in a number of standard activities to earn badges.”³³ Subsequently, GGC has done away with its specialized badges relating to housework such as Homemaker, Laundress, Housekeeper, and Sewing, which are now condensed into badges that are more gender neutral: Kitchen Creations, Life Skills, and Needlework Skills. The Guiders saw this change as a positive move, and in fact poked fun at some of the old badges and traditional Guiding activities that are no longer practiced, noting that the organization needs to keep up with the times and respond to concerns facing girls in the modern age, such as online safety, for instance, for which there is now a badge. At the same time, when the badges in GGC are viewed side-by-side with the badges in Scouts Canada, traditional gender ideologies are apparent. Rather than earn a badge in Child Care as girls do in the Guides, Scouts earn the Family Care Badge, which reflects the different gender ideologies and expectations about women’s and men’s caring labour, with women caring for children specifically and men for the family more generally.³⁴ Scouts Canada badges are also oriented to building, with the Builder, Home Repair, Modeller, and Handicraft badges. Meanwhile, in Scouts, there is an absence of feminine badges such as the

Fashion and Design Your Own Space (interior design), which reflects not only the heteronormative gender ideologies of the Guides, but also GGC's focus on giving girls a taste of the new career opportunities that have opened up to women in the neoliberal global economy.

The Guiders' acceptance of the more traditionally feminine work of GGC, however, varied among individuals and sometimes among units. At an all-ages unit meeting in the preliminary stages of this research, I spoke to one Guider (not affiliated with the two units in this research) who self-identified as a lesbian and an engineer who noted that her unit does many "non-traditional" activities such as teaching the girls about the mechanics of the bicycle and how to repair a flat tire. At the same time, while we spoke, the girls made jewelry that they painted with nail polish. When I first pointed out the nail polish, which I erroneously assumed would be used for painting their nails, the same Guider responded that "there are different ways to be feminine" and that it is "fun to play with nail polish sometimes," which suggested that, while the Guiders have individual differences in terms of the activities that they do with the girls in their units, they generally accept many of the traditional feminine and heterosexual gender ideologies that are embedded into the program. The girls in the Wychwood and Brownies units, however, reported enjoying doing a wide range of badges, with some girls noting that they enjoyed the non-traditional Engineering Badge that they had recently completed, while others gravitated to badges that were oriented to the caring professions, like the Pet Lover and Child Care badges. Further, several girls in the Wychwood unit reported that they really enjoyed crafts, which is a more traditionally feminine activity in GGC, and in fact thought that their unit did not do enough crafting, while others noted that they preferred physical games, camping, and sports.

When reflecting on the highlights of the program and the rewards of volunteering, the Guiders almost unanimously spoke about the satisfaction of seeing girls empower themselves

by developing their self-confidence and their individual voices. They often recounted instances where they saw girls “come out of their shells,” take on positions of leadership, or deepen their self-awareness, all of which speak to the overall goal of empowering girls in the program. Georgina, for instance, relayed a story about a sleepover event that her Guides unit had at the Science Centre. That night they had a dance party, and Georgina remembered that one of the girls, a first-year Guide who she described as “really tiny” and “not really the go-getter in the unit” or “the one to speak up first” surprised all of the Guiders by letting loose on the dance floor: “Like honestly, she didn’t care who was around. Like she had her dancing style [...] it was so awesome. We were like, “this is the same kid?” Loretta similarly remarked that “We’ve seen some of the girls really blossom, like really, really blossom,” and that some of her favourite moments involved seeing girls’ trajectory from the beginning of the year to the end.

Amy and Allye both suggested that the program is particularly great for girls with disabilities or who are struggling in school. Amy, for instance, recounted a memory from the previous year where the girls, in preparation for camp, had a meeting on making gadgets, which she noted is a traditional camp activity that entails making things out of sticks and string. Amy recalled how there was one girl in her unit who was quiet and likely had a learning disability, and because she had made gadgets with her dad before at a family camp, at the GGC camp “she had all sorts of ideas for how to put these together, and to watch her come out of her shell a bit and sort of take over the group I was working with because she finally found something she really understood, and she could be the leader for a change, that was kind of awesome.”

Allye also relayed a story about how Guiding allowed a girl to come out of her shell. At one of the week-long Pathfinder camps at which Allye volunteered, she remembered that at the time when the parents were dropping the girls off, she was taken aside by the parents of one girl

who told her that their daughter, who was adopted by them only six months ago and had a hearing impairment, did not want to be at the camp. Subsequently, the parents asked if Allye could keep an eye on her. This girl, Allye told me, wore a hearing aid and was “at the age where you know, if she didn’t hear the instructions or if she didn’t hear somebody she just pretended she did ‘cause it’s more embarrassing to put out your hand and say ‘I didn’t hear you.’” Allye also noted that the girl was shy and tended to keep to herself. Near the end of the camp, Allye was running an improv session and this girl was placed in a group to do a skit, which sent the girl into a panic. Allye remembers that,

she just said, “oh maybe I’ll just be the director or maybe I’ll just be, you know, I’ll tell them what to do, kind of thing” and I was like, “yeah, you could do that, or you know, I felt the same way when I was your age and I really didn’t wanna do it but I thought it was so much fun and it was really, and I was really, I’m just going to do it one day, and I did it and felt fantastic afterwards.” And she said, “ok, I’ll do it, and it took her kind of a minute, but like, I could tell like, oh great, I convinced her even if she wasn’t gung ho about it, I convinced her. And then she got up and did this skit, and it was funny and she got one of the laughs of like, she told a joke and people laughed, they loved it. And she came and sat beside me right after she got offstage and I said, “you did a great job!” and she looked over at me with a huge beaming smile on her face and she said, “And it felt really good!”

GGC thus provides a space for girls who face systemic discrimination from ableism to take risks and feel a sense of accomplishment and success by performing an activity that they are skilled at or that they thought they were unable to do. As Amy remarked, her own experience in Guides as a girl provided her with an “alternate source of success”:

I didn’t do very well in school. I’m dyslexic, and I often got poor grades, especially in the middle grades, and so it was often a struggle for me, and I had successes in Guides that I wasn’t getting in school. Like I, you know...and the successes you have in Guides are very tangible, because you get badges and they get sewn on, they’re very visible. And when I moved up into the older age groups into Pathfinders, the other...my peer group were recognizing skills that I had. Because the Pathfinders do a lot of planning your own program and I certainly felt like I got more credit for what my strengths were in Pathfinders than I was sort of getting amongst my peer group in school.

These anecdotes demonstrate that GGC can and does have a positive impact in the lives of individual girls by providing them with a supportive environment in which they can gain new skills and confidence.

However, I found that GGC's emphasis on teaching girls about self-confidence often overshadowed what could have been very transformative discussions about the systemic oppressions in girls' lives. For instance, there is another side of the story about the girl with the hearing impairment that is not told in Allye's narrative, and that is the story about the systemic exclusion of girls whose abilities are deemed non-normative in an ableist society. In an ableist society, girls who have disabilities are made to feel responsible for learning how they can better fit into a social structure that denies their existence. While teaching about self-confidence is a critically important piece for working with girls, the problem with emphasizing individual empowerment at the expense of a critique of systemic inequality is that it places the responsibility on girls to become more effective citizens rather than challenge the normative structures that exclude them in the first place. By expecting girls to "fit in" rather than challenge ableist structures and ideologies, the message that girls are likely receiving is that they are the ones that are non-normative and defective in some way, which effectively re-marginalizes them.

None of the Guiders in this research challenged this approach, but rather the ones that addressed disability suggested that girls who face challenges often can benefit from being drawn out "of their shells," which they rewarded with positive words of encouragement. As Taft argues in her discussion of traditional girls' organizations, a focus only on individual self-empowerment prepares girls to meet the challenges of neoliberal society rather than teaching them the critical skills for subverting the very structures that engender oppression and inequality.³⁵ In describing its role as a program that promotes "positive youth development," GGC notes that it aims to

produce “active and engaged citizens” that “exhibit healthy habits, and are *better equipped to respond to the challenges they’ll face*.”³⁶ This approach more closely resembles the characteristics of what Taft describes as the normative approach to working with girls, as it does not challenge the model of self-empowerment that is found in modern neoliberal citizenship that is taught to girls at school, wherein bodies are, as feminist, disability and queer theorist Jasbir Puar argues, “evaluated in relation to their success or failure in terms of health, wealth, progressive productivity, upward mobility and [enhanced] capacity.”³⁷

The focus on self-esteem is not only individualizing, it is also rooted in a white, middle-class approach to understanding young women and the issues that constrain them. As several girlhood studies scholars have pointed out, among them Sinikka Aapola, Marnina Gonick, and Anita Harris, the focus on self-esteem and voice that was popularized by psychologists like Mary Pipher was based on the experiences of white, middle-class girls, which were made to represent the experiences of all girls.³⁸ The foundation for Pipher’s book in fact comes from her work with her clients, who were mainly white, middle-class girls whose parents could afford to enrol in therapy. As girlhood scholars have pointed out, privileged girls in Canada and the U.S. who are seen as “troubled” are typically enrolled into expensive therapies where their problems are treated, while low-income and particularly Black and Latina girls are more likely incarcerated and punished. While it is easy for psychologists to see self-esteem as the primary problem of girls who live privileged lives and are “failing” despite having every advantage in life, it would be difficult to make the same argument about incarcerated girls whose lives before imprisonment were shaped by poverty, racism, sexual violence/exploitation, physical abuse, homelessness, or addiction.

The focus on self-esteem in programs for girls at the exclusion of other forms of oppression thus inherently assumes a white, middle-class female subject identity unburdened by the oppressions linked to race, sexuality, class, ability, or colonialism. It is for this reason that programs like GGC focus on self-esteem and voice. GGC presumes that girls' biggest problem is a lack of self-confidence to reach their potential, and this position remains unchallenged by its predominantly white, middle-class membership and volunteer base. For instance, the emphasis on body image in the GGC program illustrates this point. Through the body image curriculum, the girls are encouraged to love and accept themselves as they are, and are given messages that being different is beautiful, and yet there is little consideration for the actual social differences among girls that produce racialized, queer, dis/abled, low-income, and indigenous bodies. Even Nikki, whose unit is comprised of a significant number of Black, South Asian, and low-income girls, spoke about how her unit's activities on body image focused on healthy eating and encouraging the girls to be physically active, which suggests that whiteness, racism and class were not likely part of those discussions. In the few instances where the Guiders spoke about systemic challenges in girls' lives, it was in the context of girls' access to the program, particularly in being able to afford the costs of the program fee, uniform, and activities, or in accommodating girls with disabilities.

Even in the income- and race-diverse Malvern Brownie unit, in which many of the girls are the daughters of adults who more recently immigrated to Canada, Nikki described social difference in terms of the issue of access:

we have multiple different cultures and we also have a widespread spectrum of social economic status, which can be sometimes hard in planning events because you don't want...we want to do a lot with our girls, but if we do too much that costs money, it restricts some of the girls from being able to attend, or sometimes you run into the families where they may not say anything, but sometimes you

kind of have that like, it's really awkward for me to ask, but if they're kind of hesitant and always asking about the cost or may be late with money.

For the girls in the Wychwood program, several Guiders noted that access was only rarely a problem, given that the girls come from middle- to higher-income families. The stories that I heard in the field from the girls about their extracurricular activities, their family holidays, and in one instance, a girl's problematic reference to her "Filipino nanny" suggests that the girls in Wychwood do not contend with the same oppressions relating to class/income and race as many of the girls in the Brownie unit. However, access is only one aspect of marginalization, and it is significant that social differences in GGC, including poverty, (dis)ability, sexuality or race are not politicized through the curriculum.

The effect of having a program that articulates self-esteem as girls' chief problem and that ignores other systemic oppressions beyond gender is that it actively produces white, middle-class girl subjectivities. Gonick argues in her article "Between 'Girl Power' and Reviving Ophelia" that the psychological approach employed by girl-serving professionals like Pipher, aimed at "understanding girls, monitoring their development, and regulating their identities," can be viewed as a technology for producing particular kinds of girlhoods; namely, girlhoods that are autonomous, can overcome personal challenges, and strive for happiness and, I would add, that ultimately reproduce white, middle-class ideals of girlhood.³⁹ Because the discourses of self-esteem were produced in the 1990s by white, middle-class professionals for white, middle-class, and heterosexual adult consumers who read this literature and enrol their daughters into therapy and other programs, the focus on self-esteem is a technology for regulating girls who deviate from this norm to put them on the track for (white, middle-class) success, thus producing "can-do" girls who are willing to roll up their sleeves and face the challenges of the modern world.

Making girls into good environmental citizens

The goal of GGC, as Amy proposed, is to make girls into good citizens, and environmental stewardship is an important aspect of that citizenship. In GGC, Amy noted, “there really is an emphasis on being a citizen and a steward of the country long term and understanding what could damage it and what we can do to help.” Amy and the other Guiders defined this environmental citizenship as a function of teaching the girls to take personal action for the environment in their everyday lives, to perform environmental service in the community, and to enjoy the outdoors without harming it, all of which privilege more private forms of environmental engagement. Loretta, in summing up the importance of the environment in the program, suggested that camping and being outdoors is crucial to GGC’s environmental citizenship:

I think it would be really hard for girls to get through Guides and not be much more aware of the environment. It’s important for the whole...because of the camping origins, and the outdoor nature of a lot of the things that we do, it’s woven into a lot of the activities. And even if a girl never did a badge, there’s enough group activities that we do that a lot of that comes through.

The organization’s origins in camping, which were about fostering a responsible citizenship for girls, very much define contemporary understandings of citizenship in the Guides. For GGC, the citizenship learning that takes place at camp includes teaching the girls to take responsibility for themselves, work in teams, and be a leader, all of which do not directly have anything to do with the environment but are connected to the modern project of building girls’ confidence and the much older one of encouraging good citizenship behaviour. Amy suggested that camping in fact provided her with an “alternative form of success” when she was a girl in Guides, which had a lot to do with camping and hiking. She argued, “you learn a lot through doing these things, like leadership and planning and even at the higher levels budgeting ... I think it’s a great way of

learning those things without realizing that you're learning it." As Amy elaborated, at camp, girls learn to work as a unit and as a smaller group within the patrol system to accomplish different tasks, like working together to put up tents, and in the planning stages, they also learn how to organize and distribute responsibilities in a fair manner.

There is an aspect to camping that does relate to the environment, however, and it involves teaching the girls about respecting and caring for the environment, which the Guiders defined as an important aspect of GGC's ecological citizenship. One way in which GGC teaches care for the environment is through its philosophy of no trace camping. As Rini explains, when her unit does anything outdoors, there is a strong ethic to

just leave only your footprint kind of thing, and make sure, even if you're not getting them to actually make things, just like be aware that all these are trees, you only take things that are already fallen down. You don't pick things or whatever, and when we're going camping as well, leave it cleaner than you found it.

In a similar vein, Loretta noted that "we take them camping, we talk a lot about you know, making sure that you have a clean campsite, that you don't destroy anything when you're there. That you leave the environment in good shape. So there's a lot of things that teach the girls about stewardship." This stewardship is also connected to Canadian citizenship. Georgina, who also observed that a core lesson that they teach is not to "pull things off trees" remembered how when she was a Guide, her mom, who was also a Guider in her unit, was constantly telling the girls "don't pick the trilliums, don't pick the trilliums, don't pick the trilliums.' Don't pick anything, but, specifically not the trilliums." Camping and hiking thus present opportunities to teach the girls how to respect the environment and how to be good citizens of Ontario by protecting the trillium, a flower which the Guiders attribute sacred status due to the fact that it is the provincial symbol of Ontario.

When the girls relayed the environmental learning that they had absorbed through the program, they spoke not so much about any specific environmental knowledge that they acquired, but rather about the rules of conduct associated with being outdoors. Speaking about camping, many of girls referenced the importance of leaving only your footprint: Cadence said that Guiding “teaches about how you shouldn’t kill things and how you should protect nature or how you should try to not harm it,” and Marietta, also from the Guides, noted that they are not to “take plants home, just memories.” In one instance when the girls went to an urban park (Wychwood) in the city, they spent the afternoon playing games which were followed by unstructured play. During their free play time, some of the girls began hugging and hanging off some of the trees, and as Georgina recalls, Loretta instructed the girls to leave the trees alone and “turned it into a learning experience about [how] what you’re doing is actually hurting the tree.” In Guiding, camping is used to regulate girls to become good environmental citizens, which Rini described from the perspective of a Guider as doing “damage control.” As she explained it, instead of teaching girls that “‘you should do this,’ it’s kind of like, ‘you shouldn’t do these things.’” Camping, she noted, particularly in the upper years, is the space in which the girls “start to learn what kind of practices they should do to become a better citizen,” which means ensuring that they are not littering and that they are leaving a clean campsite.

Camping is a quintessential experience that defines Guiding in Canada and it was undoubtedly one of the most anticipated activities of the year. In fact, when I asked the Guiders about what kept them coming back to the program each year when they were Girl Guides themselves, many of them told me it was the fun of camping. For the girls, it was much the same, particularly for the ones that had never been camping before. As Austin, a Girl Guide in the Wychwood unit noted, “I really like the fun activities. Like, I’ve never been camping before in

my life other than...yeah, I've never. Um, I really wanted to go camping and Girl Guides provided...so that was very fun, this was very fun." Camping was a particularly big draw and the girls described how their favourite things involved traditional camp activities like setting up tents and making campfires, being in the outdoors, spending time with their friends, and sleeping away from home. In fact, the girls described the excitement of camp as a function of its geographical separation from home and urban life in the city. Leanne, for instance, noted, "I like camping, especially 'cause my parents aren't here. It's fun." In the camp setting, the girls also get to have fun together, which involves staying up late and being "silly" together. Annabelle talked about how the most fun she had at camp was in Brownies when her friends "started waking up in the middle of the night and it was really fun and the camp leaders had to tell us to be quiet 'cause they were making too much noise, and then I asked Audrey if I can sleep with her." Camping thus carves out a physical and social space for the girls to bond with each other, a space of single-sex comradeship that is not, under the heterosexual matrix of the organization, a threatening thing at all, but which fits easily into the heterosexual model of girlhood promoted in GGC that sees girls wanting to be around other girls as a normal part of being a girl. This kind of homosocial bonding is in fact seen as an important part of the program (it was and currently continues to be defended ardently in the single-sex vs co-ed debates in Guiding) and is in fact reinforced through activities like camping.⁴⁰

The girls also saw camp in contrast to their urban home and neighbourhood, which they described as somewhat devoid of nature, or if not devoid, certainly inferior. This sentiment was expressed by April and Sandy, both Girl Guides in the Wychwood Guides unit, who noted that "I like getting away from the city, 'cause it's a lot nicer and there's more fields and nature" and that "there's not that many buildings here and you can actually see the stars." In addition to being

able to see wildness and the stars, some of the girls contrasted the city as a polluted place. Katie observed that because “we kind of just like destroy nature like all the time” it “just feels kind of nice to be in a place where nature’s not completely destroyed.” The implication in this girls’ statement is that camp is a space of escape from the human-caused environmental destruction in urban areas and that it is something more authentic, as Audrey also point out. Reflecting on the differences between a park where she plays near her home and the Bonita Glen camp, Audrey remarked that even though the park has “tons of trees,” camp is “the real thing,” because it is different than the “concrete jungle” of the schoolyard, soccer field, park in her downtown Toronto neighbourhood. Mia, who was part of this focus group with Audrey, added that downtown Toronto is just “different” because “you have to wait at stop signs and there’s a lot of cars booming by.”

The girls also associated camp with the more adventurous activities that they are not able to do in the context of the regular evening meetings. These activities included swimming, kayaking, canoeing, horseback riding, and archery, which were particularly exciting for the girls. Several reported that they were disappointed that they did not have the opportunity to do any water sports at the Bonita Glen Spring camp, noting that their unit lacked a certified lifeguard. Nevertheless, they felt that camp was still a welcome change from their regular meetings in the gym because it gave them opportunities to play fun games outdoors and do activities that were out of the ordinary.

The girls were not alone in describing camp as a space away from the city that provides an authentic experience of nature. I asked the Guiders how they thought being in an urban environment affected their unit’s environmental activities, to which Amy responded by speaking about camp and how their unit does not go camping as much as others because “it takes such an

effort to get out of the city” due to the cost of renting a bus and the problem of traffic congestion. Although all of the Guiders happily acknowledged that Toronto has amazing green spaces and parks to which they bring the girls for activities like hiking and orienteering, their stories suggested that their girls’ experiences of nature are perhaps not as rich as those of the girls in units that go camping more often and presumably have more authentic experiences of nature. Georgina expressed how “camp is a great opportunity because we get to really see, like an environ...you know what I mean, like a natural environment ... we are very isolated at Bonita Glen which is great. You’ve got a couple houses, but for them it’s really, you can kind of get more hands-on with the environment.” Despite the fact that Bonita Glen is not truly isolated – it is, as Georgina suggested, just off a dirt road that is lined with houses – the camp is treated by the Guiders and the GGC as an authentic natural environment. More than just a natural environment, the camp is important because it is an anachronistic space that connects the girls with the history of Guiding and allows them to unplug from modern technologies of the twenty-first century. At camp, Guides engage in time-honoured Guiding traditions of taps (flag raising), sleeping in tents, building a fire and occasionally cooking over it, singing around the campfire and making camp gadgets and crafts.

Furthermore, Guiders also noted that what they liked about camping was that it allows girls to be more hands-on with nature and to have unstructured and unsupervised time outdoors, which they often do not have in the city. Being at the Bonita Glen Camp afforded the girls such opportunities, which the girls seized in their play in teepees in the surrounding stand red cedar and pines. Katie described how building the teepees was in fact her favourite memory: “last year when we came to camp and we all, and we made teepees in the forest. It was *awesome!* And we pretended we were part of the warrior clans.” Sadie also liked this activity the most, noting,

“when we did the teepees, um, that was really fun. We found one and then we built on to it and we made a few more and we had like a tribe thing and stuff and it was really fun.” While none of the Guiders, to my knowledge, encouraged the girls to build the teepees and play at being “the warrior clans,” the girls’ appropriation of Canadian Indigenous cultures in the space of the camp links to the point that historian Philip Deloria makes that early camping movements such as the Scouts and Guides provided a space in which white, middle-class youth could “play Indian.” As I showed in Chapter One, camping in the early Guiding and Scouting movements was seen as a method of counteracting the pernicious effects of urban modern life, particularly on the boy.⁴¹ The girls’ play-acting at being Indigenous during their free time, and the fact that their play was not questioned or problematized by the Guiders speaks to the ways in which Guiding historically created a space for girls to “become” Indigenous and how this play, while perhaps not directly encouraged today, is accepted as a “natural” outcome of the camp setting, which is shaped by white, colonial, and middle-class ideologies about childhood and nature.

Independently of camp, GGC also encourages girls to be environmental citizens in their everyday lives by being “eco-savvy.”⁴² When the Guiders discussed citizenship in reference to the environment in their regular programming, they described environmental problems and activities using a language commonly found in environmental education curricula and in Green citizenship theory, both of which stress green consumption habits and community service, articulated specifically through an individual discourse of “doing one’s bit.”⁴³ Amy explained that:

There’s a section [in the program book] talking about small changes you can make that have, sort of the act local idea, composting, recycling, walking to school instead of taking the bus, reducing drafts at home. Girl Guides just finished a big...had to do this two or three-year service project on environmental issues where they were encouraging activities like tree planting, making crafts that would help around the house. Like making dryer balls to reduce the time it takes your dryer to

dry clothes, or making draft snakes to put at the bottom of doors to stop drafts from coming in.

In Brownies, girls can earn badges that teach them about tree planting, water conservation, weather, endangered species, gardening, and recycling. For instance, the Brownies did the “Water, Water, Everywhere” badge which challenged them to monitor their water consumption at home when doing the dishes, taking baths or showers, and brushing their teeth. Reflecting on some of the activities that they have done as a unit, Nikki reflected on how she thought that “at the Brownie level, a lot of it’s more about the awareness of what’s around you but [it] does tie into conservation” and that she thought that “they’re learning not necessarily about being environmentally-friendly, but more about their environment and I think the more aware you are about nature and the environment, the more you want to as you get older, take actions to protect it.” As part of learning to be aware, Nikki recounted how an important aspect of the curriculum at the Brownie level is helping the girls notice the environment, which they do by talking about the importance of plants and trees, and drawing girls’ attention to sustainability at work in the program, for instance, by encouraging the girls, when they are doing a craft, to think about the materials they are using and whether they are bought or recycled.

For the older girls in Guiding and Pathfinders, there is more emphasis on doing service in the community. Georgina reflected on the fact that in the program, “community service projects are huge. I think they’re great for girls, and I think every kid should do community service projects. I think that’s where it starts.” Echoing Georgina, Amy observed how in the program,

there’s certainly an emphasis on community service, including environmental service. You know, tree planting, garbage pickup [...] our emphasis is on being part of your community and understanding how you could be a good participant in your neighborhood and in your community, whether that’s participating in community events or...service in your community.

The Brownies and the Guides learn about being a good environmental citizen of their communities through different interest badges that compel them to take action in their personal lives and in their communities through environmental service projects.

One example of service that stood out in my time in the field was the shoreline cleanup put on by the Wychwood Guides unit. This event emerged from GGC's partnership with the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, a national initiative launched by the Vancouver Aquarium to clean up waterways across the nation. The Wychwood Guides chose Cedarvale Park, which was located a few blocks from their meeting place, because this particular park had a ravine and one of the conditions of the activity was that the site be near a body of water. On a cloudy Monday evening in April, we walked to the park, and after the girls received instructions about what to pick up and which items were considered dangerous and should not be touched, they were separated into groups and given gloves and a large garbage bag. Each group had an adult leader responsible for supervising and recording item by item what the girls were picking up, which included everything from cigarette butts, glass bottles, plastic food containers and old signs. The GirlGuidesCANblog site notes that this activity provides an opportunity for the girls to be involved in stewardship and conservation in their communities and that it counts towards several core program badges.⁴⁴ At the Guiding level, it meets the requirements to "Be Involved in Your Community" from the section "You in Guiding" and to "Learn about our Environment" from the program handbook. It also meets the requirements of the "Green Connection Community Service Badge" which is earned when Guides "participate in a Green Connection environmental service project and help promote environmental awareness and help Guides have a deeper understanding of the impact that they are making when they take part in a cleanup."⁴⁵ In the Wychwood unit specifically, four of the girls who participated in the shoreline cleanup earned the Lady Baden-

Powell pin, which is the highest award in the Guide program and which stipulates, among other things, that girls participate in and lead projects in their community. Georgina interpreted this event as an instance of the girls serving their local community: “they’re directly impacting the community when they’re doing [service projects]. When we did the shoreline cleanup, that was their community and that was a place that they frequent.” Georgina added that “we want the girls to know that even the small things they do in the community, like picking up a cigarette butt, impacts it.”

Environmental activities at the Brownies level might also have a service component. The Brownies visited a community garden in their neighbourhood, the Littles Road Park Community Garden, as part of their gardening badge. The girls made two visits, once in October where they picked some fall vegetables and helped prepare one of the raised beds of soil for rest over the winter, and another in June in which they loosened up the soil and planted beet, bush bean, and carrot seeds. These visits taught the girls about how food is produced and also furnished them with the experience of being a participant in the community. Rini remarked that “especially in Guides and Pathfinders, you kind of try to give back to the environment, so there’s a whole, I don’t want to say like a mandate, but one of the goals is service, service projects. So...it could be like towards another Girl Guide unit or like to the community, or [a] specific organization in the community.”

The Guiders did not articulate an awareness of the ways in which the environment and environmental issues are shaped by class, race, sexuality or any other categories of difference, and were not cognizant of environmental justice issues in the wider Toronto community. One connection, however, that several of the Guiders did make with environment/alism and social

inequality was class. Nikki, who provided one of the more elaborate responses to this question, noted that,

If you buy organic, it's better for the environment, it's often better for the local community, but it costs more. So if you are a lower income family, you can't do that. There's a lot of welfare housing, whether it's in apartments or co-ops, they may not have recycling programs because it costs more. So just little things like that that I've noticed, from whether it's girls in these communities or friends that are from lower-income families, that's something that I have specifically noticed that there isn't...and it's also not something that's necessarily as highly valued to be taught.

She also noted that single moms are less likely to have the time to be environmentally friendly and eat fresh organic foods because of time and financial constraints. Several other Guiders also observed that caring for the environment is easier to do from a place of economic privilege. Rini, for instance, felt that “most of the people that I would say are like extremely environmentally friendly and all that would be the people that are not marginalized” because “they have the liberty to worry about things like that,” while Georgina noted that wealthier people are more likely to produce a lot of waste that is recycled by low-income people, something she was not sure was motivated more by environmental reasons or economic ones. Amy characterized the class inequalities in people's experiences of the environment as a “difference in opportunity” to experience nature, namely in the opportunities for lower-income girls to experience camping and nature outside of the city, and acknowledged that “if you're struggling with other issues it could be harder to find the time or the emotional space to tackle, you know, environmental issues, or to assign the extra time to do whatever the extra work is.”

The Guiders suggested that environmental injustice was not really a problem in Toronto, and were more likely to cite examples of injustice from other places in world, mostly in developing nations. Georgina, noting that she did not think the environment was linked to race, remarked that she saw environmental problems as being bound to places where human

populations are higher, in places such as China where severe smog causes air pollution and in India where great economic disparities reduce the metropolitan cities' poor to sifting through the trash discarded by the wealthy. Several Guiders in fact suggested that Canada was free of these kinds of environmental problems because Canadians are more "environmentally conscious." As Georgina noted, "Here in Canada, we're more conscious about the environment," a sentiment echoed by Nikki, who, in her reflections about water access and equality, remarked that "fortunately, being in Canada, specifically in the GTA and Ontario, we don't have to deal with that ... the water here is regulated." The Guiders' view that Canada is more conscious about the environment was rather surprising given Canada's position as a major global oil producer/exporter and in light of the reality that Canada, as a rich Western country, is responsible for many of the environmental problems in developing nations in the Global South like India, China, and the Philippines where it has relocated its manufacturing to take advantage of cheap, poorly regulated labour and where it also dumps its trash, recyclables, and e-waste, causing environmental and human health problems in these countries.⁴⁶ Furthermore, with Canada's cold climate and high standard of living that comes with being an advanced capitalist nation, Canadians are some of the world's highest energy consumers and stand in stark opposition to rural areas in other parts of the world where people rely on traditional methods of sustenance.

This view of Canada's environmental position provides a glimpse into how GGC understands Canada's, and subsequently its own position as a supposedly liberal and progressive nation on the world stage, a position which ignores its implication in colonial, imperial, and capitalist global relations, which I will explore more in depth in the next section. With the view that environmental justices were not an issue in Toronto, several Guiders suggested that if they

were a problem, they would be open to addressing them in the program. According to Allye, “if a girl was ... really interested in environmental justice and brought us this, you know, thing that she wanted to talk to the unit about, we would definitely be open to that.” But she also noted that “I think it is, depending on what the leaders think, too. Like, I’m sure there are some leaders who, that’s what they talk about when they do environmental badges, ‘cause that’s what they’re interested in.” Amy suggested, however, that environmental justice is not something that the organization is “looking for”:

I’m sure that if that was an issue that was being raised in our community, I could see us participating in it, but I don’t think we’re necessarily looking for it. I mean there’s a lot of flexibility in the Guide program to sort of tackle local issues, whatever those issues might be in your community, and I don’t think that our immediate community that’s an issue that I’ve heard raised. And we were talking about social equality issues in this neighbourhood, I don’t think environmental [justice] issues are ones that come up.

In my time in the field with the Guides and the Brownies, I did hear about environmental justice issues in the community. For instance, at the Littles Road Park Community Garden, our tour guide remarked that the community members who tended to the garden have planted many “ethnic varieties” of vegetables – callaloo, Tamil spinach, okra, jalapeño peppers and Indian chili peppers along with the more common varieties, which are still transnational but more typically found in Canadian gardens, such as eggplant, peas, beans, squash, basil, and cucumber. She noted that the less common transnational varieties reflect the community diversity as well as the fact that there is a large South Asian and West Indian community in Malvern. Littles Road Garden also helps address food security in the community by donating a portion of its harvest to the Malvern Community Cupboard and other food programs in the area. The visit to the garden could have opened an opportunity to talk about the origins of food justice and the role the garden plays in addressing race- and class-based inequalities in Malvern, a community that has a high level of poverty.

Another environmental justice issue presented itself during the beach cleanup with the Wychwood Guides unit. While the girls were collecting trash, one group happened upon an area littered with syringes. Remembering the talk that they received at the beginning of their excursion about dangerous items that they are not to touch, the girls alerted the Guiders who subsequently called the City to report it. This incidence of discovering syringes in a park could have opened a conversation about homelessness and poverty as an environmental issue, and its correlation to substance abuse. However, on our way back from the trash cleanup, several girls were interested in why the syringes were in the park, to which one Guider responded that “some people make bad decisions.” Rather than explore the social processes that produce homelessness and substance abuse in the first place, the Guider instead reduced a complex social problem to an incidence of personal responsibility and bad decision making.

A quick look at the Brownies and Guides program books also shows how political topics, particularly related to colonialism, are deliberately avoided in GGC. The Brownies and Guides both have badges that touch on Indigenous peoples in Canada, but the recommended activities associated with each badge touch on safe topics related to Indigenous peoples’ cultures. The Aboriginal People in Canada badge, for instance, takes a liberal approach to examining culture by suggesting that girls “find out about the Aboriginal People who live or used to live near your home,” “learn an Aboriginal game, folk tale, dance, or ceremony” and “play an Aboriginal game, such as lacrosse.”⁴⁷ Discussions about the historical and contemporary colonialism of Indigenous peoples in Canada (of which GGC was and is a part), of the high number of missing and murdered Indigenous women, the contamination of water and food sources from resource extraction, the isolation of communities in the North and the lack of government investment that

has left children in many communities without affordable food and below national standards in regards to health services and education, are absent.

An exceptional instance in the program in which the girls were introduced to an environmental justice issue was when Nikki went on a camping trip with eight Rangers to Churchill, Manitoba. On this trip, the girls did a variety of activities, including studying zooplankton in a coastal and inland pond to explore the effects of geography and climate change on the local habitat, and they spent a few hours at a local food bank helping the Métis women who ran the centre to sort potatoes. For one of their events, the girls met Lyna Hart, a residential school survivor and the subject of the film *We Were Children* (2012), which tells the story of her physical and sexual abuse in the residential school system. While the girls who went on this trip were Guides, the trip itself was organized not by GGC but by a third party called Global Explorers. Before they went on the trip, Global Explorers recommended that the girls read *Night Spirits: The Story of the Relocation of the Sayisi Dene* (1997), a book about the Sayisi Dene community that was forcibly relocated to Churchill, Manitoba, by the Canadian government. While Nikki did not name the residential school system and the violence towards Indigenous women as environmental injustice, this experience opened a dialogue between Nikki and the girls about the treatment of Indigenous women in Canadian history. The exploration of these more politicized issues of colonialism, racism, and violence towards women would likely have not taken place if they had adhered to GGC's regular curriculum programming.

Gender, development, and international sisterhood

The view that Canada is a liberal and progressive nation devoid of serious social and environmental problems structures the program's understanding of gender equality and

humanitarian issues globally and shapes its relationship to those problems. I noted at the beginning of this chapter that GGC's gender lens is international in scope and addresses the issue of gender equality internationally, and it purports to tackle this inequality in two ways: by educating Guides in Canada about global gender inequalities, and by encouraging them to participate in service projects at home and abroad that could advance these gender equality goals. While GGC's project of girl empowerment internationally sounds like a noble goal, particularly in the way that it is articulated through the lens of human rights and equality, the problem is that it also replicates colonial narratives that position Canadian girls as the saviours of Third World girls, subsequently perpetuating patterns of Western domination and orientalist narratives about girls in developing nations. To illustrate this point I will consider two program activities that are embedded in the Guiding curriculum: World Thinking Day and international service projects.

In the Guiding movement internationally, girls celebrate World Thinking Day every year. Robert Baden-Powell and his wife Olave Baden-Powell shared the same birthday, and so every year on February 22nd, the Girl Guides and Girl Scouts all over the world use this date as an opportunity to commemorate their birthdays and to "think about their sister Guides in other countries and celebrate international friendship."⁴⁸ On February 23, 2015, I visited the Wychwood Guiding unit and witnessed how the Guiders used Thinking Day to teach the Canadian Guides about the sisterhood of Guiding and the lives of girls around the world. At the Wychwood Thinking Day, the first game that the girls played was "malaria musical chairs." The game was played like regular musical chairs, except the girls who did not manage to find a seat when the music stopped, they were told by the Guiders, represented the children who are infected and die from malaria every year. The girls also played what can only be described as a larger-than-life board game laid out on the gym floor on which there were trivia questions and

challenges for them. When a girl rolled the dice and landed on one of the squares, she and her team had to answer a question or participate in a challenge relating to Guiding, world problems, or MDGs. In one of the challenges, the girls were asked to perform a role play about the MDG goal “achieve universal primary education.” The girls were given a statistic stating that 781 million adults and 126 million children today lack basic literacy and that 60 percent of them are women. With this information, a group of about six girls performed a skit about girls in an African village who were granted the right to go to school. Reflecting on the MDG activities that her unit did for World Thinking Day, Georgina explained that “it just makes them realize that there’s more that...more than just here. Like, there’s the whole world out there and we have it good here, but many countries, like, globally, just don’t have what we have, especially with the girls’ education.”

In addition to making girls in Canada aware of gender inequality abroad, GGC aims to alleviate that inequality through service projects. GGC provides girls with opportunities to travel, and older girls who are willing to fundraise or who can pay for their travel expenses themselves go abroad to countries such as England, Peru, Mexico, and Costa Rica. Nikki, who has extensively traveled as a Girl Guide and as a Guider, told me that when she was fifteen years of age in Pathfinders she went on a trip to the World Guiding Centre Our Cabaña in Mexico. She described how her visit included “friendship sessions” with girls from all over the world and leadership and team building exercises facilitated by the Guiders. She also noted that there was a service project where local children came to the Centre and played games with the girls, and ended with the GGC girls giving them toothbrushes. Other service projects abroad in which she recalled other Guiders participating included painting a school in Mexico and building a community garden in Peru. The Guides also do international service projects from home. Amy

recalled when she was a girl that the Ontario Guides' twinning partner was the Kenya Girl Guides Association and for one of their projects they donated fruit trees to provide food and shade for Kenyans contending with food scarcity. Other recent initiatives that Guiders have done across Canada include making reusable menstrual supplies to send to girls overseas, and donating school supplies to Syrian refugees arriving in Canada.⁴⁹

The Guiders from the Wychwood and Malvern units suggested that these activities provide the girls with an opportunity to recognize that there are global inequalities with respect to environmental resources. In depicting these inequalities, however, they highlight how life in the West/North is radically different from life in the East/South for girls in a manner that "Others" girls in the Global South and divides them from girls in the Global North. Nikki, reflecting on the activities that the Malvern unit does through its Twinning partnership and specifically for the "Water, Water, Everywhere" badge, noted that

Part of that [twinning partnership with Guides from other countries] is teaching the girls about those countries. So, a lot of the activities that we've done that do surround, like, you know, you open a bottle of water, you don't think about it or you pour water from the tap in a cup, you don't think about it, but there's other countries where the amount of water you fill up, put in your bath tub, that's how much clean water they get in the whole year, and how often do we get to shower, how often do they get to shower.

While perhaps well-meaning in her desire to teach her girls about global environmental inequalities in the countries with which they are twinned, Nikki's description of these inequalities homogenizes girls' experiences of their environments in the Global South and paints an image of "Third World difference" in her (erroneous) claim that they only have access to the equivalent of a bathtub of water for a year. As Mohanty explains, western feminists construct Third World difference by appropriating and colonizing "the constitutive complexities that characterize the lives of women in these countries," thus homogenizing and flattening their experiences.⁵⁰ The construction of Third World difference is accompanied by an image of

Canadian girls as privileged and blessed with many resources. The Wychwood Guides unit also did the Water badge and the implications of their message were very much the same. According to Allye, “just knowing who has access to water and discussing, like here, we can just turn on the tap, but in other areas of the world, not so lucky and yeah, I think it’s just drawing it...again, just making the girls think about it and recognize that you know, things are different in different places.” The notion that girls in Canada are “lucky” is echoed by Loretta, who explained:

We’ll talk about you know, that there are issues of poverty. We played a game...we did a lot of games they learn to play, and we did a whole segment on diseases and we talked about how where you’re born in the world really impacts your health. So, we had a game where we went around, and you know, it’s almost like a game of tag, but the person will get an illness. It’s like, ok, the person needs to help you at the other end of the gym, too late, you don’t make it, right? So, they get an idea of how almost random it is in some areas about whether you’re going to get access to medical aid. A lot of it is through play and role play.

The Guides’ narratives about girls in developing nations also reflect these Orientalizing colonial discourses and demonstrate how they have internalized them into their own understandings of themselves as citizens with civic responsibilities. Mia, a Guide from the Wychwood unit, noted in our discussion of environmentalism that “we should be grateful” for having a lot of trees in Canada, “ ‘cause [in] some parts of the world, there’s barely any nature and people are dying, so we should actually be very grateful. See, we throw out all this garbage and we get this! [referring to the nature around us at the Bonita Glen camp]. I think we should trade places for a day to see how it feels and all that stuff.” The notion that Canadian girls are lucky compared to girls in developing countries and should be grateful for what they have is also reinforced in the pages of *The Canadian Guider*, which feature stories about girls’ international trips and their service projects abroad. In the Spring 2015 issue there is an account of Canadian girls who went to Peru where they gave care packages to the local people, which included food, candies, school supplies and toothbrushes, did a litter cleanup, painted a mural at a school, and

built an indoor adobe stove, according to the article, for a grandmother in the village of Mato. In the final paragraph of the story, the author reflects on how “the idea of making a lasting difference in a distant country can be daunting. However, as one Ranger remarked, ‘[a] person may not be able to change the world alone, but we can each do a little bit together to make it a better place.’ Experiencing a different culture and way of life also made us all feel very fortunate for the things we take for granted in Canada.”⁵¹ By teaching Canadian Guides that they “have it good” compared to girls in developing nations, GGC reinforces the notion that girls in advanced capitalist countries like Canada are free and in a position of privilege because they have more rights and liberties and that subsequently, it is their role to help liberate their “less fortunate” sisters.

This representation of Eastern/Southern and Western/Northern girlhoods echoes the more recent efforts of international development agencies and corporations to “invest in girls.” Since the empowerment of girls in developing nations has become a trendy cause in the late 1990s, international bodies and corporations such as the World Bank, United Nations Foundation, Plan, and the Nike Foundation have been raising and donating funds for the purposes of providing girls in the developing world with better access to education, health care, economic opportunities and human rights under the assumption that these efforts will help developing nations break the cycle of poverty and become more modernized.⁵² Nike’s campaign Girl Effect, for instance, as Emily Bent illustrates, has produced videos showing Western philanthropists, NGOs, and governments how girls can transform their communities when they are educated and employed. As Bent argues, Girl Effect reproduces colonial discourses about “liberated” Western girls rescuing “oppressed” Third World girls and reinforces the boundaries between “us and them.” It invites Western girls to see girls in the Third World through a lens of privilege and pity,

“encouraging Western girls to associate poverty, gender discrimination, and violence with the Global South.”⁵³

The United Nations Foundation program “Girl Up” also takes a similarly problematic approach in the way that it appeals to American girls’ benevolence and pity for girls who supposedly lack the privileges they enjoy. Feminist education and literary scholars Özlem Sensoy and Elizabeth Marshall describe this approach as “missionary girl power,” a view espoused in colonial nations like Canada that Western girls living in advanced capitalist nations are empowered and that it is their duty as citizens in the free world to intervene on behalf of girls who live in places where governments fail to look after girls and in some circumstances, do violence to them.

GGC’s contemporary focus on gender equality for girls, particularly in developing nations, emerges from the international Guiding movement’s early role in supporting the UN’s humanitarian goals. As historian Kristine Alexander explains, in the interwar period, the League of Nations, which is the predecessor of the United Nations, was established to prevent another World War and to promote international peace, pacifism, and cooperation. When the League of Nations was dissolved and replaced by the UN, representatives of WAGGGS attended conferences at the UN and its associated agencies, for which WAGGGS had consultative status. WAGGGS was (and still is) an elected member of UNESCO from which it receives funding to implement community projects in countries where member organizations are under resourced in addition to travel funds for girls to visit the World Guiding Centres and attend conferences. WAGGGS has also been engaged at national and international levels in promoting the humanitarian goals of the UN by developing programs in response to its many campaigns, such as the International Year of the Child (1979) and the International Year of Shelter for the

Homeless (1987).⁵⁴ For instance, for the Year of the Child, GGC participated in WAGGGS's "Our Day Without," an event in which girls made a sacrifice for a day, whether by eating starvation meals or by making donations to a library or a school in another country, in order to "reflect upon our relatively good fortune and to experience, in a very minor way, some of the discomforts that others live with every day."⁵⁵

The Guiding movement internationally envisions itself as playing a role in international development. Echoing the UN's concerns about poverty and development in many Third World countries during the 1970s and 1980s, WAGGGS and GGC responded by creating initiatives addressing development issues faced by its member associations in the global South, most of them known as "tenderfoot" Guiding associations, a rather patronizing designation bestowed on national units that are new to the Guiding movement. In 1979, GGC supported the Upper Volta Water Project (in present-day Burkina Faso) in response to The World Bank's identification of the Upper Volta as one of the poorest countries in need of international aid for infrastructural improvements. With the funds-matching project offered by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), GGC helped fund the construction of 40 wells for communities suffering from drought in the Upper Volta. In the 1980s, the Chief Commissioners justified this new project on the basis that "the organization should become more involved in "grassroots" development by forming links with Girl Guide Associations in less developed countries."⁵⁶ The twinning projects that followed the Upper Volta were wide-ranging: planting fruit crops in Kenya to provide local women with seasonal work; setting up a bakery at the Uganda Guiding Centre to teach the girls skills in baking that they can transfer to their communities while also generating income for their unit, and establishing a school for girls in Zambia to teach them

about catering and tailoring in addition to math and English so they can find employment after graduation.⁵⁷

Through twinning and other humanitarian projects, Guiding internationally saw itself as a conduit for development, promoting “literacy, non-formal education, youth and educational opportunities for girls and women.”⁵⁸ This approach echoed discourses of women in development that emerged in the 1970s that positioned women as untapped resources for development and critiqued traditional gender roles for prohibiting girls’ access to education and for confining women to the home where they do not earn an income. WAGGGS and GGC envisioned themselves at the forefront of girls’ and women’s rights, assisting them with developing their communities so that they can be self-sustainable. Reflecting on the goals of the twinning projects, Robyn Young, the Special Projects Coordinator of GGC in charge of twinning in the 1980s, observed that their objectives are to foster self-sufficiency at the community and national levels, empower girls and women to earn an income, position them to get better jobs, and provide them with the knowledge to train other young people in their communities.⁵⁹

GGC’s twinning development projects, which Guiders believe to be mutually beneficial for the girls abroad who have improved access to education, water, and other basic necessities, and for the girls in Canada who gain “an increased awareness—the understanding that global issues are local issues,” fits into Guiding’s early program of fostering sisterhood and international cooperation. A troop leader, Winnifred Kidd, captured this sentiment in a 1933 issue of *The Canadian Guider* where she wrote that “every Guide in our great sisterhood can do something to help,” and “having sister Guides in so many sections of the world should make us see how important it is to build up tolerance and understanding between countries of the world.”⁶⁰ GGC encouraged the girls that were enrolled in Guides in the early years of movement

building to see their sameness instead of difference, which it did by organizing international camps and, for girls who could not travel, by exposing them to the lives of Guides elsewhere in the world through pen pal writing and Guiding literature (newsletters and novels) that showcased the different Guiding uniforms, cultures, national anthems, and customs from around the world. As Alexander argues, the hope was that girls' cross-cultural exchanges, facilitated through comparison and exchange at the international camps and in the Guiding literature, would "highlight similarities of age and gender while encouraging girls and young women to disregard differences of culture, geography, religion and 'race,'" a point validated by an article in the International Girl Guide and Girl Scout Paper, *The Council Fire*, that remarked, following an international camp, that "nations are only collections of human beings, and once we discover that we are, at bottom, very much alike, and that our differences are only interesting, not alien, then surely we have discovered something of the secret of Friendship."⁶¹

Alexander and Proctor argue that these proclamations of sisterhood during the interwar years, so core to the program, in fact affirmed Britain's colonial power at a time when its power was diminishing with nations such as India gaining independence. At the same time that it celebrated diversity, peace, and tolerance, Guiding constructed itself as an imagined community that was both white and imperial. As Alexander notes, the organization up until this time was governed from afar by a geographically dispersed group of elite, white, Anglo women who made up the Imperial Council and the International Council, which oversaw the world Guiding association and advised Guiders around the world about "their special part[s] of the Empire."⁶² Furthermore, the women belonging to these councils also looked upon Guiding as an opportunity to modernize girls and women in the British dominions, such as India, to liberate them from their so-called "degraded" positions. As Proctor notes, the Baden-Powells envisioned that white

Europeans made up a “natural community” and that it was their responsibility to “civilize” and “educate.”⁶³ They saw Indian girls and women as poorly educated and, in the words of Olave Baden-Powell, the hapless victims of “backward” traditions such as purdah.⁶⁴ In Canada, similar attempts were made in the early twentieth century to modernize Indigenous girls by setting up units in residential schools that “civilized” them into ideals of European femininity.⁶⁵ Guiding, a movement which Alexander has aptly termed “Commonwealth feminism,” subsequently introduced and disseminated a citizenship rooted in white, upper- and middle-class British feminine ideals emphasizing bodily discipline, service, and charity into places where such notions of citizenship did not exist, in the name of advancing girls in colonized and developing nations into the modern age.⁶⁶

Just as it did in the past, the Guiding movement today buries its implication in modern colonialism under the liberal rhetoric of empowering girls and addressing gender inequality. WAGGGS states that its role is to educate Guides and Scouts “on issues that are relevant to girls and young women, encouraging them to look beyond their own lives to develop an understanding of the wider world and how they, as global citizens, can make a difference.”⁶⁷ In its mandate to encourage girls “to make a difference,” the international Guiding movement brings, much as it did historically, the Western values of progression and modernity to developing nations in the Global South in the name of gender equality and girls’ rights, a process which maintains the superiority and hegemony of Western values and erases the colonial relations that underpin global inequalities today. The notion that Canadian Girl Guides should be prepared to help their sisters abroad in the developing world constructs a citizenship for Girl Guides that is based in white, middle-class, female, western (and Canadian) benevolence.

Barbara Heron, in her feminist critique of international development work, argues that Canadian volunteers who go abroad actively reconstitute their identities as white, middle-class subjects, while Othering those that they purport to be helping. Heron argues that this approach to subject-making was not only a critical part of British imperialism, but also constituted white, middle-class colonial femininity. Because white women in Britain and many commonwealth countries historically were barred from participation in public life, their access to meaningful work outside of the home was limited to charity, and in fact, as volunteer work gained greater acceptance, white, middle-class women's participation became mandatory for performing a femininity rooted in "goodness." International development work, which continues to be dominated by women, is part of modern colonialism and provides an outlet for achieving this "goodness":

For white middle-class women, the comparison of Northern to Southern countries, and specifically the focus on gender relations and the status of women in the "Third World," not only reinforces a sense of our own "freedom" (derived from the supposed comparative "advancement" of our society, and our position in it vis-à-vis "Third World Women"), but also compels us to act out our "goodness" by finding ways of joining the intervention processes that claim to better the lives of women elsewhere."⁶⁸

Again in *The Canadian Guider*, narratives of Canadian Girl Guide goodness are relayed in Canadian girls' stories of gratitude from the recipients of their service work abroad, about the grandmother in Peru who was "overcome with happiness" and "tearfully realized that she would not have to cook outside anymore," the children who were "thrilled with our care packages" and delighted in playing a soccer match with the new balls that were given to them by the Rangers, and on an international trip to India, the children and teachers who were "so openly thankful for our efforts" in painting a mural at their school.⁶⁹ Furthermore, the Guides and Rangers who participated in these activities are rewarded by having their "eyes opened," in being "humbled

and much more thankful” for what they have, and by expanding their knowledge of the world, gaining confidence, and broadening their skills.⁷⁰ These narratives about the goodness of international service elide sticky discussions about power and privilege that underlie the relationships between Northern giver and Southern recipient of charity. As a result, GGC service projects fail to meaningfully engage across difference and end up replicating patterns of oppression and privilege.

Furthermore, packaging (Northern) girls’ actions to make a difference as a form of selflessness and good citizenship, both the GGC and the international Guiding movement fail to analyze and in fact conceal the underlying colonial and imperial power relationships that construct global relations of inequality in the first place. They overlook how global inequalities are the product of British colonialism, a violent process which resulted in exploitation and in some circumstances, genocide, and which forced many nations into positions of dependency and economic devastation from which they have not yet recovered. They also ignore how those inequalities today continue as a result of the neocolonialism of multimillion dollar corporations and governments in the Global North that take advantage of the dependent position of many so-called “post-colonial” nations. Instead, in Guiding, privilege and misfortune are viewed as “random,” as Loretta suggested, rather than the outcome of historical relations of domination.

Speaking about privilege and distress in this way also conceals the reality that there are many citizens and non-citizens in Canada whose human rights are not upheld. This discourse is troubling, particularly in light of the gross violations of human rights that are happening right now in Canada to Indigenous women, many of whom are missing, murdered, and incarcerated, and to Indigenous communities whose traditional territories are being sacrificed to the interests of global corporations looking to profit from resource extraction. Deep systemic inequalities

exist in Canada, among them the exploitation of migrant workers, the growing levels of poverty from the widening gap between rich and poor, and racist police violence towards communities of colour.

These contemporary inequalities are rendered invisible in GGC, in part a function of the reality that the organization is comprised largely of a white, middle-class base for which it is not beneficial to explore differences in race, class, and sexuality. The Guiding movement both historically and today has been unwilling to examine substantive differences in race, class, and sexuality among girls, and to challenge the hegemonic white and European power that has shaped the organization. While the language of sisterhood in Guiding professes to unite girls in a common identity and a common cause, it evades questions of difference. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues in her book *Feminism without Borders* (2003) through the example of a feminist (Robin Morgan) who also draws on the language of global sisterhood, this concept is problematic because it is “predicated on the erasure of the history and the effects of contemporary imperialism,” which causes the power imbalances of privilege, oppression, and dependence among women to disappear. Mohanty argues that this is dangerous for women “who do not and cannot speak from a location of white, Western, middle-class privilege.”⁷¹ In Guiding, ignoring differences of power and privilege among girls thus replicates the kinds of inequalities it professes to address.

Care-based citizenship and the public/private

In this chapter, I gestured to the ways in which GGC is an organization that is highly structured – in fact, rigidly so – and very much hierarchical. Girls who become Guides are initiated into a highly-ritualized Guiding culture where they must learn and recite the Promise and the Law,

collect badges, raise money for their unit through cookie sales, go on camping trips and attend rallies, demonstrate a loyalty and obedience to the nation, and honour the organization's founders through the annual Thinking Days, all practices that represent good Guiding citizenship. As I noted, many of the expectations surrounding citizenship in GGC required girls' obedience. My focus groups revealed that the girls responded in very different ways to the hierarchical structure and mandatory citizenship practices of GGC. While some described how they enthusiastically embraced the activities and supported many of the (citizenship) lessons and values embedded in Guiding, others critiqued some of the program rules and activities that were imposed on them.

One aspect of the program that the girls enjoyed was the badge work. Several girls from the Wychwood unit noted that they were drawn to the program because of the badges, and they demonstrated an awareness that the purpose of the badges was to teach them skills and life lessons. As Adina reflected, "they make you work and still have fun. And you can pick out which badge you wanna do, like if you really love animals, you can do like an endangered species badge and stuff like that." Marietta similarly reflected that the Guiders "make the games fun and easy for us to learn instead of just making it really boring and talking about it. They make it like games, we got to do when they taught us about our street safety, we got to like do skits on what you shouldn't do and what you should do, like, when you meet a stranger or something." The girls expressed excitement about earning badges because they felt that it allowed them to explore new or build on existing interests. Furthermore, they are a mark of success and distinction. Katie explained that "we do some of the badges as a group, so we just get the badges, it's pretty awesome. But there's some that you can just work on by yourself and yeah, it's awesome to show it off." Paige, also a Guide from the Wychwood unit, similarly noted

that she enjoys the badges because “you know what you’ve accomplished in the years of being in Guides,” a point echoed by Audrey who agreed that “I like to feel proud about myself that I’ve done something and actually got something for it.”

At the same time, some of the girls expressed resistance to certain elements of GGC’s citizenship education. One group of Guides from Wychwood, on the subject of program activities they did not like, had the following exchange:

Brooklyn: Well, some of them, like um, some of the lessons are like, [using a mock adult voice] “be a good girl.” Well, not quite that, but it’s kind of, it’s kind of boring. They should make it a bit more fun.

Paige: Like when they’re babbling on about stuff that we don’t even know about because...

Erin: You know what’s fun? Getting free time.

Brooklyn: Yeah.

Erin: Well, like, in the forest for example, ‘cause like we get to do what we want basically, as long as we don’t go too far out the boundaries. And when they give us free time, we can, like, organize our own games and sometimes we, like, suggest them to the leaders and then they will let us play.

During the fieldwork, several Guiders remarked that one of the criticisms they receive from the girls in the program is that there is a scarcity of time allotted for unstructured play. For many of the girls, their play in the forest at Bonita Glen in the tipis stood out as one of their favourite activities because it gave them agency to pursue what they liked.

Several girls from Brownies also voiced their dislike for singing the national anthem at their meetings. When I asked the girls what made them excited to come to Brownies every week, Mandy responded that she was not very excited. When I probed further, the following conversation ensued:

Alina: She’s like, whenever you go to places, whatever you do, sometimes when you do things, they’re always like long and boring.

Mandy: Like having to sing the national anthem.

Alina: I sing the national anthem twice. Twice! Every Monday I sing it twice. At school and at Brownies.

Rachel: We have to sing it every week.

Alina: We have to sing it every day.

Mandy: Yeah. [unenthusiastic voice]

Alina: I know.

While the Brownies and Guides overall found the program to be fun and exciting, especially with regards to the badges, the games and the camping, it was clear from some of the girls' responses that there were elements of citizenship teaching that they felt were forced upon them and that they did not enjoy. I read these girls' criticisms as a resistance to certain forms of moral and bodily discipline that are taught in the program and also as evidence of the fact that the citizenship that is taught in GGC is not open to girls' critique.

Despite the fact that GGC provides girls with opportunities to be leaders in their communities, I found that the program's understanding of citizenship and democracy was defined in very traditional terms as their rights (or responsibilities?) to engage in participatory democracy; the examples of girls' engagement that were recognized and rewarded typically fell within these limited boundaries. As a GGC training manual indicates, Guiders are expected to make Guiding a space for girl engagement and to regard girls "as active participants and as full partners with our adult members" and to share decision making with girls "in a way that matches their developmental ability and interests," with responsibility for decision making increasing as girls grow older.⁷² However, Amy, commenting on the availability of opportunities for girls to be decision makers, observed that her unit has not done enough to ensure that girls have those opportunities. She remarked that "there's actually quite a bit of emphasis in the Girl Guide program with getting the girls to kind of lead the way. Like have them make some of the decisions. And that's something that my particular unit has probably been not doing as much as

we should [in] getting the girls' input in what they would like to see, what they would like to do.”

In my time in the field with the Malvern Brownies and Wychwood Guides units, I gained a sense that the meetings were Guider-directed, with the meeting themes chosen and planned by the Guiders who were drawing on program resources and the badge curricula found in the Guides manual. While the older girls in Pathfinders may have more opportunities for shaping the program, the girls in the units I studied were limited to making smaller decisions, such as choosing an activity from a set of options provided by the Guiders or planning a camp menu, as Nikki indicated. The girls do, however, as a condition of earning certain badges, plan and organize their own initiatives, which often take the form of community service projects, the most successful of which are featured in *The Canadian Guider* and recognized by awarding their creators with “Girl Greatness Awards.” Yet, while Guiding encourages girls to pursue projects that improve their communities or the lives of girls, their activities are articulated within the framework of individual service and helping others, meeting the conditions that Guiding defines as “good citizenship.”

The problem with this model of citizenship rooted in service is that it is more about being a good citizen than it is about challenging political structures. Young people today are expected to participate in service work in the community, often as a component of civic education in formal schooling. As Taft argues, “youth participation programs can act as a form of regulation, encouraging particular forms of civic engagement and particular kinds of political expression, all under the watchful eyes of the state.” Participation, then, becomes a “way to manage and contain youth dissent and more rebellious forms of political activity,” therefore curbing children’s citizenships in ways that render them docile.⁷³

Further, another problem with this model of citizenship, in addition to the racist and colonial associations with “care” and “service” that I have already discussed in this chapter, is that it is rooted in a gendered understanding of social and political participation. Although Guiding emerged in a social context in which girls already had limited social roles, the organization actively used service to perpetuate those traditional roles, using volunteer work with children, the sick, and the elderly at home, in hospitals and in other institutions to prepare them for their future roles as wives and mothers.⁷⁴ Girls and women stepped in to perform private caring labour that reduced the need for state intervention in providing social services. In the modern context, neoliberalism relies on the unpaid caring labour that women do in the home and community. Governments in advanced capitalist nations like Canada and Britain increasingly exploit women by downloading care responsibilities onto them, and do so using the feel-good language of community care and participation that mask their self-interests to privatize certain kinds of work and reduce social spending.⁷⁵ As MacGregor points out, women are much more likely to volunteer than men, which means that they take on a “triple” workload of paid employment, unpaid domestic labour, and unpaid community work,” which only deepens gender inequalities.⁷⁶

Although gender ideologies have shifted since the movement’s beginnings, GGC’s continued reliance on service and community care perpetuate the privatization of gendered labour and traditional gender ideologies. By defining citizenship through activities like volunteering at a community garden, building animal shelters, and running food drives, GGC reinforces depoliticized forms of community engagement that make it the responsibility of girls to care for others. Issues such as homelessness, hunger, access to healthy food, and animal welfare are not politicized as systemic issues that require political and governmental

interventions, but rather packaged as social problems that can be addressed through the private actions and charity of committed individual girls. Girls' citizenships are therefore not political – they are an extension of their identities as carers.

GGC's strong reliance on women's and girls' unpaid care labour is also linked to its gendered citizenship. When GGC came into existence, Guiders were mostly single women who had made the decision not to marry or become mothers, and Guiding provided many of them with a socially acceptable means to stay single or live a more independent life. Despite the fact that these women rejected marriage and motherhood in their personal lives, the unpaid gendered labour that they performed as Guiders in caring for girls and preparing them for their future roles as wives and mothers in fact positioned the Guiders themselves as a kind of surrogate mother.⁷⁷

Today, many Guiders are married and have one or more daughters in their unit. In both the Wychwood and the Malvern units, there was at least one Guider who had a daughter enrolled in program, and some of the girls identified themselves as third generation Guides; in other words, their mothers and even grandmothers participated in the program as girls and perhaps as adults. Volunteering in GGC is thus a kind of mother-work in the sense that Guiders have not only been treated as metaphorical mothers as role models for the girls, but also that many Guiders are often literally mothers to one or more girls in their unit. In fact, the program relies on the strong sense of nostalgia that grandmothers and mothers have of their girlhood memories of Guiding to ensure the generational continuity of the program. In some instances, however, multigenerational participation is a function of convenience for the mothers. As one Guider* remarked,⁷⁸

I'm taking the kids there, I'm dropping them off, and then I'm going home and then I'm coming back to get them? And I thought, for, you know, I only have half an hour at home. I thought this is silly. I could be volunteering. And I still have to go out to pick them up, and so I can volunteer and everybody comes out ahead and I

don't have to add to my schedule so much. I'm so busy, that it was really important to me that I get something that was manageable.

As this Guider explained, it proved more convenient to volunteer with her daughter's unit rather than having to add to her busy schedule by driving to and from the meetings for drop-off and pick-up.

As a function of all of this unpaid commitment to Guiding, several of the Guiders in my interviews spoke about burnout. Because their labour as volunteers is unpaid and for the majority of them it is in addition to full-time paid employment, they expressed how they felt exhausted by the end of the year and were looking forward to their two months of rest during the summer before the program picked up again in September. While all of the Guiders who expressed this sentiment noted that the rewards of working with the girls always outweighed their exhaustion, this point raises the problem of running an organization primarily on volunteer labour. The amount of work involved, the time commitment, and the likelihood of burnout means that there is a chronic shortage of women volunteering to be Guiders. Georgina noted that "we have the girls, but it's the Guiders who are missing [...] when my mom was a leader, it was kind of, you had a lot of stay-at-home moms back then, right? So they had that time and it is like, it's a full time job being a leader, like, it's lot of work." However, neoliberalism has altered patterns of labour and has rearranged gender roles such that women's participation in the labour force has become imperative for most families, and as MacGregor points out, because women often have the double burden of paid work and unpaid labour in the home, many of them lack the time for volunteer and leisure pursuits. While GGC is not unlike Scouts Canada in the respect that the Scouts, too, relies on the volunteer labour of both men and women, the reality is that even with the presence of gendered inequalities in the division of household labour, women as a whole outnumber men as volunteers in GGC and Scouts Canada combined.⁷⁹ Further, Aniko Varpalotai

has observed that members within the organization have been critical of the “rigid hierarchical structure of the organization” that is based on volunteer commitment, a function of the fact that GGC has had difficulties filling higher level positions in the organization that are volunteer-based, such as the Chief Commissioner.⁸⁰

Furthermore, the fact that GGC relies on volunteer labour means that there are inherent limitations on who can participate as a leader. It is likely that many low-income, immigrant and women of colour who must work to support their families will not have the time and resources to commit to Guiding, a fact evidenced in the largely white, middle-class volunteer base of GGC. As noted in the previous chapter, GGC has a statement on diversity and has made efforts in its internal and external marketing campaigns to represent girls and sometimes Guiders of different races and abilities as participants in the program. Georgina noted that because there is already a shortage of Guiders volunteering, GGC is more concerned with ensuring that there is an adequate number of Guiders available to meet the demand than it is with racial diversity amongst the Guiders. Subsequently, there are fewer Guiders who are racialized, disabled, and working class, which limits the diversity and reduces the richness of perspectives in the program, which also leaves the white and middle-class ideology of the program unchallenged.

Where GGC does address “politics” in the program, it teaches girls about participation through the channels of formal politics, which include voting, lobbying, and advocacy, and WAGGGS also provides opportunities for a small selection of girls to attend world conferences as youth delegates, as it did for COP18 and as it continues to do at the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. However, as Alexander shows in her discussion of Guiding during the interwar years, Guiding movement leaders historically perceived politics to be the ideas or actions that challenge the ideology of the Guiding movement and the state, as

occurred with the French Canadian Catholic Guides and the Seva Samiti Guides in India, which they disapproved of for being divisive for their French and Indian nationalism and anti-British sentiments. GGC today replicates this view of politics by, on the one hand, participating in nationalist activities and rituals, like celebrating Remembrance Day as a show of celebration for “our country, our commitment to a peaceful homeland, and our respect and appreciation for Canada’s veterans and military personnel,” and in singing the national anthem, while on the other hand remaining silent about, and choosing not to ally with disability rights, LGBTQ, feminist, Indigenous, anti-poverty, and anti-racist movements and initiatives.⁸¹ By claiming that the organization must remain “non-ideological,” GGC hides behind the cloak of neutrality while simultaneously supporting a nationalist, white and middle-class Canadian politics rooted in traditional gender ideologies that ultimately do not challenge some of the most fundamental oppressions that girls face. This limited and flawed view of politics, which situates more radical movements in the ideological camp and shelters girls from learning about important critiques of the state, fundamentally limits the kinds of political actions that girls can take in the program and impacts girls’ understandings of the state, democracy, and citizenship.

Conclusion

In the twenty-first century, GGC has defined itself as an organization that empowers girls to meet the challenges of modern society and “to take action for a better world.” As this chapter has shown, the citizenship that it imagines for girls is one that prepares them to serve their communities, to be stewards of the environment, and to act as advocates for girls’ rights. In articulating this citizenship identity for girls in Canada, GGC draws on the language of global humanitarianism and sisterhood. However, as I have shown in this chapter, the organization’s vision for girls’ empowerment and social equality is compromised by its politics of sisterhood

that overlooks differences among girls and ignores global relationships of power. While GGC aims to empower girls in Canada as change agents that are aware of global issues and empathetic to the plight of girls around the world, its MDG-inspired curriculum problematically replicates narratives of First World benevolence and Third World dependence by positioning Girl Guides in Canada as the benevolent helpers of girls in the Global South. Furthermore, while GGC hopes to empower girls to be confident and take action on global sustainability issues, it also paradoxically restricts their agency by inviting them to take part in a program in which notions of citizenship, politics, social justice, and democracy are not open to criticism and analysis. What GGC demonstrates is that while there might be benefits that come along with belonging to a large national and international organization and movement, that membership also imposes structural and ideological limitations that ultimately curb the service providers' abilities to respond to local issues and redefine the citizenship work of the program.

CHAPTER FIVE

Between Philanthropy and Justice: Environmental Science, Environmental Justice, and Green Girls

In the previous chapter, I examined how GGC is an organization which, despite having an extensive diversity and inclusion policy, is not particularly diverse or attuned to the ways in which girls' environments are shaped by intersecting oppressions based in race, class, sexuality, and colonialism. Its marginalization of other categories of difference, in addition to its articulation of a white, middle-class, Canadian environmental citizenship rooted in obedience, responsibility, and a weak analysis of power create a limited vision of "empowerment" for girls. GGC, however, does not claim to be concerned with environmental justice issues. The Guiders were generally unaware of the environmental justice movement and the possibilities environmental justice holds for environmental education. In contrast, Green Girls, a New York City nonprofit organization that serves mostly low-income girls of colour, has claimed since its founding in 2002 to provide girls with "intensive summer experiences that enrich their understanding of science and environmental justice issues."¹ This chapter turns to Green Girls to explore the possibilities of an environmental education for girls that takes race, class, and justice into account.

While Green Girls has been shaped by environmental justice concerns – a function of its geography in NYC and of the priorities of past staff members – I argue that the program relies on a similar narrative of girl empowerment found in GGC that is more philanthropic and civic-oriented than it is justice-based. Like GGC, Green Girls focuses on individual change, but its efforts instead are directed at low-income girls of colour. Green Girls, aligned with the overall mission of the nonprofit organization City Parks Foundation (CPF) in which it is anchored, aims

to shape girls into citizens who care about the natural environment in their local communities while preparing them to have the skills and education to succeed in the twenty-first century job market, particularly in STEM fields where women of colour are underrepresented. However, rather than challenge hegemonic relations of power, which is a central goal of the environmental justice movement, Green Girls assumes that the girls are the ones who must change, conforming to white, middle-class ideals of success to secure better environmental futures for themselves.

Green Girls, as I will show, demonstrates a greater awareness of the race- and class-based systemic inequalities that shape the lives – and citizenships – of low-income girls of colour, which can be attributed to the fact that environmental injustices are more visible in NYC, and also because in NY there is an established network of nonprofits targeted to low-income youth of colour. Yet, the program replicates many of the problems of philanthropic organizations by taking a regulatory approach to working with the girls that does not address or challenge the systemic injustices that permeate their lives.

In the first section of this chapter, I outline Green Girls' gendered work with girls through the context of CPF's overarching goal of promoting environmental citizenship for young people, highlighting where the staff articulate this work through an environmental justice lens. In the second section, I examine Green Girls' environmental citizenship education in practice. In emphasizing girls' educational success through science learning, and in exposing them to the possibilities of careers in the sciences, Green Girls hopes to transform girls that it considers "at-risk" into "can-do" girls. In this discussion, I also note how references to environmental justice in Green Girls' curriculum have diminished over time with staff changes, which has engendered a more depoliticized approach to environmental education in the program. In the third and final section of this chapter, I draw on literature from environmental justice education and

multicultural science education/critical pedagogy to explore some of the limitations in how Green Girls conceptualizes girls' citizenships and education for community transformation, and I consider some alternatives. I argue that while Green Girls does put a strong emphasis on community stewardship and action, its framing of action as volunteerism and citizen-science, which does not empower girls to shape and question the curriculum, fosters a more passive citizenship for them that leaves hierarchical relations of power undisturbed. I consider how Green Girls' more regulatory approach to working with girls is a function of CPF being shaped by the interests and priorities of a predominantly white and elite funding class, and managed by predominantly white service providers. I reflect on CPF's relationship to the communities with which it works to consider what alternative approaches a nonprofit organization like CPF can take to engage in better ways with these communities, which are marginalized by environmental injustices, so that it can effectively decentralize power and facilitate systemic social change.

Throughout this chapter, I rely primarily on the interviews, focus groups, and other documentary sources (CPF website and internal documents), given that academic scholarship specifically on Green Girls has not yet been produced. However, where appropriate, I cite from the limited scholarship written on CPF to better foreground Green Girls' institutional context. In addition to the backgrounder that I provided for Green Girls in Chapter Three, I have also included a quick reference sheet for Green Girls in appendix F that summarizes elemental details regarding the size of the organization, the staff members, the demographics of participating girls, and other pertinent information about the program.

Science and citizenship for the twenty-first century

From its inception, Green Girls has been focused on teaching environmental science to young girls of colour from low-income communities. Green Girls is a unique program in CPF in the sense that it is offered specifically to girls out of recognition that they are underrepresented in the STEM fields, and therefore the staff approach this work through a gendered lens that is absent from all of the other programs. However, there are elements of the citizenship education taught in Green Girls that are not gendered and that permeate CPF's other environmental education programs. Therefore, before exploring how gender emerges in Green Girls, I first want to explore the significance of environmental citizenship within CPF more generally.

Citizenship is at the core of what CPF does as a nonprofit organization. From the time that CPF was founded in 1989, it has worked to create a platform for community engagement to improve NYC's underfunded parks. As the City experienced budget shortfalls in the 1980s and 1990s, public-private partnerships emerged between nonprofits like CPF and the municipal Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to raise funds for and to manage the city's parks. As one such nonprofit, CPF made its mission to work with community members to empower "citizens to support their parks on a local level" so as to transform them into "dynamic, vibrant centers of urban life."² In the mid-1990s, CPF launched the Partnerships for Parks program with NYC's Department of Parks and Recreation, a public-private partnership that provides community members with training and resources such as seed grants, technical assistance, and workshops, so that they may become leaders in their parks. Like other park nonprofits dedicated to park restoration, CPF relies on ordinary citizens in the community to transform their local parks. As Debra Sue Lorenzen, the Director of Education at CPF (2013-2016) explained, CPF identified Long Island City (L.I.C.) as a community of focus for the Partnerships for Parks

program to get citizens out to their parklands to enjoy recreation and arts activities and to become active volunteers by setting up “Friends” groups and volunteering their time to their parks. The work of CPF’ Partnerships for Parks has even garnered the attention of Green theorist Andrew Light who has praised this initiative for creating an avenue for public participation in which citizens not only engage in restoring the local natural environment but also nurture a relationship to nature and build community. The initiative, he argues, is an excellent example of environmental citizenship because it encourages “the evolution of a more responsible citizenry” that makes “human communities themselves sustainable.”³

CPF’s educational programs are an integral part of this work. The organization’s athletic and educational programs, according to Debra Sue, are about connecting the populace “to their parklands in new ways so that they could promote stewardship.” Seeds to Trees, like Green Girls and CPF’s other science-based programs, teach kids about “personal stewardship” to “help kids grow as scientists and stewards of the natural world” so that hopefully they, too, might become citizens who care about their parkland.⁴ The staff working in Green Girls, who are hired by CPF and devote their time to other CPF youth education programs like Seeds to Trees, described environmental stewardship and citizenship as a central part of their work. Echoing the different scales of citizenship that I discussed in the previous chapter, Kaari Casey, who has been both Lead Educator and Program Manager in Green Girls, explained how citizenship is:

definitely important in terms of we’re teaching our girls to take responsibility for their own selves in their environment. I think that really ties into the idea of citizenship, in understanding the role you can play in your city, within your community, within your local community, your country as a whole, you know, a citizen of the world ... understanding the role that you play, understanding the importance of that role I think is definitely part of our program, and it’s definitely a goal that we try to reach through those five weeks.

Lindsay*, a former employee of CPF, similarly argued that the goal of Green Girls is to empower girls with knowledge and opportunities that they might not otherwise have so that they can “become environmental activists and citizens and help promote those values when they grow into adulthood.”⁵ Lindsay further explained that “action projects are huge” in the program and that their role as staff members is to support the girls in pursuing the projects that they are most passionate about. She noted that “I want to help them to think about how they can make a difference in their community. When we talk about community they love it. They really care about their community. They care about their neighbours. They’re at the age that they really care about other people, and so by tapping into that and building on that they want to make a difference in their community.” Debra Sue also described citizenship as a function of service learning and teaching the girls to become participants in their communities, which are among Green Girls’ program goals. She explained,

if we can help kids understand, from a very early age, the science behind stewardship and connect them with their parks on an ongoing basis for things other than soccer, they’re going to come to understand that there’s a whole ecosystem within that parkland that they’re going to want to protect, that I’m betting, if they know about it, they’ll want to protect it.

CPF, however, is particularly concerned with fostering citizenship in low-income and racialized communities and approaches that citizenship through a philanthropic lens based in mitigating poverty and helping children achieve academic success. Because CPF’s mission is to work in neighbourhoods that are “underresourced,” it serves mostly low-income communities of colour. However, it does not use the language of equity or justice in its programs, nor does it articulate a race or class-based politics for working with low-income girls of colour and youth of colour in its other science-based programs.⁶

Claudia DeMegret, who was the Director of Education at CPF between 2003-2013, noted that while CPF's education programs serve "low- income, underserved communities," she didn't think that the organization's goals were specifically about addressing racial inequality:

They did not specify communities of colour and I don't think that that is a primary motivation. Now there is a new Executive Director and my successor is very different from me so I don't think that they bring to it the same, that same focus. But it is part of the mission in terms of the written language around serving our Manhattan ... Central Park raises about three million dollars a year. So, the whole thing was that each neighborhood's parks should be as programmed and as successful as Central Park.

As such, CPF lacks a critical lens of race and income inequality in its stated mandate, and does not make mention of or address the issue of racism. The staff, rather, articulated how CPF's educational programs are focused on improving the lives of low-income children as part of its goal of making parks in low-income areas "as successful as Central Park." As Danielle Rolli, a former Program Manager for Green Girls explained, their aim as service providers in CPF was to get programming out to communities "that didn't have a lot of access to outdoor education programs, and that was true for everything at the department ... all of our programming was in low [-income], underserved communities, communities of colour, and just places where there weren't, where there wasn't as much programming." Claudia, however, noted that each member of her team was "deeply committed to improving conditions for children in our world and conditions for children in our communities and communities of colour, and [committed to addressing] social justice issues." Although the staff all shared a commitment "to improving conditions for children," the way they articulated children's citizenships, as I will discuss at the end of this section, was significantly different and the differences can be mapped over time based on who was the Director of Education.

In the program, however, there were constants in which conditions the staff were trying to improve. First, for an organization that aims to promote park stewardship, CPF sees children's

access to parks as paramount. A problem, however, according to many of the staff members at CFP, is that young people are not connecting with the environment. As Lindsay observed in a comment that echoes New Nature Movement discourses about children and nature, “urban youth are very disconnected from nature, [and] have very few opportunities to engage with nature in a meaningful way.” While the staff acknowledged that children’s disconnection from nature is generally a function of living in an urbanized city, they understood that children from low-income families have less access to nature, parks, and playgrounds than do children from high-income families. Debra Sue, for instance, noted that

urban kids, high poverty urban kids do not interact with the natural world. Our Green Girls, their parents are afraid to let them walk home. They’re not going out and playing in the park ... And they live in housing projects. There is no outdoors where they can play. Maybe there’s a playground. Maybe. If a child isn’t connecting to the natural world, how can they care about it?

Debra Sue’s suggestion that it is not always safe for girls to walk their neighbourhoods alone points to a second and related problem that the staff identified vis-à-vis children’s disconnection from nature: the quality of their environments, including play spaces, particularly in many low-income communities. The staff, who spoke specifically about the poor environmental conditions in L.I.C., linked the organization’s decision to work with girls in L.I.C. to the fact that it is a contaminated environment. As Lindsay observed, “we’re trying to focus into Long Island City because it’s an area with so much pollution and it can use programs like ours.” Lindsay, who described L.I.C. as “concrete locked,” noted that there are few parks in which children can play and that the ones that do exist are along the East River, an area of the city touched by well over a century’s worth of industrial pollution from power plants and metal factories. Similarly, Debra Sue explained that “Long Island City has a dubious distinction as one of the worst air polluted communities in New York City, one of the worst water pollution

problems in the country. ... It has these enormous housing projects, it's concrete, it does not have nearly enough green space to mitigate the effects of all that pollution." Noting that there are some areas of L.I.C. that are gentrifying, Debra Sue remarked that the children from this community are not coming from these gentrifying areas, but rather that they are "being left behind." Claudia, who noted that the children are growing up in hazardous areas, remarked that their goals in exploring issues of environmental health were driven by their desire for young people and for girls "to be activated and become activists at some point."

Furthermore, CPF's educational programs are also designed to provide supplementary education for youth of colour in low-income communities where education is underfunded. The staff members who were working in the programs during the time of this research all stressed the point that youth of colour in low-income communities do not have, for the most part, access to high-quality and well-funded education. The staff were all in agreement that schools in NYC located in low-income areas are less well funded, have fewer in-house resources, and have larger classrooms, all of which impact children's quality of education and their levels of educational attainment. As Lindsay noted,

There's definitely some of these public schools that are wonderful, but as a rule, they tend to be lacking in funds, lacking in resources, and so that reflects on our students who have less writing skills, less science skills, less math skills. So, by working with these urban students who are from low socioeconomic status, we can give them opportunities to improve in those areas and to have a better future.

Very much in line with the discourses of children and nature found in the New Nature Movement, several staff criticized the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the emphasis put on testing in formal education. As noted in Chapter One, with the introduction of the NCLB Act in 2002, the curriculum has been refocused on a back-to-basics math and English language proficiency to ensure that children are meeting national standards of literacy. Many education researchers, however, have pointed out how this narrowed curriculum is inherently inequitable

because it has closed down opportunities to “connect to the diverse interests of youth as well as fails to connect to youths’ out-of-school identities,” and subsequently has given rise to higher dropout rates among low-income youth and youth of colour.⁷

Therefore, Claudia described how their goals in working in the Young Women’s Leadership School in East Harlem (YWLS), Green Girls’ first home base, was to bring hands-on science into the classroom because the girls “weren’t getting hands-on science” and because “seventh grade science was just physical science in the New York City curriculum and it was incredibly boring.” Claudia explained that in her previous job she “would see children who couldn’t sit still in the classroom and who were diagnosed and labelled and medicated and [when] you took them out to the park and they were focused, excited and motivated, and that’s what our education should be like and it’s not.” Kaari similarly described having worked at a public school in NYC and feeling burnt out with the structure of education, which involved teaching for 45 minutes, writing notes, and testing, and Claudia and Kaari both compared the American model of schooling based in standardized testing and indoor learning unfavourably to the more outdoor and experiential kinds of learning that are used in European countries such as Finland and Sweden.

The concern that some staff expressed over the test-based curriculum in formal education and the labelling that is imposed on low-income children suggested that they have incorporated, to some extent, modern understandings about children, nature, and “nature-deficit” into the program. While the staff did not reference the New Nature Movement, their emphasis on creating an out-of-school curriculum based in hands-on experiential education and nature study to counteract the problem of low-income children’s lower academic achievement and the trend of labelling and diagnosing them suggests that they see direct experience in nature as a way to

help children in the education system who are disadvantaged by poverty achieve greater academic success. Green Girls, like CPF's other education programs, is therefore focused on bringing hands-on learning to schools, but in low-income areas and with the goal of modeling how science learning can be made rich and exciting for girls. As Claudia recalled, "our ideal was that we would model for the school, and model for that science teacher and hope that they really start to integrate and implement these things on their own so that it would become the fabric of their school."

As I have already suggested, what makes Green Girls different from CPF's other programs is that it is the only one that considers young people's citizenships through a gendered lens. As CPF's only single-sex program, Green Girls articulates how women are underrepresented in, and face gender-based discrimination in the STEM fields. Although the details of Green Girls' origins are murky, the interviews that I conducted with the staff from Green Girls, in addition to the conversations that I had with staff at the Young Women's Leadership Network strongly suggest that Green Girls owes its existence, and its gendered lens, to the YWLS, an all-girls public school that philanthropist and former NBC News correspondent Ann Rubenstein Tisch opened for low-income girls in 1996. Tisch opened the school to provide low-income girls, most of whom are Latina and African American, with the opportunity to receive a quality education so that they may go to college and, as the Young Women's Leadership Network's webpage states, to help "empower students to break the cycle of poverty through education."⁸ The YWLS's website describes the school as oriented to college preparation and boasts of a 100 percent college acceptance rate for the girls who attend the school. As Tisch explains, the idea for opening the school came to her during an interview that she conducted in the early 1980s, while she worked as a news correspondent, on an assignment

in a high school that had recently opened a day care for teen mothers who were also students at the school. Tisch recalled asking one of the fifteen-year-old teen moms where she saw herself in five years, and remembered how one of the girls started to cry.⁹ In 2001, during the planning stages before Green Girls was launched, it had already been decided that the program would be piloted in the YWLS in East Harlem, a decision likely attributed to the fact that Tisch was looking for community partners to work with the YWLS and because she already had connections to CPF through her husband, Andrew Tisch, who served as a board member. From the very beginning, then, Green Girls shared YWLS's vision for providing educational opportunities for low-income girls of colour in the hopes that it could help with their educational attainment and position them for career success in the future.

For CPF, however, focused on the urban environment and parkland, Green Girls offers another layer to the analysis of gender inequality in education, namely, the underrepresentation of girls and women in the sciences. As Danielle explained, "girls are not being encouraged to go into the field of science. You know, if you look at the numbers it was like, we weren't having equal representation in the field of science ... it's not that girls don't have an interest in science, it's that they're not necessarily pursuing it as a career." Lindsay elaborated on this point by noting that the field of environmental science is permeated with gender inequalities: "Women are behind when it comes to science and that's where this environmental science program is key. There are fewer women in management positions and in just about every industry in the country, there are less rates of women in most of the sciences with the exception of biological sciences." When women do manage to enter science fields, she further explained, they are paid less for doing the same work. Kaari also pointed out that girls are often stigmatized in their middle-school years when they do show an interest in academics generally and science particularly, and

that this inequality is largely due to “archaic” gender stereotypes. As she caustically remarked, there is a perception that girls “shouldn’t really care about the trees,” and subsequently, girls are less likely to pursue their interests in science out of fear of social judgement by their peers.

At the same time, it is worth noting that both Claudia and Debra Sue articulated how they thought that boys were more endangered than girls, with Claudia arguing that girls are catching up in the sciences and that, “if we’re talking about low-income communities, our boys are really falling much further behind at this point.” Noting that boys are more likely to “disconnect” and spend hours in front of the television playing video games, which are most often violent, Claudia expressed how boys “are in such danger” and that “our humanity is dependent on engaging children of every race and every class.” Debra Sue also expressed this conflicted position, arguing on the one hand that a program like Green Girls needs to be defended against people who posit that there should be a boys’ program because young women are the ones underrepresented in, and face inequality in the STEM fields. On the other hand, she later noted that the girls in Green Girls “are vulnerable. They are not as vulnerable as boys, but they are vulnerable.” Although Debra Sue did not elaborate further on this subject, the vulnerable boys to which she was referring were specifically boys in “high-risk communities” or in other words, racialized boys from low-income communities who are more likely to have lower levels of educational achievement.

Claudia’s position reflects the problematic discourses of the “boy crisis” articulated in popular media and education that assume that boys, irrespective of race and class, are falling behind academically and are more disadvantaged than girls, which necessitates interventions in education such as hiring more male teachers and instituting boy-friendly pedagogies in the classroom. This view has been critiqued by education theorists as a backlash to the gender equity

measures implemented for girls during the 1990s through STEM programs and to homophobic and patriarchal concerns about the “feminized” culture of schooling.¹⁰ Furthermore, as education theorist Wayne Martino points out, this discourse is problematic because it does not consider differences of race and class among boys or acknowledge that certain groups of boys (white and middle to upper class) have high levels of educational achievement compared to low-income, racialized and immigrant boys.¹¹ While Debra Sue’s position on gender understands that it is low-income boys who are specifically underperforming in school, her perspective that boys are more vulnerable reflects the dichotomous thinking of the “boys vs girls” education debate and negates the difficulties with which low-income girls of colour are faced in the unequal schooling environment and labour market.

While Green Girls creates a pathway for addressing the unequal representation of women of colour in the fields of science and the inequalities facing low-income youth in their educational attainment, this work is also rooted in a white, neoliberal, middle-class ideal of modern citizenship for girls, what girlhood studies scholar Anita Harris refers to as the “can-do girl” ideology. Like the girl empowerment ideology that I explored in the previous chapter, the ideology of the can-do girl is based in the values of educational success, delayed motherhood, and career ambition, and is more likely attributed to girls who are “marked” for success, which are typically middle-class white girls. The flip side of the “can-do girl” ideology is that of the “at-risk girl,” which Harris argues is a racialized and class-based label typically associated with girls who are considered vulnerable because they are growing up in poverty, in difficult family situations, or in communities known for crime, drugs, or violence. As Harris explains, “at risk” girls are perceived as being in danger, and “if these conditions are identified early, young people can be tagged and closely observed in an attempt to keep them on track” and ensure that they do

not engage in so-called “deviant” behaviours, such as sex, drugs, drinking, school dropout, crime, and violence.¹² Because of the systemic social inequalities that create difficulties in girls’ lives that limit their opportunities for success, “at-risk girls” are more likely to be poor, racialized, Indigenous, queer, and young mothers.¹³

A few of the staff members working in Green Girls articulated the position that reaching girls of colour from low-income areas was important because they were more at-risk for becoming pregnant and dropping out of school, which undermines their opportunities for success in the future. Debra Sue explained that “the girls are most vulnerable. They’re the ones who can get pregnant at fifteen. They’re the ones who could be the single moms, yet perpetuating the generational poverty in those housing projects. We can serve those girls. We can give those girls a sense that they can do whatever they want to do and raise them out of L.I.C.” Lindsay articulated a similar position, noting that “in New York City, we have things to worry about like teen pregnancy and all of these issues that girls can experience. And I think that in our modern society, where girls do have all these options, it’s important to educate them and to mentor them and work with them on figuring out how they can live up to their fullest potential.” In the view of these two staff members, girls of colour in low-income communities, for whom educational levels are lower and pregnancy rates are higher, are seen as being at risk for failing to reach their potential and for becoming women who perpetuate the cycle of poverty. In promoting educational achievement for girls through the sciences, Green Girls encourages a citizenship rooted in educational success and delayed motherhood, which Bindi Shah, in her research on the Laotian Organizing Project, argues represents a “middle-class liberal ethos” rooted in the belief that “teenage motherhood undermines a young woman’s economic situation and educational opportunities, preventing her from leading a stable and productive adult life.”¹⁴

The staff's view that the girls served in Green Girls are somehow "at-risk" was reflected in their descriptions of the girls' communities and in their overall approach to education in the program, which was based in a charity model of empowerment aimed at intervening in girls' lives and repositioning them for success. Under the assumption that the communities in which many of the girls come from are "unsafe," several staff members suggested that Green Girls plays a protectionist role in young women's lives by keeping them safe: by re-directing their attention to their educational engagement and success and, in a sense, away from their communities. Debra Sue, for instance, explained that the girls that they serve come from low-income families that have lower levels of educational attainment, and that their communities have "high unemployment, gangs, and drugs." Debra Sue argued that it was their role to "give them an outlet, keep them with you, make them safe," with the goal of "raising these kids up above their circumstances and nurturing them." She suggested that if Green Girls was successful in improving "these children's lives, [then] we've done a lot of good." Similarly, Kaari and Lindsay also explained that the girls live in unsafe neighborhoods. According to Kaari, the girls are for the most part low income, and many of them live in family situations where they are raised by a grandparent or must care for a sibling. She also noted that several of the girls have had a family member or someone known to them become a victim to gun violence. As a result, most of the girls "are dealing with life issues that really trickle down into their academic success."

As Kaari explained, for many of the girls, academic success is therefore not their priority, and a lot of the girls, "if they have nowhere to go, wind up wandering around all day. So, I think that's why it's crucial for us to have programs like this that keep them occupied, to keep them engaged. I mean school ends in June and they go back in September. There's plenty of time to

get themselves into trouble in the meantime.” On the other end of the spectrum, Lindsay suggested that because the girls’ communities are not safe, many of the girls end up getting shuttered indoors, watching television, doing their homework, or playing basketball. The after-school program in Green Girls, she suggested, was “a great way to get the kids outside and get them to do something more productive with their day but in a way that the parents can support.” These staff members’ comments, rooted in unexamined assumptions about race, class, and citizenship in low-income communities of colour in New York City, perpetuate stigmatizing views of the girls’ communities that assign blame to them for their “failure” to produce a safe environment for girls, and simultaneously position the Green Girls’ program as a safe (white and middle-class) space. These staff members in different ways expressed how they did not think that the girls on their own were positioned for academic success and suggested that their role was to intervene by providing them with more support and better education.

I read these Green Girls staff members’ uncritical views of race, class, and poverty in connection to the fact that they were predominantly white and because they were working within an institution that does not politicize racial diversity or justice. In my interviews, I learned that over Green Girls’ existence, there has been cultural diversity among the staff. Claudia noted that her team over the years was comprised of women from different racial backgrounds, including a Dominican-American woman, a white-American woman, and a woman who was Chinese and white. In 2013, the team also included two women of colour, one employed by CPF and the other a staff member at the YMCA in which the Summer Institute was based. In the 2014 Institute and after-school program, however, the staff were all white, in addition to the then-Director of Education, Debra Sue. The team of interns, in contrast, was more diverse and included an Asian-American and a young South-Asian woman. However, when I asked Debra Sue whether hiring

women of colour is a priority she did not suggest that it was. In fact, none of the staff that I interviewed, with the exception of Claudia, suggested that it was a goal in Green Girls to hire educators or specifically reach out to scientists who are women of colour. This lack of attention to the cultural identity of the program educators came as a bit of a surprise given that Green Girls is dedicated to addressing the underrepresentation of girls of colour in the sciences and to providing them with mentors. Furthermore, the staff, to my knowledge, did not receive any training in working with low-income girls of colour or how to navigate the race- and class-based power differentials that separate them from the girls and situate them in a position of power.

While the staff working for Green Girls while I was in the field positioned the girls and their communities as “at-risk,” a perspective which is not necessarily shared by other Green Girls’ staff members now and in the past, the program structure itself is based in an individual model of empowerment that assumes that girls struggling in poverty can overcome social disadvantage through academic engagement and become empowered “can-do” girls. By providing girls with hands-on learning in Green Girls, it is the service providers’ hope that the girls will be more likely to stay in and perform better at school, which will later help them with career success in the future. As Claudia noted, “ultimately, we really wanted to encourage girls to pursue really academic and intellectual pursuits in addition to science. Like if it wasn’t going to be science then [it was their hope that] they really found an identity within their school work.” Debra Sue suggested much the same. Noting that poverty is a systemic issue that is difficult to overcome, she suggested that one way to effect change is “through the cradle to career model” in order to help girls grow, “reaching them in middle school when they’re at the most vulnerable age.” The problem with this model of empowerment, as I will suggest in the pages to come, is that it assumes that education is enough to help the girls overcome systemic inequalities – a

position which does not adequately consider the role of structural oppression in girls' lives or engage with those inequalities in a meaningful way.

Empowering girls through STEM and science careers

As part of its goal to encourage girls on the path of academic success, Green Girls provides experiences for the girls that model successful women who have carved a career out for themselves in the sciences. Throughout the five weeks of the institute, the group of roughly thirty girls meets urban farmers, ornithologists, botanists, zoo keepers, urban foresters, conservationists, and other professionals working in the sciences.

For instance, at the end of the Summer Institute each year, the Green Girls went to the zoo where they had a fun day seeing and interacting with the animals and speaking with the zookeepers. Lindsay recalled how one year, the zookeeper, who was “a female leader” and a “highly educated ecologist,” provided the girls with the opportunity to “think about some careers in science” by speaking about her own role in taking care of the tropical birds and creating habitat for pollinators. As Debra Sue reflected, “we must connect these girls to women who are scientists, who are working in laboratories, who are naturalists out in the parklands, who have made a life for themselves in many different ways in science and technology,” and she identified Time Warner Cable, their corporate funder, as a particularly important piece of this work. As a condition of receiving funds for the program, Green Girls each year makes a visit to their corporate headquarters, but as Debra Sue noted, the visit fits well into their mandate of exposing girls to careers in technology. In 2013, the Green Girls went to the office in Manhattan to learn about binary coding and did a question and answer session with a woman who was a senior executive at Time Warner. The following year, Green Girls went to the Time Warner office in

Chelsea, Manhattan, where they went on a tour of the newsroom and met female newscasters who spoke about what it is like to work in front of the camera. They also met a woman who worked behind the scenes who explained the process in which breaking news is sorted through, edited, and finally broadcast, and lastly, the girls were given a short presentation on camera robotics.

Both Claudia and Debra Sue linked the experiences of meeting successful women scientists, city workers, and managers to girls' economic empowerment, suggesting that seeing them at work and talking to them can provide the girls with access to possibilities that would not have been there otherwise. Debra Sue, for instance, noted that touring Time Warner provides the girls with a glimpse of what it is like to work in "corporate America," noting that this is an environment that is unfamiliar to most of the girls and that it provides them with the experience of seeing what it is like and imagining, "I could do this. This is fun." Claudia, who focused instead on the jobs available not only in the sciences but also through the DPR, explained:

We worked with a whole bunch of people with science backgrounds that were working in forestry and natural resources and they were all white and middle class or affluent. All of them. This is where our offices were housed. And these are people that love their jobs. You know, they were really, incredibly passionate and motivated and loved what they went to do everyday. And that's what you would want for your child, right?

As Claudia suggested in her comment about the city workers being white and more affluent, Green Girls exposes girls to white and middle-class careers with the hopes that girls of colour from low-income communities can broaden their possibilities and gain access to these careers.

During my time in the field, Debra Sue and her staff implemented some changes to the program curriculum and structure that reflected their more systematic efforts to prepare girls for college and future employment in the sciences. One of the big changes was that the staff redefined the curriculum so as to emphasize the acquisition of deeper scientific knowledge over teaching what they considered to be more generalized experiences outdoors. In 2014, the Green

Girls Summer Institute went through a curriculum overhaul. No longer based on the “sampler” of different environmental topics, it now has a more specialized focus on urban forests, a change that also appears to have coincided with the disappearance of environmental justice language from the program description. According to Lindsay, the new curriculum introduces girls to the dynamics of forest ecosystems and their value to urban residents. In each week of the summer institute, the girls visit a different borough of NYC where they compare and contrast different forest ecosystems. In the 2014 summer institute, the girls did a forest survey, which involved counting the trees and examining tree crown width and symmetry, they took readings of the microclimate, including the air temperature and soil temperature, looked for evidence of which species of fauna and flora inhabit each forest, and assessed the health of each forest. As Lindsay explained, the girls were able to see Inwood Forest in Manhattan, a landscape that is higher in elevation and comprised of caves and rocky outcroppings; the Bronx River Forest, which is much lower in elevation and shaped by the river ecology; the coastal forest of Brooklyn, with its nutrient-poor sandy soils; the mature forest of hickory and oak in Queens; and the coastal forest ecology of Fort Wadsworth in Staten Island. The girls also studied the different layers found within each ecosystem, from the forest canopy to the understory.

Lindsay and Kaari both noted that they hoped that the new curriculum will “give them a much deeper, more profound understanding that will help them in science and that will also kind of like, leave a more lasting impression on them in their lives ahead” and that they will remember in ten years’ time after they have left Green Girls. Lindsay felt that the new curriculum was more successful than the old one because it went deeper in terms of the knowledge and the content being taught. While she noted that the “sampler” curriculum was fun for the girls, she argued that it “didn’t have a feel of an institute quite as much” and that the new

curriculum is more effective for the girls. The assumption in these staff members' comments is that fostering a deeper scientific knowledge of urban forest ecology is a more desirable educational outcome for helping the girls achieve educational success.

Another way in which Green Girls is trying to strengthen girls' educational success and encourage them to find an identity in their school work is by lengthening the time of their intervention into the girls' lives. Debra Sue's team was concerned about the fact that the program was designed to engage the girls for two years only and was not having a long-term impact in the girls' lives, so they made a few structural changes to the program to create an infrastructure that could sustain their engagement. One such change was the reactivation of the after-school program. As already noted, Green Girls for a long time operated only as a summer institute. The after-school component of the program ran for a short while in its early years, went dormant, and was reactivated in 2013 when funding became more stable. The staff, long before this decision was made, were concerned that they were not meeting the girls' needs and the mandate of the program by simply offering a three or four-week Summer Institute and then saying goodbye to them for another year or perhaps never to see them again.

Debra Sue, who noted several times in our interview that she would like to see more continuity in the program, observed that the short length of the program does not allow the staff the time to develop rich mentoring relationships with the girls and achieve the kind of positive youth development for which they are aiming. While she thought that the staff were great mentors to the girls, and did indeed develop close relationships with them over the course of four weeks, she felt that the depth of their impact in girls' lives was limited by the fact that they were not equipped to work with them on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, they noted that the girls expressed how they developed deep connections with the staff and the other girls and that it was

important to sustain that connection. Danielle recalled how so many times at the end of the Summer Institute while she was Program Director, the girls would ask, “why does it have to be a summer program? Why don’t we just meet once a week?” Danielle interpreted the girls’ eagerness to continue in the program to the fact that they had bonded so much as a group that they did not want to lose the friendships and connections that they had made over the summer. As Lindsay noted, a lot of the girls do not have families, and thus in many cases, Green Girls provides a setting for girls to develop close and enriching group bonds.

Furthermore, the team extended the program’s reach in other ways as well. Green Girls ends in July, and the girls are now encouraged to join other CPF programs that are environmentally-based, including the co-ed program Coastal Classrooms, which several girls did attend in 2014. In addition to the paid internships already offered in Green Girls, CPF recently created more opportunities for Green Girls alumnae to access paid internships through its new program, TEEN PASS. When I did focus groups with the girls in 2014, there was strong evidence that the staff would not have any problems filling those internship positions, as the girls were very enthusiastic about the opportunities to apply. There were several girls, even those who had another year of Green Girls ahead of them, who expressed their hopes during the focus groups that they could come back to the program as interns. The staff viewed the internships, which are paid, as a critical tool for retaining girls in the program and sustaining their interest in the sciences. As Debra Sue noted, the internships suggest to the girls that “science is viable. It is a viable career path for you and we’re going to demonstrate that to you by paying you to be a citizen scientist. And we’ll pay for as long as you’ll stay with us.” The internships create space for sustained intervention in girls’ lives with the goal of putting them on the path to success.

The introduction of media arts, which was part of Debra Sue's overhaul of the program's curriculum in 2014, was designed to enrich the girls' STEM learning and skills. Media arts fit well into Green Girls' STEM program in the sense that it teaches the girls about the "technology" part of STEM, including different technological devices and software and how they can be manipulated in creative ways. In the 2014 Summer Institute, one of the first projects that the girls were assigned involved learning about photography. Over the first two weeks, the girls learned about composition, the rule of thirds, and portrait and landscape orientation. They also studied and practiced different kinds of shots using iPads provided by the program, including close-up, bird's eye view, and candid and posed photography, and were taught to see patterns in the environment and how to frame light and shadows to make an interesting photograph. After focusing on photography in the first two weeks, Green Girls then moved into videography, and at the end of the program, the girls who were very interested in film production worked together using editing software to create video compilations of selections of footage that the girls had taken over the course of the Summer Institute. While the staff viewed media arts as a tool to make environmental education more accessible to the girls, media arts are also part of the citizenship work of the program in that it equips the girls with "twenty-first century skills" that they will need throughout their education and in their future careers. According to Lindsay,

I think that it's a way of meeting students where they're at and empowering them for their future. The technology, like I mentioned the iPads, that's a twenty-first century skill. By teaching them how to look up information and determine credible sources and what to do with that information, like how to contact a Senator or how to do an interview, that's a job skill that they're going to use in college hopefully and in their careers in the future.

By promoting science for low-income girls of colour, Green Girls holds the potential to do something very positive for the girls. It is attempting to help low-income girls gain access to the economic benefits that come with skilled employment, and it is also trying to make the

STEM fields more racially diverse and girl-friendly. As educators and civil rights activists Robert Moses and Charles E. Cobb argue powerfully in their book *Radical Equations* (2001), “economic access and full citizenship depend crucially on math and science literacy.”¹⁵ Because math and science literacy provide the tools for young people to pursue skilled, high-paying employment in technology and innovation, teaching STEM to low-income young people of colour and particularly African-American children, one of the groups most deeply affected by poverty and racism in the U.S., is thus a crucial part of the achievement of civil rights and equality. Green Girls recognizes that low-income girls of colour have fewer economic opportunities within the existing public education system and strives to open doors to careers that many of the girls would not have imagined for themselves so that they can access economic opportunity in the future. Further, as science education scholar Angela Calabrese Barton points out, urban environments are permeated with environmental justice issues, which are linked to the “hierarchical relationships between those who know science (and how to manipulate scientific findings) and those who do not.”¹⁶ Empowering young women of colour with the skills and confidence as scientific knowers has the potential to reduce hierarchical relationships in society and opens possibilities for them use those skills in the lab, at the policy level, in the classroom, and/or in their communities to address current environmental injustices and prevent them in the future.

At the same time, STEM education for girls of colour focused only on girls’ individual empowerment and devoid of a critical analysis of systemic racism and poverty risks replicating some of the problems associated with traditional forms of education. For one, it assumes that girls’ greatest obstacle is a good education, and that with a supportive educational environment, girls will be able to overcome the inequalities that structure their lives. Taft observes that many

empowerment organizations for girls assume that training and education are enough to position girls against the dangers of the outside world. She argues that the organizations “aim to prepare girls to face society’s barriers and challenges. They identify a variety of social failings that produce barriers to the happiness and success of girls, but their solutions are primarily oriented toward improving girls’ ability to cope with these problems.”¹⁷ Even as the staff acknowledge that the girls are faced with very serious systemic inequalities, the absence of any social critique of systemic forms of oppression in the program curriculum and the program emphasis on girls’ acquisition of the skills to become more successful suggest that their solution, as Taft argues, is to help girls cope with social problems rather than challenge them.

There is another layer to this work, however. As Ruth Nicole Brown argues, there are many girl empowerment programs that work specifically with Black girls who they deem “at-risk” and they share a problematic undercurrent in that they articulate a vision of empowering girls that in fact silences their speaking voices. As she explains, many girl “empowerment” programs

often work with Black girls because, as the definitive “at-risk” population, the organizing nonprofit profits most from changing speaking Black girls into “empowered” Black girls, meaning silencing their speech and actions. These very same empowerment programs often remain uncritical of program leadership that rarely looks like the people whom the program claims to be “empowering.” Therefore, even in spaces that desire speaking girls, Black girls speaking is not desirable.¹⁸

As Brown further explains, many programs for Black girls assume that their speech and behaviours are the problem and need to be changed rather than changing the oppressive social relations that discipline Black female bodies. This view of Black girls exists within a racist social context that sees Black female expression as threatening and seeks to silence it. Replicating the disciplinary environment of the school, these programs punish girls for using swear words, for

being too loud, rolling their eyes, or talking back, or for expressing their bodies and sexualities in ways that are read as being inappropriate or excessive. In short, these programs socialize girls according to the norms of middle-class, white civility based in quiet confidence, modesty, and self-discipline, all of which are associated with success and marginalize Black girls.¹⁹ Green Girls, like many other girl empowerment programs, implicitly associates success with white, middle-class norms of civility, embodied not only by educational attainment but also in the girls' behaviour.

Without explicitly stating it, Green Girls assumes that the voices and bodies of Black girls need to be disciplined to open their opportunities for success in formal education and later, to ensure their employability in the neoliberal job market. This approach can be seen in the staff's approach to using media arts in the program in more recent years. In the 2013 after-school program, the girls spent an hour outside interviewing passers-by on camera about their thoughts on green space in their community. Prior to going out, the girls practised their interview skills on each other at the school and spent time observing each others' interviews. Lindsay suggested that getting girls on camera and teaching them how to interview other people teaches them life skills in relating to other people. In the activity in which they were discussing the interviews, Lindsay recalled realizing that the girls

don't know anything about interviews, handshakes, body language. They're all standing there for their interviews like this [poses], with their hands on their hips. So, we did a really funny skit with them about body language and what does that say to you. And they kind of were able to connect the dots. I think it's about all types of skills: life skills, science education, integrating it all together and trying not to let them know that they're learning. Trying to let them just have fun and enjoy and the learning comes naturally.

As Lindsay suggested, the staff in Green Girls at the time of this research felt that preparing girls for the future meant teaching them about how to behave and discipline their bodies. Lindsay read the girls' postures and expressions during their interviews, with their hands on their hips and

their downward gaze, as not conducive to producing the self-assured, disciplined and successful girlhood envisioned by the program. Lindsay noted that to teach the girls about appropriate body language for an interview, she had them do skits so that they could reflect on how their body language is being read by other people, an exercise which turned the girls' gazes onto their own bodies for evaluation.

As Brown again argues, the speech and behaviour of Black girls are “types of knowledge about the ways the world works for Black girls living, working, and/or studying in a particular time and place,” and these knowledges are often suppressed in girls' empowerment programming and in other institutional contexts.²⁰ In schooling, African-American girls are pressured to become “gender passers or impersonators of white middle-class femininity” and to suppress behaviours that identify them as “Black,” while “loud Black girls” are disciplined for being “defiant” and “bad.”²¹ Lindsay's suggestion that the girls should change their behaviour suppresses their own unique ways of knowing and being and that arise from their individual identities, which are shaped by their race, class, citizenship, and culture. In this same space, the white middle-class knowledges/norms associated with success and professionalism – the air of self-confidence exuded through eye contact, an erect posture, a firm handshake, clear enunciation and appropriate language – went unquestioned and were imposed on the girls. Lindsay, in line with this approach to working with the girls, described the work of Green Girls as teaching “life skills,” “youth development” and “building character,” terms which echo the citizenship work of GGC and which highlight how the girls in the program are positioned and socialized according to normative understandings of girlhood. The message conveyed to the girls is that their success hinges on learning proper white middle-class behaviour and changing

themselves, which places the girls in a position of subordination to a set of hegemonic norms and knowledges.

Green Girls' emphasis on careers in the sciences, which were encouraged through hands-on and engaging field experiences, did indeed leave a mark on the girls. Several of the girls in the focus groups told me that their dream career was in a STEM field: paleontology, architecture and design, biology, marine biology, technology, and environmental law. One girl, Jessica, in fact relayed how her favourite aspect of the program was meeting scientists in the field and learning about what "they went through in life to become what they are now." To illustrate her point, she cited the examples of their canoe instructor who led them on their excursion to the Bronx River and how he had been paddling all his life, as well as their guide at Jamaica Bay who told the girls about his work in reforesting certain parts of the conservation area that were hit hardest by Hurricane Sandy. Her testimony suggests that meeting scientists and learning about their work puts a human face and narrative to scientific practice, rendering it more accessible.

However, the fact that the staff do not track the girls in the long term means that they do not have the data to determine whether their program is effective in helping with girls' retention in school and in encouraging them to pursue sciences in higher education and in their careers.

Debra Sue reflected on this point, which I quote at length:

It's one thing to say we want to expose girls to different careers. Yeah, ok, three years from now, how many of those girls went to science-based high schools? Six years from now? How many of those girls went to college and [have] careers? You know, how many of those girls do we help make a living or some sort of money, monetary benefits to pursuing science? How many of those girls remember their Green Girls experience? How many of those girls wanted to stay with the Green Girls experience for more than one year but we didn't have a program design that would allow that to happen? ... I think even in the out-of-school time hours, you have an obligation, we have an obligation to track the girls and find out what influence are we really having on them. I don't think we're doing that very well.

While the staff have not yet been able to change the program infrastructure so that it serves and tracks girls in the long term, Danielle recounted one's girl's story as evidence of the impact Green Girls can have in girls' lives. Trina,* a girl who joined Green Girls without having any pre-existing interest in science, participated for two years during which she developed an enthusiasm for science, and returned the next year as an intern. During her internship, she applied and was accepted into a public high school in NYC that specialized in environmental stewardship and water ecology where, in addition to regular classes, students were able to dive for oysters and monitor the health of the New York coastline. According to Danielle, Trina decided that she wanted to make environmental science her career. Through Green Girls, Trina "found out that she has this interest, she got into the school, and she's [now] heading down this very intentional path, and it's enriching her." For a program that is focused on girls' educational success, particularly in the sciences, experiences like Trina's are an indicator, in the absence of longitudinal data on program outcomes, that the program is having an impact on some of the girls' possibilities for future success. The absence of data, however, also means that the number of girls who do not manage to graduate from high school, go on to college, or find high-paying jobs – girls who are unlikely to fit the program's definition of success – is also unknown.

Although Green Girls strives to break out of the mould of formal education through its hands-on and more girl-driven approach to learning, like formal education it is based on the acquisition of skills for academic success. The girls, as revealed by their reaction to the media arts, responded to this work very differently. On one hand, some of the girls reported that they loved experimenting with new technologies. Tenesha, for instance, liked doing stop motion videos that allowed her to creatively use different materials like feathers, cheerios, paper, markers and the iPad to tell a story. Another girl, Brie, reflected on how she appreciated the new

skills that learning photography afforded, noting that her “favorite part about the media was photography, ‘cause I, before I was the worst at taking pictures. My family would never ask me to take a picture, but because of media photography, like, now I’m improving at it and I know different skills and learning about it was interesting for me.” On the other hand, several of the girls did not like the media arts component of the program quite as much and suggested that engaging in this learning was like being in school and that it was too rigorous. Sophie noted that she thought the photography and videography parts of the program were “a lot of talking and not a lot of acting.” As she explained, “It’s more like talking a lot and like, sitting and listening. We didn’t play that many games. Um, and I think that in the summer we should be more active, but that we were just sitting down and listening to talking and things that she just said over and over.” Jessica concurred that while she liked doing videography, she did not enjoy photography because it’s “way too long” and not particularly stimulating. According to Jessica, “they taught us to do this and that, but even though, some people don’t like...we just wanna have fun in camp and not do a lot of work. That’s the whole point. But yeah, you’re still learning.”

Two other girls, Ariela and Dakota, also expressed their dislike for the media arts component of the program, but for different reasons than Sophie and Jessica. As they explained, they both found the photography and videography to be repetitive and were frustrated by the fact that they did not have creative license to use the media to explore the things that interested them:

Ariela: And also I don’t really like videography ‘cause it’s just like, boring. I don’t see the point in taking this video or whatever. They keep on telling us the same thing and like, oh my god, I just like, I know what to do, just leave me alone! And I don’t like being forced to take video like, and I just wish I could just take the iPad and film what I want to film, it’s just really annoying.

Dakota: I didn’t really like media either because like both parts, taking the pictures and videography, I think maybe the teachers could have found a more interactive way of getting to us. I know a lot of people were very annoyed because it was so repetitive. So, I think maybe they should give us more space and more opportunity to take pictures or

take videos of what we want, but I think they should also go with a different approach so that we are interested in it.

The girls' expressions of frustration over the media arts suggests that they did not feel that they were given enough agency to explore the elements of the environment that interested them most. For Green Girls, this frustration and lack of excitement is somewhat counterproductive to the goals of the program, given that it is supposed to foster a greater interest in the environment. The girls' narratives suggest that affording them more freedom to express their unique voices and more choices in terms of the devices and materials used might foster a more meaningful learning experience for them.

Justice, philanthropy and access to environmental health

Green Girls, unlike ECO Girls, was not explicitly born out of environmental justice concerns. Claudia observed that Green Girls originated from a desire "to help through a service" by providing young women of colour from low-income communities with the opportunity to learn about science. However, when Claudia came on board as Director of Education in 2002, she shaped the program to incorporate an environmental justice focus with the help of her team of staff who connected science and environmentalism with social justice and health. Claudia remarked that,

I didn't want to just teach science, science, science ... Like if we're going to engage children then we have to connect with them in ways that they're going to connect with. So, if it's going to be, so if girls are about the makeup and the hair and nails, then we're going to do herbal cosmetics and talk about the properties and where these come from plants and plants-based. So, that is very much how we developed curriculum as well. That was an important piece. Also, how to take care of yourself, and what is the nutrition and what's in your body and we talked about all those things because I think it's difficult to disentangle and separate these core issues that girls are grappling with.

Claudia, who does not have a background in science or environmental justice, but rather in the arts and in children's health, observed that she wanted to ensure that the environmental education taught to the girls was linked to their experiences. Claudia also described other environmental justice topics that they explored. During her time at CPF, Claudia established a community link with Sustainable South Bronx, an environmental justice organization that took the girls on toxic tours of a Bronx neighbourhood where they learned about the toxicity left by factories that are no longer operational but have contaminated the water. Focusing on the Bronx River, Sustainable South Bronx, according to Claudia, informed the girls about "different environmental projects that were actually occurring in their communities and how the Bronx River was cleaned up and [how that initiative] was primarily led by community activists."

Another issue explored in Green Girls that had a strong correlation to environmental justice was the issue of food affordability and accessibility. Danielle pointed out that low-income communities have less access to healthy, fresh, and affordable foods, and such is the case in L.I.C. Subsequently, the staff each year organized trips to rooftop gardens and farmers' markets to teach the girls about food and gardening. Danielle explained that Green Girls would go to East New York Farms in Brooklyn during the Summer Institute where they would get a tour of the farm, which had been established on vacant lots, and be briefed on some of the food security issues in the neighbourhood. The staff from East NY Farms would point out some of the differences in which kinds of foods are available in different NYC neighbourhoods, noting that there are lots of fresh options and farmers' markets in Manhattan, while in places like East NY, there has historically been a lack of fresh and healthy options. The staff at East NY Farms would discuss their work in the community in addressing food justice and how they empower young people in the community by teaching them about growing food.

Danielle, however, who had worked under Claudia, was less confident that they were successful in integrating environmental justice into the program. As Danielle reflected, environmental justice is “another thing that I think could have been much more of a focus in the program,” and her criticism largely was based on two points about the program: first, that the “sampler” format of the program did not allow them enough time to explore environmental justice issues in very much depth because, as Danielle noted, she could only introduce a justice topic “but we couldn’t go very far with it.” The second problem was that most of their activities were not local and did not address environmental justices in the girls’ immediate communities. As Danielle again reflected,

I think that [we] should just have had more of an awareness of some the inequities that exist around environmental problems based on you know, our geography and demographics and like how, I think that that would be an important piece to add to the program and I don’t think we did, I don’t think we addressed anywhere near enough.

Danielle even recalled how one of the girls who was very engaged in Green Girls asked her ““why are we always traveling? Like why are we always getting in the train and going to Manhattan, and going to the Bronx, and why don’t we just do like, local stuff?”” The girl’s comment struck Danielle, who in fact thought “that was what I actually wanted this program to be was to be more sort of locally focused. Like, what are *our* issues in our community that are related to the environment, and what can we do?” The spatial dynamics of the program, which involved taking the girls out of their communities into different areas of the city meant that the girls did not engage in much depth with the environmental justice issues in their own neighbourhoods, but rather it gave them a taste of some of the spatial injustices in New York City more broadly.

Furthermore, Danielle also pointed out that many of the activities that they did in Green Girls were not political or environmental justice-based. She cited their visit to Van Cortlandt Park to pull invasive weeds as one example, which she described as being more focused on empowering the girls to make tangible changes in their environments and to protect an ecosystem that's being overtaken by invasive plants. In other words, she interpreted invasive species removal more as a citizenship-building activity rather than a political one.

Danielle's point that invasive species removal is not political speaks to the complex ways in which justice issues were spatialized in the earlier years of the program. While Claudia and her team exposed the girls to spatial inequalities in such places like the South Bronx through toxic tours, other environmental spaces and activities, such as the invasive species removal in Van Cortlandt Park, were depoliticized. However, invasive species removal is, like other environmental activities, inherently political, and this activity's enmeshment in nativist and xenophobic discourses makes it particularly so. As geographer Charles Warren observes, the distinctions made between "native" and "alien" plants, which are constructed in a social context and do not have fixed or definitive boundaries despite scientific accounts that suggest as much, rest on fictions of a "pure" vs "altered" nature. Furthermore, many conservationists' descriptions of "alien" and "foreign" species cannot be read outside the context of the nation and relations among people of different racial groupings, particularly in a colonial multicultural society marked by deep racial inequalities, white nativism, and anti-immigrant sentiments.²²

While I was not in the field at the time that Danielle worked at Green Girls and participated in this activity, I did take part in an invasive species removal during the 2014 Summer Institute. The girls in fact went on two invasive species removals that summer, one in the Bronx forest and the other in Marine Park in Brooklyn. In the Bronx, the girls focused on

removing Japanese Knotweed, while in Brooklyn, they removed Mugwort and a vine that looked like Oriental Bittersweet. In Brooklyn, several groups of girls donning gardening gloves tugged with all of their weight to remove the large vines that encircled some very large native trees, while other girls used loppers and handsaws to cut down the invasive plants. When I asked the girls about what their biggest takeaways were from the program with regards to environmental stewardship and learning, they in fact most often talked about the invasive species removal in the Bronx. As Jessica noted,

The top for me was that...that Japanese...what's that thing called? Knotweed? The Japanese knotweed that we had to like, take it out. It's good for the environment so it won't break our trees from like, um, New York, 'cause those are only supposed to grow in Japan or in China, because here isn't China. It's just some reason, they've moved over here and we only want our plants?

Jessica's description of the activity using racialized language about knotweed belonging not in New York but in either Japan or China gestures to the unexamined nativist symbolism and politics that underpin invasive species removal. Her description suggests that the meaning that she and most likely the other girls derived from this activity is that they are doing good for *our* environment ("our plants") by purging it of foreign invaders that have "moved over here," a narrative which resonates with the anti-immigrant sentiments that permeate US culture. The invasive species removal suggested to the girls that nature is a space apart from the human social world that paradoxically needs human intervention to be kept "pure."

As I noted earlier in this chapter, Green Girls has undergone major shifts over the last several years. References to environmental justice in the curriculum have disappeared, and the staff under Debra Sue changed the "sampler" curriculum into a curriculum focused on urban forests that now emphasizes a greater depth of environmental knowledge. With the change in curriculum, the staff have reduced girls' opportunities to experience the environment as a social

process. While my discussion of the invasive species removal draws attention to the fact that the older curriculum was not perfect in this respect, the disappearance of the visits to East NY Farms, the toxic tours from Sustainable South Bronx, and tours of the water treatment plant, which were replaced with visits to wildlife refuges and coastal marshes, have engendered a new program based in depoliticized environmental experiences. Where girls were once prompted to think about the politics of food access, they are now studying the crown width of trees and learning to care for urban trees (more on this in the next section). While the study of trees is indeed a worthy topic, this particular approach no longer invites the girls to think about the spatialization of race, class, and social inequity vis-à-vis the city's environment as it did before. One exception is perhaps the after-school program in 2014 and 2015, which focused on water quality and involved visits to the East River. As Lindsay explained, the girls in the after-school program chose water pollution as their focus, and they did water testing which helped them to think about the health effects of contaminated water for humans and the local ecology.

Despite the depoliticization of space that has occurred in the program, the staff that I interviewed still defined their work through the environmental justice lens. The environmental justice discourse that resonated most with the staff that were part of both Claudia and Debra Sue's teams was access to environmental health. In describing the environmental justice work of the program, Kaari argued that it means "having access and the ability to access the environment no matter who or where or what you come from." She noted that the staff's role is to make sure that "girls are justified in their access to their environment. It's not just seeing the environment, you also need to access the environmental health." Claudia made a similar argument and suggested that girls' participation in the program is intended to "expose them to the resources that we have available in New York City and our parks system and what the natural world could

do especially if you don't have money.” The emphasis on providing girls with access to green spaces around the city comes from the recognition that girls and young people living in urban areas and from low-income families generally do not have the same access to the environment as children from middle- and upper-income families. However, while there is a justice imperative that underlies the belief that low-income children also need access to green space, the method in which organizations strive to provide that access, and the ideologies associated with those green spaces, are what separate environmental justice programs from philanthropic ones.

As explored in Chapter One, there is a history of middle-class reformers removing poor and immigrant children from their inner-city neighbourhoods into “nature” in the late-nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth. Progressive reformers, out of concern for children’s welfare and in many cases, out of nativist sentiments and a disdain for the poor, created a number of initiatives that connected children with nature: Fresh Air Camps that brought poor children into the country just outside the peripheries of the city, vacation schools that took children on excursions to green spaces in the city such as the pier, the park, and islands, and children’s gardens, which taught gardening to children over the summer months on school properties and vacant/reclaimed lots. These efforts, which were linked to the Nature Study movement and which were enthusiastically taken up by public health reformers, operated as a form of “progressive governance” designed to uplift poor children away from crime and delinquency, Americanize immigrant children, offer “healthful leisure” to the poor, address sickness and malnourishment, and produce “good citizens.”²³ These efforts were rooted in the belief of the uplifting powers of nature and reflected the racialized meanings attributed to the different geographies of “nature” and the “city.” As geographer Robert Vanderbeck argues in his analysis of the Fresh Air Fund, an initiative which is still active today, the camps were and

continue to be based on “racialized imaginative geographies” that associate inner-cities with Blackness, non-whiteness, immigration, and poverty, and the landscapes of the suburb and country with whiteness and nature.²⁴

The format of the Green Girls program, which involves bringing low-income girls of colour into nature, taps into these historical narratives that assume that being in nature is part of the “normal” childhood experience, and that low-income and racialized children in cities are denied that experience. Lindsay reproduced the “racialized imaginative geographies” that Vanderbeck writes about when she expressed how the girls in the program

have no contact with nature. When I asked if they had ever been to a park before, nobody raises their hand. Then I can kind of prompt them and say, well what about for a barbeque or for the Fourth of July and then they think “yes.” But it’s not an actual connection to the environment. Sometimes they’ll use it for their pure enjoyment, like going to the beach and sitting on the beach but they’ve never had a chance to observe birds on the beach or observe crabs crawling around on the beach. But really our kids are urban to the core and they just haven’t had this experience of connecting to the environment at all. And there’s a big level of fear, a deep fear within a lot of communities that we work with.

Lindsay’s description of children’s lack of connection to nature, which echoes the discourse found in the New Nature Movement and the early twentieth century back-to-nature movements, is based in a culturally specific ideology of nature. For Lindsay, connection to nature is based in developing an individual connection to it through immersive experience and close observation reminiscent of the approaches used in Nature Study. At the same time that she notes that most of the Green Girls have “no contact with nature,” she dismisses other modes of experiencing nature such as a Fourth of July barbeque, which is a more common way of experiencing the outdoors for communities that are working class, poor, racialized, and landless, and for whom being outdoors might be an inherently social experience as opposed to an individual and educational one. As environmental scholar Carolyn Finney argues,

representations of the Great Outdoors can intentionally or unintentionally feed stereotypes of who is engaged with the environment and who is not. A narrative is constructed about the environment that is deemed at once authentic and universal and that denies the complexity of experiences that nondominant groups have encountered historically.²⁵

Lindsay's narrative that girls of colour in low-income communities are not experiencing nature and that they are in fact afraid of it ignores non-white cultural experiences of nature and produces stereotypes about communities of colour that have a marginalizing effect. Furthermore, this view is ignorant of African Americans' historical erasure and exclusion from nature.

The notion that the nature experiences of low-income girls of colour in L.I.C. were insufficient was accompanied by the belief that girls grow up entrenched in their urban communities. As Kaari argued, "a lot of our students grow up so entrenched in their own communities, be that a good thing or a bad thing, and it was important for us to get them out and exploring the city." In the same way that exposing girls to different careers in the sciences provides them with glimpses of what it can be like to work as a middle-class professional and access economic benefits, the model that undergirds Green Girls in bringing the girls to different areas of the city resonates with the Fresh Air attempts to offer low-income children of colour from inner cities white and middle-class experiences of nature. For instance, in the 2014 institute, I joined the girls on a visit to a coastal marsh in Brooklyn where they explored the beach and its marsh ecology. While some girls waded into the water, others stayed on shore and excitedly examined the crabs scurrying about on the beach in and out of their burrows in the sand. In the pools left by the tide, the girls examined snails, mussels and other small creatures, turning them over in their hands and asking a lot of questions of Kaari, who skillfully answered them. Meanwhile, after several of the girls overcame their fear of the squishy marsh bottom and what they described as the "slimy water," they had fun examining the mussels and picking at the

seaweed floating above the waves, examining it, and using it to scare their friends. Reflecting on their day at the salt marsh, Kaari remarked that she was surprised that the girls took such an interest in the marsh ecology. Expecting that they would just be interested in playing in the water, Kaari was delighted that the girls had so many questions about what they were seeing. She reflected on how it was

weird for me because some questions are things you'd assume just every kid knows, right? That's a snail, that's a crab, the sort of things that you just take for granted in terms of the privileges that you were afforded when you were younger, or I was at least afforded. And being able to pass on that knowledge, so they were like, "whoa, that's a snail!" and that's not really something that's crossed your mind in years is all of a sudden this new and exciting thing for them. Or having girls even themselves explaining something to them like the mussel beds and explaining to them what they are and what they do, and turning around and seeing them explaining it to somebody else with the same enthusiasm and the same drive. That was just one of those moments where you say, 'ok, you know what, they get it.' This experience is valuable to them.

One of the goals of the Green Girls education, as Kaari relayed through this experience at the salt marsh, is to enable the girls to experience the wonder of nature that is assumed to be a natural part of childhood.

In the absence of an environmental justice critique that politicizes space and, more recently in the program, that politicizes the racial and class dimensions of environmental issues, the staff explored environmental health issues in a way that reinforced middle-class ideologies about health, as well as individual solutions to achieving health in lieu of challenging the social relations that produce inequalities. The middle-class ideologies about health specifically related to exercise and healthy eating. Lindsay, who spoke on these issues, noted that

we do need more physical activity in our lives because there is an obesity epidemic in this city and that is also a justice issue because it's, you know, you can read articles about how all of this refined processed food is causing diabetes and obesity and low-income populations that tend toward that food. I'm passionate about trying to get the Green Girls a little bit active if we can, or a lot active if we can.

Kaari also noted that in the program they have “a number of girls who are overweight” because they “don’t have access to fresh food as much as somebody else or that they don’t have access to the education,” and that the program, in getting them outside and active, “forces them to confront some issues that they don’t like to confront.” While Lindsay and Kaari’s comments reflect a desire to see an equality of food choices and access to exercise for low-income girls who are often denied this access, issues which are in fact addressed in the environmental justice movement, their framing of the issues as an “obesity epidemic” and as a problem draws on moralizing middle-class discourses about poor people.²⁶

In an incisive paper on this subject, feminist theorist Anna Kirkland explores how it has become more common for people with more progressive politics to attribute moral blame for obesity not to individuals directly but to the conditions of living in a modern world, in addition to environmental factors like poverty and racism. Kirkland calls this approach the “environmental approach to obesity” and argues that it, too, is problematic because it

actually embeds and reproduces a persistent tension in feminist approaches to social problems: well-meant efforts to improve poor women’s living conditions at a collective level often end up as intrusive, moralizing, and punitive direction of their lives. In this case, the environmental argument seems structural, but it ultimately redounds to a micropolitics of food choice dominated by elite norms of consumption and movement.²⁷

As Kirkland argues, proponents of this view ultimately urge low-income communities to take personal responsibility for their consumption habits, a position which fits neatly into neoliberal discourses of self-improvement based on making the “right” consumption choices. Lindsay explained that in Green Girls, the staff do everything that they can to promote healthy food choices for the girls by providing healthy fruits and vegetables as snacks and, in the old curriculum, by taking the girls to the farmers’ markets. Lindsay recalled how, on one of their

visits to the East NY farmers' market, some of the girls in the program were not terribly enthused about being there and were resistant to eating certain foods:

They were all like, "oh I hate tomatoes, those are disgusting, I'm not going to try those!" One of them tries it and says, "oh my god, this is the most delicious thing I ever ate!" because the farmers give us all these samples and it was like these sweet cherry tomatoes, grape tomatoes. But they were fresh. A tomato in a store that you buy tastes nothing like a tomato from a farm. So they ate them like candy and they wanted more. And they had cantaloupe and all these different fresh fruits. And for me that was really exciting to see them just say, "oh, this is delicious!"

Lindsay's account of her experience in bringing the girls to East NY farms reflects some of the differences in the approaches to environmentalism in Green Girls over time. With the absence of a critique of the food desert, the politics of access, and the race- and class-based ideologies rooted in stigmatizing obesity discourses, the message relayed to the girls is that it is their responsibility to make the right decisions about what they are eating and how much they are moving. The emphasis on teaching poor and marginalized girls about personal health is also reminiscent of earlier attempts in the Fresh Air movement to bring children into nature to restore them to health. Where in the past Fresh Air camps addressed malnourishment and sought to improve children's athleticism, now many environmental programs, like Green Girls, teach youth about eating less fried and fast foods and more fresh fruits and vegetables, and how to exercise to maintain a slimmer, more athletic physique. As historian Sharon Wall argues, the Fresh Air camps were (and still are) an "attempt to remould working-class culture": a middle-class approach to exercising its power that in fact reinforces class and racial hierarchies.²⁸ The emphasis on teaching low-income girls middle-class values about health, which reduces the complex issue of health to a matter of personal responsibility and a set of choices, unfortunately ends up marginalizing youth much as it did in the past.

My focus groups with the girls suggested that the curriculum based in exploring different areas of the city benefited them, however, especially if they had limited financial resources. They reported that they derived much pleasure from their exposure to places that they would not have had the opportunity to experience otherwise. As Sophie observed, “it’s really good how we can go, go to different parks, because sometimes you just go to the same park and you learn a lot about it, but you don’t get to like see and experience all the other parks that are available to you.” I asked her if she meant that at home she is limited to playing in one park, to which she answered that “when I’m on my own I usually just stay in one park. My mom’s not, my mom’s probably not going to let me go to all these different parks in all the five boroughs, but with Green Girls I get to go all around and I get to see all the beautiful trees and get to learn about them.” Dakota also confirmed that the program provided her with access to new environments. She explained that “I haven’t really gone to any of these parks before. I haven’t been around Queens a lot, and I think it’s a really nice experience visiting these parks and learning that there are actually so many species that are special that I don’t know about.” She added that the only park she had played in previously was in Astoria, which only had “trees in concrete boxes” and was subsequently not a very exciting place to play.

Another girl, Ariela, hinted at the reality that children from low-income families do not have as many opportunities to explore their local parks, noting that she “never really had the opportunity because my parents work a lot and they’re always tired and my sister works a lot and she’s always tired, and my other sister isn’t, like, old enough to bring me outside and she doesn’t wanna go anywhere anyways, so I really like Green Girls ‘cause it gave me the opportunity to explore and discover different parks.” One girl, Shantice, also drew attention to how Green Girls is offered free of charge, which has removed barriers for her to visit places to which she would

normally not have access. She noted that “one thing I think is super cool about Green Girls is you get to go places for free and that you don’t have to pay all the time. Like some summer camps, you have pay a \$120 or more just to go to...say you go to Brooklyn...you have to pay money for that. Say you go to the botanical gardens, you have to pay for that.” For girls who live in poverty or in families that are financially strained, having a free program means that the girls have access to places and resources that they are not usually afforded. However, the time spent in different areas of the city also meant that the girls were not furnished with a sense of the environmental injustices and possibilities in their own communities. It is this point to which I turn in the next section.

Speaking for themselves?

More than any other program in this study, Green Girls promoted community engagement, which it did by bringing the girls to different areas of the city where they learned about various urban ecologies and participated in service projects. The emphasis on service and action in Green Girls has been prevalent from the start and is a function of CPF’s goals of promoting park stewardship in low-income communities. As Lindsay argued, “we want to incorporate action and community service, thereby creating a more educated and capable citizenry. And a citizenry that cares about its neighbors and cares about having a positive impact.” Two examples of how Green Girls teaches girls to care for parks are the invasive species removal, which I have already discussed, and tree stewardship. In the 2014 Summer Institute, Green Girls spent time in L.I.C. learning how to care for urban trees. They weeded, mulched, dug tree pits, watered the trees and planted flowers with local volunteers to help beautify the community. Reflecting on these service activities, Kaari explained that they help the girls take ownership of, and feel connected to their

city environments: “they leave with the understanding that this is something that they can participate in, it’s their environmental action that they can take that is helping throughout the community and hopefully will inspire others to take the same action.”

The Green Girls staff also stressed advocacy as an important skill for the girls to acquire as young citizens. Debra Sue, in speaking about advocacy, noted that the goals of the program are to create a platform for the girls to express their voices, a goal which I perceived to be part reality and part visionary. I say part visionary because Debra Sue noted that advocacy should involve writing letters to the mayor, meeting members of city council, and speaking with the commissioner of NYC Parks, none of which, to my knowledge, Green Girls had done.

Nevertheless, in the Summer Institute, the staff foster advocacy by inviting the girls to choose an environmental issue that matters to them which they research, develop an “action plan,” and present to the rest of the girls at the end of their four weeks together. Topics that they have chosen have ranged from smoking, water pollution, littering, tree conservation, and factory farming.

The staff also build videography into the program not only as part of the STEM learning but also to teach them about how media can be a tool for advocacy. In one of the activities, the girls made stop motion films: the activity, led by an educator from Block Box Productions, began with a short conversation on environmental stewardship, followed by an introduction to stop motion video making which included showing the girls how stop motion is done, along with some examples of stop motion shorts by an artist named PES on Youtube. The girls were then broken up into groups of three and instructed to make a stop motion video that touches on an environmental theme. The materials that they were given to work with included clay, glitter, feathers, pipe cleaners, construction paper, and markers, as well as an iPad to take the photos.

One group decided that they wanted to do a video about bubble gum, but they were reminded by the staff that it had to be related to the environment, so with Lindsay's help, the girls used the knowledge they learned in the previous week about the American sweetgum tree and its original use by Indigenous peoples as a medicine consumed as chewing gum. The girls then decided to create a video commentary on the environmental impacts of chewing gum. Their film consisted of a gum tree seed falling (presumably from a tree not seen in the frame), turning into commercial chewing gum as it hit the ground, and then getting splattered by a shoe on a sidewalk until it turned black. Another group did their stop motion video about the impact of litter in the environment, encouraging the viewer to put their garbage "in the right place" and to recycle. The purpose of the media arts in the program, as Debra Sue reflected, was not only to assist the girls with their learning, but also to help girls narrate their stories about the environment and advocate on the issues that matter to them. As Debra Sue put it, through videography, girls "express their voices, share with the world what it is, what is their opinion about what's going on in their community."

At the same time, Green Girls lacks certain elements of transformative education that are found in environmental justice education and other critical pedagogies described in Chapter Two. Perhaps the most important point is that the curriculum does not originate from the experiences and cultural perspectives of the girls that it serves. As Principle 16 from the Environmental Justice Principles states, "Environmental justice calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives."²⁹ Teaching from the point of students' experiences means beginning with the environmental issues that affect girls' lives rather than implementing a pre-determined curriculum. As Dorceta Taylor argues, educators may

have to expand their understanding of what counts as an environmental issue; they might find themselves exploring topics such as hair products, drugs, homelessness, vacant lots, pests, or urban wildlife, which are environmental experiences that are more familiar for many urban dwelling youth who live in poverty.³⁰

While several Green Girls staff argued that the program is driven by the girls' interests, and that their role is to facilitate learning by supporting the girls in pursuing their intellectual curiosity and environmental concerns, I found that the girls were accorded little agency in shaping the program. There were some wonderful instances of participatory action learning at work in the program, as the examples of the stop motion video on chewing gum and the "action plans" demonstrated. These activities, however, generally were not pursued beyond the space of the program, and the program curriculum and activities overall were selected and organized by the staff with limited input, and at times none at all, from the girls. In my interviews with the staff, for instance, they spoke about some very significant environmental justice issues in the girls' lives and communities, including gun violence, drugs, and a dearth of green spaces for girls to play. Lindsay, for instance, noted that many girls in the program "have some kind of first-hand, second-hand, third-hand experience with drugs or violence, and when you ask them what they want to change about their community, a lot of the times it's violence." In my time in the field with the girls, they also alluded to environmental justice concerns that touched their lives. For instance, one girl told me about how she no longer had a place to play because her local park had been shut down after high levels of asbestos were discovered.

While Lindsay suggested that their role as staff is to facilitate the girls' learning by assisting them in figuring out how they can have a positive impact in their community and make change, the fact is that drugs, violence, and poverty have not been pursued as environmental

issues in Green Girls. Kaari in fact expressed how Green Girls should be “a safe space where girls don’t have to worry about those things” and where they can “focus on the environmental experience.” While Kaari, in taking this position, is well-meaning in wanting to protect the girls by providing a safe space away from the difficulties that some of them encounter in their families, neighbourhoods, and schools, and to create a place where they can focus on their educational achievement, her view does not consider how these problems are environmental issues in girls’ lives and how exploring them and organizing to address them potentially can be a source of empowerment. As teacher education researchers Okhee Lee and Aurolyn Luykx argue, beginning with young people’s interests and their experiences of injustice not only makes them more likely to become interested in and see the relevance of science and the environment in their own lives, thus making science more accessible to them, but it also opens opportunities to think about the ways in which science can be used as a tool to make meaningful changes in their communities.³¹

Earlier in my discussion of environmental justice in Green Girls, I noted how Claudia explained that while she was Director of Education, she worked with her team to build a curriculum that dealt with “the issues that girls are grappling with.” She suggested that she and her team focused on issues such as plant-based, non-toxic cosmetics and access to healthy food because she did not just want to teach science, but recognized that “if we’re going to engage children then we have to connect with them in the ways that they’re going to connect with.” As Claudia described it, she and her team often did include issues in the curriculum to which they hoped the girls of colour could relate on a personal level, and thus did create an environmental science that connected to their lives.

Green Girls' curriculum, however, is not (and was not) based in a curriculum that is entirely driven by girls. Danielle, who was on staff at the same time as Claudia, noted that they did not go nearly far enough in addressing the girls' concerns, as there were moments in the program when the girls "were telling us what we should be doing and what we're not doing." One year, according to Danielle, while the girls were walking back to the Green Girls' home base in Brooklyn after a field trip, one girl began to take notice of all the vacant lots in their community. When they got back to the school, the girl told Danielle that she had counted eleven vacant lots and asked her, "why don't we turn them into Green Girls Gardens?" This girl was serious about this issue and asked Danielle what would need to happen to pursue such a project. Danielle counseled her on how she might find out who owned the lots and how she might go about securing funding for the project, and the girl in fact wrote a letter to the President of CPF asking for a meeting to discuss her proposal. It never took root, and Danielle was not able to recall what, if anything, came of the girl's letters.

Reflecting on the program and the girl's unsuccessful efforts, Danielle articulated how the failure to pursue the project was a missed opportunity. She felt that Green Girls is the type of program, with its student-driven and hands-on pedagogy, that should have been able to create a platform for student-initiated projects, but that program constraints, including funding and the fact that it was a short Summer Institute, did not. While these constraints do indeed have a significant bearing on what the staff and the girls can and cannot do in the program, structuring the program so that it is guided by girls' environmental concerns at its core also requires that the staff relinquish their position of power and expertise in the space of learning, and treat the girls as co-teachers throughout the learning process.³²

Environmental justice and critical pedagogy educators have also pointed out that young people's experiences and cultures are often "discontinuous with Western science as it is practiced in the science community and taught in school."³³ Young people who are marginalized often do not connect with environmental education because they do not see themselves represented in the curriculum and find it difficult to connect with the white, Western cultural narratives about nature found therein. Environmental justice educators subsequently call for the teaching of environmental education through diverse cultural perspectives so that students can experience science as a tool for cultural affirmation and liberation. In this regard, Green Girls has been weak on integrating diverse cultural perspectives into the program. While it appears that the old curriculum did present opportunities to explore how marginalized communities organize to address environmental injustices in their neighbourhoods, such as food justice in Brooklyn and toxic tours exposing the environmental racism in South Bronx, the new curriculum more narrowly focuses on learning about the biophysical environment using the tools of empirical science. And, as I have already suggested, the lack of racial diversity at the staff level contributes to this problem because it narrows the possibilities for introducing the girls to a wider range of environmental experiences rooted in diverse cultures. Although Claudia and Danielle suggested that it was a goal of theirs to seek out women of colour scientists to lead activities in the program, Claudia confessed that they were not often successful in doing so because there are so few women of colour in the sciences. Subsequently, the program often did not challenge the hegemonic white, empirical, and middle-class ideologies of science and nature.

In the 2014 Summer Institute, however, in one of the instances where culture did emerge through the curriculum, a very interesting political debate developed among the girls. A New York-based artist named Juanli Carrión had invited Green Girls to visit his outdoor installation

which he titled “Outer Seed Shadow” at Duarte Square in Manhattan. The installation, which Carrión described as an “investigation of what it means to be a contemporary migrant today, trying to reveal the complexities between the individuals, their culture and the country they now call home,” consisted of a raised garden bed in the middle of a paved public square.³⁴ Carrión began the project by interviewing immigrants living in Manhattan about their experiences of migration and adapting to life in the United States. He then asked each of them to select a plant that they felt represented their experiences and culture, and then worked with a team to plant them in the raised bed shaped like the island of Manhattan.³⁵ The result, as Lindsay put it, was a mini-ecosystem of plants with different soil, sun, nutrient and water requirements co-existing in a single garden bed. This installation, operating as a metaphor for immigration and multiculturalism, opened a discussion among the girls during their visit about the tensions surrounding the U.S.-Mexican border, on which the girls had a variety of opinions. Lindsay recalled how,

We had girls that had views, you know, and a lot of them just hear what their parents say. So, they would say, “oh I don’t think that we should have immigrants from South American countries because they take away our resources.” But it was a safe place for other students, too, to come up and say, “well you know my family is from Mexico and I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for them having immigrated, then I wouldn’t have access to this great education. ... And we encouraged them to go study it more when they got home and to think about it more and talk about it with their parents.

ORE Design firm, Carrión’s partner in implementing this project, notes on its website that the installation is an “opportune place to engage in a dialogue about city, place and immigration, especially when immigration is a hot-button issue on political agendas nationwide,” and the Green Girls, with the debate that ensued about immigration into the U.S. from Latin American countries, proved that the installation is indeed a space for public dialogue.³⁶

The installation provided an excellent opportunity to make connections between culture and nature by prompting the staff and the Green Girls to think about immigrants' relationships to nature and their experiences of adapting to and shaping the NYC landscape. Furthermore, the girls' debate about citizenship and who is entitled to reside in the United States raises important questions about race, white privilege, power, colonialism and relationship to land. However, Lindsay suggested that the primary reason that they had visited the installation was not so much to discuss the cultural and political dimensions of place as it was to think about "the ecological concepts" of what "plants need." As she explained, the ecology of the place was the primary angle of study because "not everybody's ready. Like you saw our group and you know some of them are really ready to start thinking on a more issues-based level, but some of them are a little more immature and are just sort of, starting to think about those things." Despite Lindsay's uncertainty about whether the girls were capable of having this conversation, and her suggestion that it was not their intention in visiting this site to have this particular conversation, several of the girls did end up discussing the social and political aspects of place and Lindsay recounted how she did her utmost to provide a "safe space" for the girls to talk about this complex issue and to encourage them to recognize their own "biases and think through the issue from all sides." The girls' excitement in talking about this issue points to the fact that environmental learning is made more accessible and meaningful when it is, as Shari Levine Rose and Calabrese Barton argue, explored "within a sociocultural context, paying attention to how power and positioning shape this process."³⁷ This activity marked a stark contrast with the invasive species removal. Where the racial politics undergirding the invasive species removal were ignored, Outer Seed Shadow sought to make the racial politics of environmental space visible, which produced a much more enriching learning experience for the girls.

Finally, I want to draw attention to the limitations of articulating environmental citizenship through the lens of stewardship and citizen science. As Calabrese Barton points out, activism in the traditional spaces of science learning is usually conceptualized as young people's ability to take action on science-related topics and to develop environmental habits of mind rather than challenge the practice of science and the hierarchical power relations embedded therein.³⁸ Volunteering, action projects, and citizen-science projects often do not serve the communities doing the science because these forms of engagement both in scope and function are "tightly mediated by those already with authority—those who set up the questions, the tools, and the resources for participation."³⁹ In reflecting on the transformative potential of environmental action and citizen-science, Calabrese Barton points out that it is crucial to ask "to whom does citizen-science belong?" and which communities are benefitting from it?

In Green Girls, the girls spend much of their time in natural spaces outside of their communities where they learn about forest and marine ecology. They collect water samples with Coastal Classrooms educators, help forest rangers from the DPR remove invasive plants, and do litter clean ups. In doing these activities, they are positioned as learners and participants rather than the co-creators of environmental initiatives that they have identified, researched, and implemented themselves. I do not want to suggest that these activities aren't meaningful, but rather to gesture to the ways in which they fulfill an understanding of civic participation that is specific to a mostly white, elite, adult community that exists apart from this group of predominantly low-income girls of colour. Danielle raised the point that Green Girls is not an organic part of the communities in which it has been based and "that was always like a, a strange thing for us because we were City Parks Foundation, we started in Manhattan, working in the five boroughs, but never based out of any one of those communities. You know, and I think that

would be a very different program if there's something like Green Girls that spawned out of East New York or spawned out of Long Island City itself.”

Danielle's point in fact draws attention to an issue that social movement scholars Daniel Faber and Deborah McCarthy identify in their discussion of foundations and the power that they hold in defining the problems in the communities in which they work. They argue that foundations often

assume the responsibility of deciding what are the primary problems and needs of a particular community, invent the special projects or services designed to "remedy" the problem, and then select (or even create) the organization(s) that will provide and/or advocate for these "needed" services, projects, or policies. Under this model, foundations often "steer" organizations that speak and act on behalf of a community but are not necessarily grounded in the community. This does not promote community self-determination.⁴⁰

Faber and McCarthy argue that while some foundations and nonprofits might be well meaning in their desire to assist struggling communities, most in fact are used by the funding class to reform society in ways that are consistent with their economic and political interests. Many foundations subsequently contribute to the civic disempowerment of low-income and other marginalized communities because they represent the interests of the business class and do not support a model of decision making based on democratic, grassroots participation or radical social transformation. As Faber and McCarthy observe, the funding class often favours foundations that are based on corporate organizational models that bar citizens from being involved in problem solving.⁴¹ Furthermore, foundations tend to perpetuate familiar hierarchical relationships of power. With the majority of the staff, executives, and board members of foundations being white and economically privileged, and a large constituency of nonprofits in social welfare working with low-income communities of colour, patronizing ideologies about race and class that construct the poor and people of colour as the objects of charity are less likely to be challenged.

Further, Lisa Duran, who writes specifically about racial justice and foundations, points out that foundations are more likely to support “politically moderate and professionally ‘administered’ endeavors,” including social service initiatives and training programs because they do not challenge racial and class hierarchies. As such, radical grassroots initiatives and social movements are less likely to be funded.⁴²

Although CPF is a nonprofit and not a foundation, it presents some of the problems associated with foundations. CPF exists “apart” from the communities that it serves, not only spatially as Danielle suggested, but also ideologically and demographically. The board of directors that oversees the work of CPF is comprised of prominent New York philanthropists, many of whom have carved out successful careers for themselves as CEOs, investment bankers or presidents of companies in the private sector. The gulf of experience, the power differentials, and the class interests that separate the people responsible for high-level decision making at CPF and the low-income youth of colour that the programs serve, are thus monumental and are reflected in the top-down structure of the organization.

Furthermore, while CPF has rightly identified poverty and the underfunding of NYC’s schools in low-income communities as very real problems that deeply impact the lives of children, its articulation of a vision for change that narrowly focuses on education at the expense of other related systems of oppression, like systemic racism or racial segregation, for instance, while serving mostly youth of colour who live in poor and racially segregated neighbourhoods suggests that its vision for change lacks a substantive social analysis of interconnecting oppressions and is limited in scope. The education offered in Green Girls, focused on individual success through education, is more closely aligned with professional development initiatives that focus on “integration and assimilation” rather than radical social change.⁴³ The problem with

only providing young people with educational opportunities is that this approach does not address the other systemic inequalities that structure their lives and are barriers to their educational achievement.

The empowerment of marginalized communities logically must involve a redistribution of and a shift in power. As such, I echo the point that Faber and McCarthy make regarding philanthropic organizations and marginalized communities that real systemic change will not be achieved as long as nonprofits and foundations continue to exclude the communities that they serve from deliberations about in/justice and public space.⁴⁴ For deep, systemic, and sustained change to take place, CPF would need to approach the girls and their communities in the spirit of collaboration, providing the girls and their communities with the space to define the problems and devise solutions to environmental issues that concern them the most.

Conclusion

Green Girls, as I hope to have shown in this chapter, is dedicated to addressing poverty in the lives of girls of colour by enhancing their educational opportunities and in preparing them for active citizenship for a more environmental future. Green Girls recognizes that economic empowerment through access to quality education and well-paying careers, in addition to the acquisition of cultural capital, are necessary for young girls of colour to achieve equality and full citizenship. From the excitement and curiosity that many girls expressed during their participation in the program, it is clear that Green Girls is having a positive impact in their lives and that it is showing some signs of success in exciting girls' interests in careers in the STEM fields. At the same time, Green Girls can do more to empower girls as young citizens and bring greater justice and equality to their lives. By recognizing and harnessing the cultural capital that

girls bring into the learning space, the staff at Green Girls would be better positioned to empower girls to tackle the systemic inequalities that affect their lives. For this kind of education to happen, Green Girls would need to widen its lens for what counts as an environmental issue and challenge the girls not only to learn about scientific practice, but also challenge the power relations that are embedded within it.

CHAPTER SIX

Thinking through Culture: Environmental Justice and Multicultural Environmental Education in ECO Girls

Black girlhood is invisibility in the midst of
hypervisibility. Black girlhood is secrets in the
midst of all of this attention to girls' voice.

- Ruth Nicole Brown, *Black Girlhood Celebration*

Environmental programs for girls' empowerment, as I have shown thus far, are most often based in white, middle-class, and heterosexual feminine norms of civility and success. Even in programs where girls of colour are the majority, it is often the case that their voices, identities, and knowledges, especially if they are low income, are missing from the program. My analysis of GGC and Green Girls in the two previous chapters has shown that girls are frequently given very little power within the organization and are subjected to many of the same disciplinary measures found in formal education. These programs, which are based in the notion of environmental citizenship and stewardship, are frequently overseen by white, middle-class service providers who prescribe a vision for girls' community engagement rooted in service and participation, an approach that does not consider girls' own positionalities and environmental concerns within their communities or challenge the hegemonic power structures that shape their lives. Furthermore, their vision for empowerment through STEM and the sciences is uncritically patterned on white, liberal feminist ideals of achievement that are insensitive to the realities of oppression and marginalization in girls' lives and thus promise to do little to address systemic inequalities for low-income girls of colour. The question that then remains is: what can girl empowerment look like if it takes account of girls' diversity and agency? Is there hope yet for an environmental citizenship for girls that is rooted in principles of justice?

In this chapter, I argue that ECO Girls provides a basis for thinking about how an environmental ethic can be imagined for girls that takes justice, diversity and difference into account. ECO Girls, which originates in an oppositional consciousness to the whiteness of girls' programs and to mainstream environmentalism, and out of the desire to reaffirm girls' diverse identities and ways of knowing, challenges Eurocentric notions of girl empowerment. I argue in this chapter that ECO Girls achieves this goal by approaching its work with girls through a multicultural lens rooted in environmental justice, racial diversity, and an appreciation for the arts and creative practice. However, while ECO Girls examines the environment through an environmental justice perspective that critiques racism and economic inequality, it does not articulate an environmental justice citizenship for girls in the sense that it does not support girls as activists who organize in the public realm or struggle for substantive citizenship rights. While ECO Girls presents a vision for community transformation and exposes girls to environmental activism and environmental justice activism, it also favours, at the pedagogical level, individual forms of empowerment such as STEM, and more private forms of environmental action. I suggest that this tension is related to ECO Girls' view of the girls as "future leaders," an assumption which positions girls as citizens-in-the-making rather than citizens in their own right.

I begin this chapter first by examining the gendered, race and class-based language that the team of staff and volunteers used in their interviews to articulate environmental problems to situate ECO Girls as an organization that approaches the environment from a justice perspective. ECO Girls' origins are an important part of this story, so in this first part I focus on the experiences that prompted Tiya Miles, who is a tenured professor in the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies (DAAS) at the University of Michigan (U of M), to develop the idea for and establish ECO Girls and, through the voices of the staff and volunteers, I

demonstrate how their environmental consciousness – and subsequently, the consciousness of the program – has been shaped by the geographies of environmental injustice in Southeast Michigan and particularly Detroit. In the second part of the chapter, I examine how ECO Girls uses “culture” as a tool for environmental justice education, which I connect to the American scholarship on environmental justice education.¹ This education, I argue, takes place at two levels of the organization: through ECO Girls’ multicultural diversity policy, which was instituted for both the staff/volunteers and the girls who they serve, and through its environmental curriculum, which uses engaging multicultural arts-based activities to explore environmental issues. I connect ECO Girls’ diversity focus to Principle 16 of the Principles of Environmental Justice, as discussed in Chapter Two, to suggest that the kind of environmental education that ECO Girls delivers is precisely what American environmental justice scholars and activists had in mind when they argued that environmental education must represent “our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.”² As I explain, in ECO Girls, the concept of “culture” is synonymous with multiculturalism.

In the final section, I consider some of ECO Girls’ challenges and successes in reaching its environmental justice goals. I explore ECO Girls in the context of the two other environmental justice organizations for girls, HOPE for girls and LOP, which I discussed in Chapter Three, to suggest that ECO Girls does not empower the girls using participatory action or engage them in advocacy. Finally, I discuss some of the problems of access for low-income girls that the staff have identified and the funding difficulties that threaten the organization’s existence.

As in the preceding Green Girls chapter, in this chapter I explore ECO Girls’ environmental education primarily through the interviews and focus groups that I conducted with

the service providers and the girls, and through my fieldnotes and the organization's website and promotional material, as my research to date has not uncovered academic writing on this organization. I have also provided a quick reference sheet for ECO Girls in appendix G that summarizes elemental details regarding the size of the organization, basic information about the staff members and volunteers, the demographics of participating girls, and other pertinent information about the program.

Environmental justice, leadership, and gender

ECO Girls begins from the perspective that environments are made through social relationships. In this small organization of roughly ten staff members and volunteers, I interviewed six women who articulated how environments are constructed through the social relations of economic power and poverty, racism and racial inequality, gender and gendered injustice, all of which determine how a girl experiences her environment. This particular view of the environment stems from the spirit with which the organization's founder developed the program.

Tiya developed the idea for an environmental program for girls as a result of a series of personal awakenings that she had after seeing and learning about environmental injustice in the lives of people of colour. Tiya explained that she previously did not realize that environmental issues should be important to her until she went on an environmental justice tour of Detroit in 2007 with the Minority Environmental Leadership Development Initiative (MELDI). On the tour, she saw how many people live with environmental hazards every day; she saw schoolyards and playgrounds that were right next to automobile factory waste, an incinerator that people were trying to fight against that had been built anyway, and toxic brownfield sites that hadn't been cleaned up by the companies that had moved away years ago. Tiya recalled how "it was astonishing in a negative way to see the ways in which people were living in these dangerous ...

toxic environments every day.” This toxic tour made poverty and environmental racism in the lives of people of colour visible for Tiya.

Furthermore, Tiya linked the toxic tour to Hurricane Katrina, which had struck New Orleans two years prior, in 2005. As Tiya explained, these events prompted her to make a connection between the environmental racism and injustice experienced by African-American people and poor whites in New Orleans and Detroit:

the connection that I see between these two things was thinking about how Detroit is a majority African-American city and the images of New Orleans in particular during Katrina was mostly African Americans but also poor white people who were basically left to fend for themselves in the aftermath of environmental catastrophe. And so for me, the whole environmental racism, justice and really the neglect of people without white skin privilege and without class privilege, it’s a combination that was really salient.

Tiya’s motivation for developing ECO Girls came from seeing the effects of environmental racism in these different contexts. She observed how Detroit and New Orleans are both predominantly African-American cities affected by distinct and yet interconnected environmental problems. Both cities, like many others in the U.S., have histories of housing discrimination that have resulted in racial segregation, and while Detroit’s Black residents are suffering the consequences of economic disinvestment, pollution and blight from de-industrialization and white flight, Black New Orleanians, who were already disproportionately affected by high rates of poverty, were and are still gravely affected by Hurricane Katrina.³

Around the same time, Tiya, who is the mother of twin daughters and a little boy who are African American and Native American, hosted a party in her home for her daughters’ birthday. Her girls had invited two white classmates from their predominantly white school to attend and, at the party Tiya was shocked to observe how her daughters’ two friends “were kind of surprised and thrown off balance by seeing a room full of people where there were lots of African

Americans,” a symptom of the fact that her community of Ann Arbor was “racially segregated such that schools would be the only environment where they came together and when they did, girls of colour were in the minority.” This story also articulates how racial segregation is a big problem in Southeast Michigan. The white girls’ uncomfortable reaction to seeing their community’s racial composition turned on its head made tangible for Tiya the effects of race and class inequalities in the lives of children. This origin story of ECO Girls points to how historical patterns of racial segregation have created white, affluent spaces like Ann Arbor and impoverished Black spaces like Detroit, Ypsilanti, and New Orleans where working-class and poor Black residents and a smaller minority of whites have been left behind to manage the burdens of disinvestment and ruin in the wake of economic and natural disasters.

ECO Girls was thus founded through an environmental justice conceptual framework that recognizes how environments are structured by patterns of race and class privilege and systemic patterns of marginalization. However, this view does not merely reflect the perspective of the founder. The environmental justice lens was the framework through which all the ECO Girls team members that I interviewed discussed the environment, their personal experiences of living in Southeast Michigan, and their work within ECO Girls. Elizabeth James, the program’s Outreach Coordinator, talked about how poor and racialized communities are burdened by toxic waste right in their own homes and neighbourhoods. She reflected on how in Detroit,

there has been an awful amount of environmental racism. Dumping in neighbourhoods. Things where, now after growing up in Detroit, I’ve realized that I’ve lived very close to a dump, and people were leaving all sorts of toxic things there so that later when I had to undergo my [liver] transplant, I started thinking about the effects those toxins could have had on my body, and it’s something that you don’t think about because this is home. But as you grow older, you start to put things together where, “why is it here and it’s not in that neighborhood?” and it’s just something that we [at ECO Girls] were very mindful about from the beginning.

Like Tiya, Elizabeth specifically named Detroit in her account of environmental racism for the

way in which this city has become a space of neglect and inequality. In this same interview, she noted that she didn't think that if Detroit were a white city that it would have gone bankrupt and been vilified in the way that it has been, and thus Detroit's treatment is a function of a long history of racial inequality. Alexandra Passarelli, who is known to the girls as LiLi and is ECO Girls' Program Co-Manager, also talked about how racial and class inequalities shaped the stigmatizing views many people held of her hometown of Detroit. While she was a student at U of M, LiLi described how the city had become a "help project" for undergraduate students wishing to go in and paint a house for a day, and noted with disdain how it was also an exotic object of curiosity for tourists who, fascinated with the "beauty" of urban decay, would come in with their cameras to take pictures of the city's dilapidated infrastructure, a phenomenon recently branded as "ruin porn."⁴ LiLi highlighted that while Detroit is a city in trouble and in need of "sustainable help," right next door in Ann Arbor people are living "in a bubble" of privilege.

As noted in Chapter Two, environmental justice problems are not just about dumping and toxic environments, they can also manifest as a lack of environmental resources or benefits.

Marjorie Horton, who is Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Education at the University of Michigan and has been volunteering with ECO Girls since 2011, spoke about the lack of environmental benefits and resources for children from working-class and poor communities of colour, framing this issue using the language of injustice:

very poor families in this country don't have the gasoline to get to work or to take their children to a pediatrician's clinic, much less to get in a car or take a train to a national park ... I just feel like the racism and classism in this country are both so profoundly limiting in terms of the quality of environmental experiences many people can have and that includes clean air, whether they see any green in their environment at all, whether there's a park where their kids can play and get fresh air and exercise.

Marjorie contrasted the dearth of beautiful spaces in Detroit in which children can play with the memories of her own privileged childhood where she was able to play in the woods that backed into her home in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in North Carolina. Children in Detroit and Ypsilanti, she noted, are unlikely to have access to “a safe neighborhood in which to play outside, unsupervised” suggesting that access to free, unstructured play outdoors is an environmental right to which children in impoverished areas of Southeast Michigan are deprived. This perspective, which was uniquely articulated by Marjorie, connects to New Nature Movement discourses about children’s outdoor play, but with the recognition that access to those opportunities for play are uneven due to class and racial inequalities.

LiLi also spoke on the lack of environmental benefits for girls in Detroit and how exploring questions of environmental injustice is what attracted her to ECO Girls in the first place:

I think that’s why I was so interested in ECO Girls. It wasn’t just about saving trees, saving the rainforest. When I looked at the mission statement it was really about getting the girls thinking about their urban situation in that there’s a lot of barriers for them to overcome that’s not, that they can’t change within their home. There are opportunities for them to change things like, how come my city doesn’t have parks? How come my city doesn’t have a nice grocery store that’s not a liquor store? How come my city doesn’t come together and make urban gardens? So, I definitely think from a personal standpoint that race does matter, the history of Detroit really matters, the history of Ypsilanti matters. Why Ann Arbor has nice organic farm markets and Ypsilanti doesn’t comes back to our history of racism in the United States.

A defining feature of the environmental justice frame in ECO Girls’ conceptualization of environmental problems, to which LiLi gestures in this comment, is the recognition that race and class inequalities are *systemic* problems. In this quotation, LiLi names the history of racism in the United States as the reason why communities of colour do not have the same access to healthy environments. She is clear that a lack of access is not an individual or a family problem that can be remedied through changes within the home or individual changes in the girl, but

rather that these are systemic problems that require changes at the community level.

While many ECO Girls' team members readily embraced the label "environmentalist," Tiya recounted how her journey to environmentalism was fraught, largely because she did not identify with the white, middle-class culture of the environmental movement. Tiya recounted that she was never "a nature girl growing up" and that her family was not "outdoorsy" and "never went camping." She noted that well into her adulthood, she did not identify as an environmentalist, and in her mind environmentalists were people who could throw on a backpack and go for a hike, which was in her mind was "some kind of rarified privilege, [a] set apart experience that was not my experience." However, in 2005, at a conference hosted by DAAS at U of M, the invited speaker and environmental justice scholar Dorceta Taylor gave a talk about environmental racism and its impact on African-American communities. Tiya recalled how Taylor stood in front of a crowd of faculty in Black studies and told them that there are real environmental problems happening in their communities and around the world, and asked, "are you going to do something about it or are you just going to write a history about it when it's over?" As part of the lecture, Taylor spoke about Harriet Tubman and how it was her environmental knowledge and her ability to read the moss on the trees that helped her free as many slaves as she did. Taylor's talk struck a chord with Tiya, who noted that,

I had never thought of Harriet Tubman in that way, but of course it's true. You've got to know the land. You've got to know the landscape. You are going to be, to have free people, I mean, if you're going to be a community that can sustain itself...so for me, having my eyes opened to this really came through what I would define as a cultural lens. It had to be an African American and a Native American sense of important experience through the cultural lens. And then I was all ready for it! I had so much more conviction once I saw that piece.

Tiya's story suggests that the mainstream environmental movement has failed to speak to her experiences of the environment. Environmental justice scholars have pointed out how, with its culture of outdoor recreation and wilderness worship rooted in a white, middle-class, male

Romantic aesthetic, mainstream environmentalism has failed to represent the experiences and concerns of many people of colour for whom the environments in which they live, work and recreate are one in the same.⁵ While the mainstream environmental movement politicizes some human activities as the genesis of environmental problems, it stubbornly refuses to politicize race and class inequalities and thus to recognize how poverty, reproductive rights, and workers' rights are environmental and sustainability problems. For Tiya to come to environmentalism, she needed a framework for thinking and talking about the environment that politicizes the concerns of African-American people and that recognizes that they have meaningful connections to the land and a right to it. Subsequently, Tiya decided to found ECO Girls with the understanding that environmentalism is about "cultural ways of living" and it is about "racialization." Taking up Taylor's challenge to take action – "are you going to do something about it [the injustice] or are you just going to write a history about it when it's over?" – Tiya decided that it is the cultural pathway to environmentalism, a pathway that sees the environment through a lens of inequality and justice for people of colour and the poor and working class that would provide the best avenue to serve girls in her community.

In addition to politicizing class and race inequalities with respect to the environment, ECO Girls operates with the understanding that girls and women face gender inequalities that shape their experiences of the environment. The reason that ECO Girls is an organization that specifically serves girls comes from Tiya's experiences of raising her daughters, which triggered memories of her own girlhood confrontations with sexism and racism. Tiya noted that her daughters,

as little Black girls, experienced things I'd experienced as a girl myself. So, they started to feel really insecure about their skin colour, insecure about their hair. They didn't want to wear their hair out in a ponytail because...I don't even know what happened but apparently, there had been comments made by friends about their hair

and whether or not it moved and what it looked like, type of thing. And one of my daughters became obsessed, in the first grade with what she was going to wear and it had to be a dress and it had to be a dress with tights. She wouldn't even wear leggings because she wouldn't look like a girl, in her view she said this.... if she was not wearing a dress with tights. Meanwhile, the other daughter had really taken a liking to lizards [...] She asked me, it felt like out of the blue, if liking geckos made her a weird girl.

Tiya described how it was upsetting and frustrating that “girls of colour were facing the same kinds of things I have experienced in terms of feeling like they didn't fit. Feeling like they were not normative, feeling like there was some kind of rubric they were supposed to fit into that they could never fit into.” Other members of the ECO Girls team also noted how normative gender roles create inequalities for girls. Alyx Cadotte, ECO Girls' program manager and camp manager, spoke about the “princess culture” and the expectation that girls should wear nothing but pink and purple, which is “particularly harmful to girls [...] it's so hard for girls to find something that encourages other self-expression and encourages them to think outside of that box.” Elizabeth also critiqued how girls' bodies are seen through a regulatory gaze intended to control them. She noted that on the one hand, extreme pressure is put on girls to look attractive, but on the other, that they must do so without being overly sexual.

Several members of the ECO Girls team also talked about how girls' identities are shaped by the lower educational expectations for girls in the maths and sciences and that there is a lack of positive representations of women, and particularly women of colour, in professional and STEM fields. Zakiyah Sayyed, the program's Project Coordinator and Camp Director, observed that while boys have many male role models to look up to in the math and sciences, there is a dearth of role models for young girls. Elizabeth recounted how when Tiya approached her with the idea of creating an environmental organization for girls, “we were really talking about what it was like when we were little girls and it came from that place of, you know, are the sciences

valued? We know the girls are not always empowered or encouraged to go into the areas of the hard sciences the way that boys are.” Elizabeth emphasized how she herself had experienced negative messages about her ability to succeed in math and science when she was a young girl, and how this impacted her self-confidence in herself until she transferred to an all-girls school. These narratives speak to different ways in which patriarchal sexism shapes girls’ experiences of their identities, including their bodies and their sexualities. They demonstrate how the ECO Girls’ team politicizes girls’ gendered experiences in ways that acknowledge that they are a product of unequal gender relations, and in doing so, they expand the traditional paradigm of environmental justice to include girls’ bodies and sexualities, as well as their access to STEM education and the STEM career fields, as important environmental issues.

The second piece to the organization’s politicization of gender is based on feminist environmental justice discourses about women’s labour. As Tiya explained, ECO Girls is founded on the understanding that girls and women, through their traditional domestic roles both in the Global North and the Global South, have a direct relationship to the environment as producers and consumers of goods. On its website, the ECO Girls’ statement reads that “ECO Girls also accepts the thesis of ecofeminist scholars that environmental issues profoundly affect women and girls,” and explains this thesis as follows:

All over the world (with variations in definition and degree depending on geography and wealth) women and girls carry out domestic and community activities (such as gathering water & biomass for fuel, nursing babies, feeding families) that are dependent on natural resources within degraded environmental contexts. In economically privileged nations like the U.S., women frequently direct household shopping and consumption norms; they are therefore situated at the cross-roads of culture change for families and communities regarding the creation (and recovery) of sustainable life ways.⁶

The notion that girls and women experience the environment in specifically gendered ways also came up when Zakiyah discussed how climate change impacts women when natural disasters

strike because women are in charge of many of the family responsibilities. She noted that “girls and women face the consequences of a lot of the things that happen and go wrong with the environment.” She elaborated on this point by adding that “when you live in a community where there has been drought for ten years and there’s no food, usually...not that fathers don’t feed children, but oftentimes in families, women are the people who have to figure out how they’re going to feed the family.”

Furthermore, in places like Michigan and elsewhere in United States where women are most often not reliant on subsistence activities for their survival, they are still impacted by urban environmental pollutants because, as the ECO Girls team explained, they are still the ones responsible for their children’s health. According to Zakiyah, “If you grow up in a neighborhood where there’s a lot of pollution and most of the kids are gonna have asthma, maybe that’s something a mother’s gonna have to deal with, in my opinion. We’ll say seven times out of ten to be fair.” The perspective that women have a greater impact and role to play where environmental problems occur reflects the point made by environmental justice activists and scholars that women are often at the helm of environmental struggles to “sustain life and culture” in their communities and families. According to ecocritic Rachel Stein, these kinds of gendered environmental justice discourses are not gender essentialist, but rather assert that the “well-being of children and family are not private, isolated concerns,” and that for many women activists struggling on behalf of their family’s environmental health, “family health is always integrally connected to the larger context of community and cultural/ethnic/racial survival, as well as to social issues such as economic and civil rights.”⁷

While some members of the ECO Girls team focused on environmental justice vis-à-vis women’s gender and domestic roles within the family, a few others drew on ecomaternalist

discourses reminiscent of cultural ecofeminist thinking. Ecomaternalist discourses, as I explored in Chapter Two, are based in biological essentialist arguments that women are connected to nature because they are female, or by virtue of the gendered social roles to which they have been assigned as women and mothers. As Catriona Sandilands argues in her book *The Good-Natured Feminist* (1999), the mother and woman-nature identity is problematic because it is rooted in a very particular point of connection (essentialism) between women and nature at the exclusion of other forms of connections, and secondly, that the woman-nature identity precedes political claims despite the fact that it articulates a political identity (a problematic one).⁸ Noting that girls will one day be caretakers of their families and community leaders, Elizabeth noted that:

we're the mothers. We're gonna be the ones who have children, so taking care of your body when you're younger leads to better health all through your life so if you're aware of that at an early age, wow, how much more alert will you be to making sure that others in your family...for better or for worse, there is something that I feel is very nurturing within females and I think that is something that we'll watch out for other family members in ways where, you know, you might speak up about things and tell their families.

While Elizabeth was aware that “it is stereotyping” to suggest that girls are more nurturing, she felt that “it is something in that I’m hopeful will make them mindful of what they’re eating, how they’re eating it, how that can impact their bodies.” Marjorie also suggested a similar line of thinking when she observed that:

Stereotypically, females, at least in our culture, being socialized, and perhaps maybe genetically and evolutionarily as well, being more caretaking as opposed to the hunting and gathering in the species, the notion of getting females more and more involved in caring for the environment might actually lead to a stronger leadership and stewardship of the environment because of that sort of caring dimension of what could be both biological and sociological about how girls are raised.

These ecomaternalist statements de-politicize gender by locating it in the fabric of girls’ genes and their sexed bodies. They assume that caring is a more natural activity for girls and women

and they celebrate their caring labour as a good foundation for environmental politics, whether practiced by mothers in the context of the family or by women who are stewards and leaders in the wider community.

The articulation of an environmentalism based in girls' and women's identities as producers and consumers, however, can be problematic. As MacGregor argues in *Beyond Mothering Earth*, many ecofeminists have placed "too much weight on private identities and experiences and not enough on the public and political dimensions of women's lives – or on how private identity and public appearance are related."⁹ Even though ECO Girls recognizes how low-income girls of colour are marginalized by race, class, and gender oppressions, ECO Girls encourages more private forms of environmental engagement, like STEM, service learning, and green practices at home, over more public forms of engagement that challenge their exclusion and the exclusion of their communities from citizenship. This more private approach to working with the girls is evidenced in the language used to describe girls' citizenships. As Tiya explained, ECO Girls articulates girls' citizenships through the framework of leadership and service in the community rather than activism:

In the program, we really use the language of service and leadership as a way to again, try to reduce the potential for discussions that might take place outside of ECO Girls about ECO Girls that can evolve into contentious political debates. ... leadership is an important thing to encourage in girls and young people in general, but activism is not something that I wanted to introduce directly in our discussions. As far as the way that I view it, if I think that every person should be about trying to create positive change in the world, and that we all have to find our ways to enact that, and for some people that will be activism. I think that teaching skills around thinking critically, working collaboratively, expressing yourself creatively, being able to take your ideas forward and make them known and having commitment to bettering your community are all qualities and experiences that can help shape activists, but I wouldn't say that ECO Girls had a goal or explicitly expressed the goal of shaping future activism. There are so many ways that people can engage in social change.

The word that Tiya used to describe this work is “civic leadership,” which is in fact part of the organization’s fourth curricular layer (discussed in Chapter Three), which states that it is the program’s goal to teach the girls the value of “actively contributing to communities through participation, service.”¹⁰ This view of girls’ citizenship based in leadership, service, critical thinking, collaboration, and “having a commitment to bettering your community” is inherently open-ended and not committed to a political ideology, including environmental justice. As I noted in Chapter Two, the environmental justice movement treats young people as citizens in their own right and places them “at the center of meaningful change processes” by training them in community advocacy and organizing.¹¹ However, as Tiya noted, the team purposefully avoids contentious political debates that might hurt the organization, and therefore it does not advocate on any one particular issue.

Girl empowerment through an anti-racist lens

Given that girls, and particularly girls of colour are more likely to grow up in a society that has a dearth of girl-affirming messages, ECO Girls strives to empower girls by providing them with positive representations of women and especially women of colour. In her interview, Tiya emphasized the necessity of having a diverse team of women of colour running ECO Girls.

When she developed the idea for the program, Tiya decided that it was important to have

a range of women who all look differently from one another and who are different ages and different racial backgrounds and different skin colours and...lots of Black women with natural hair were just important to me, just as a mom [laughs]. You know, [it’s] one of the reasons why I started this.

As a consequence of this politicization of diversity, ECO Girls is the most diverse organization in this research. What distinguishes it from Green Girls, which also has a diverse representation of girls, is the intentionality that is given to recruiting a diversity of women of colour into

positions of leadership. During the time of my research with ECO Girls, the core staff members were women who self-identified or were identified by their colleagues as African American, Native American, African and Native American, and Asian American. The volunteers were equally diverse and in addition included women who self-identified as white.

The main reason that Tiya prioritized diversity in the ECO Girls team is because it upsets the patterns of racial distribution and segregation that people have become accustomed to in a predominantly white and affluent city like Ann Arbor. Recalling that girls of colour are in the minority in her daughters' class, Tiya wanted to create a space where both white girls and girls of colour could see a diverse group of women of colour in positions of leadership and where girls of different backgrounds could, in Tiya's words, "be affirmed in who they are." The second reason that Tiya wanted the program to be diverse had to do with her daughters' self-consciousness about their hair and worries about looking feminine. Both of these anecdotes convey how her daughters were confronting racist and sexist messages and were not being affirmed in who they are as young girls of colour. In having a diverse group of women leading ECO Girls, the program aims to disrupt the white, middle-class feminine norms against which girls are constantly measured (and measure themselves). Speaking again about her diverse team at ECO Girls, Tiya observed that these women come wearing their jeans, wearing their sweats, with their hair in a ponytail and ready to roll up their sleeves and get to work. Noting that the women do not arrive in high fashion, Tiya argued that

that's what girls see out there in the media, what women and girls and at younger and younger ages are supposed to look like. And so, I love it that they come and they see women who could be role models who are in their sweats, and who are going to be leading them on a hike. Doing something active with them. Who will stand up and say like Zakiyah did today, you know, "I'm an engineer." And she's got an afro puff! I just love that.

As Tiya suggested, it is important for girls to see positive representations of racially diverse

women who are comfortable with who they are, “wearing their sweats, with their hair in a ponytail,” and using their minds and making positive contributions to their communities. Furthermore, having a diverse team of staff and volunteers, and particularly “lots of Black women with natural hair” counteracts the homogenized white patriarchal feminine ideal of beauty against which girls typically measure themselves and provides space for girls to feel validated for who they are.

Another layer to the organization’s politicization of gender and race comes through its emphasis on STEM learning. Like GGC and Green Girls, the ECO Girls team attempts to make STEM fun and engaging. Alyx noted that their intention is to create “a buffer for when they’re older and run into people who tell them they can’t do it” so that they can “help reduce the drop off rate of girls interested in science.” However, ECO Girls’ concerns about STEM exceed the narrowly-defined concern about gender and recognize that there is also a dearth of girls and women of colour interested in and pursuing STEM fields. Tiya found Zakiyah’s statement “I’m an engineer” poignant precisely because it shows the girls that women of colour can and do occupy professional positions in STEM fields and it disrupts the stereotypical identity position associated with engineers.

The event at which Zakiyah announced that she was an engineer was the sustainable city day that ECO Girls ran on a Saturday in December 2013. Rather than build green dollhouses from recycled materials as the organization had done in previous years, in 2013 the ECO Girls team decided to have the girls plan a city. The way the day was structured was that the girls received a short tutorial on urban planning, were separated into teams, and using recycled materials they planned and constructed a building. Each team designated an “urban planner” who consulted with the urban planners from other teams about their design and how their buildings

would work together. At the end, the teams came together to assemble their city. The idea was to instill a consciousness about engineering, urban planning, green energy technologies, and sustainability. The talk about urban planning was supposed to have been delivered by a female urban planner who is also a faculty member at U of M. Unfortunately, that morning she could not make it to the event and so Zakiyah, who has a Bachelor's degree in Engineering, stepped in to fill her place. It was early morning and after the girls signed in and played an icebreaker game, Zakiyah gathered the girls together in a big circle and asked them a few questions, pausing in between to allow the girls a chance to answer each of them: "What is an engineer?" "What does an engineer look like?" "What is sustainability?" "What is an architect?" Zakiyah reassured the girls that they provided good answers to her questions and then she offered further explanation. In response to her own question "what does an engineer look like?" she told the girls that an engineer could be someone wearing a suit, someone in jeans, and then revealed that she herself is an engineer and called attention to the fact that she was wearing sweats.

Zakiyah's focus on appearance in her questions about the qualities that make an engineer was intended to dismantle stereotypes that the girls might hold about the identities of engineers. Furthermore, in revealing herself to be an engineer, Zakiyah attempted to make the thought of being an engineer more accessible to the girls. The fact that she has become a role model for many of the girls and that she shares some race and gender identity markers with many of them creates a different kind of access to STEM learning. Zakiyah noted in her interview that it is her hope that in participating in the program, the girls will "meet the people that they work with at ECO Girls and say "oh, well she looks like me, or she looks like my cousin, so I can see myself doing that too." The staff hoped that the girls would also see themselves represented in this way not only for the STEM careers but also for professional careers more generally. Elizabeth,

Marjorie and Zakiyah also gestured to the positive value of the girls seeing and interacting with professional women “who are scientists, who are historians, who are professors and scholars,” who represent a diversity of professional identities that girls can imagine for themselves and to which they can aspire.

The environmental justice goal of providing girls with diverse women role models to look up to also has an important class dimension. As explored in Chapter Three, ECO Girls serves a diverse group of girls from many different racial and ethnic backgrounds, which Tiya noted came about through their deliberate efforts to recruit girls from communities like Detroit and Ypsilanti. She noted that

we push very hard to get girls from Detroit and Ypsilanti, to get girls of colour, to get girls from the working poor and the working-class families and we work with high schools, we work through the office here at the university that works with communities and high schools and we were successful. There is no question we were successful in recruiting girls of colour and recruiting girls from economically challenged communities.

However, she also emphasized the importance of having girls from more affluent backgrounds in the program, and noted that early on in the program, they had a “pretty good mix in terms of racial representation,” which also included white girls from Ann Arbor who live in more affluent households. By having a mix of girls that cuts across race and class demographics, the program aims to provide girls from poor and working-class households with access to the social capital to which economically privileged girls typically have.

Observing that girls from economically challenged communities “won’t always have the same language or the same means of social interaction as Ann Arbor kids who are in \$100,000 a year households,” Tiya noted that the vision for ECO Girls was that “we would have girls from these different backgrounds and they would have learned from each other. That they would each be able to share their social capital and their understandings of the world to each other.” LiLi

attributed this program goal to fact that race and class segregation are significant problems in Southeast Michigan:

people are really easily segregated especially the Black community in the United States. It just kind of happened that white Americans live in suburbs and Black Americans live in urban areas and I think it's important for Tiya to not just make ECO Girls about girls of colour, but girls who are meeting other girls who they just might not meet outside of their school system. So, we want a girl who maybe comes from a lower socioeconomic background to meet a girl who comes from a higher socioeconomic background and become friends and show each other new things and new ways of thinking about their environment.

ECO Girls thus attempts to address the harmful effects of segregation which typically reproduce patterns of inequality in the lives of poor girls of colour and poor white girls. The simple opportunity for cultural exchange that is provided in ECO Girls opens doors for girls who might not have access to the same quality of education that wealthier girls do in their communities. Marjorie pointed out that at the same time, ECO Girls provides girls from more affluent families with an understanding of “economic and environmental disparities” and helps them gain a sense of their own privilege. Furthermore, she also commented on how ECO Girls, also through its activities, promotes teamwork and friendship and how this structure offers all of the girls the opportunity to have “positive experiences working with diversity and difference.”

Another class dimension of the program that the ECO Girls team members spoke about was the value of providing girls from lower-income and working-class households with a glimpse into the college experience. Most of ECO Girls' events take place in different buildings on the U of M campus. They have had events in the School of Natural Resources and Environments Building where they were given a tour by the students working there, in outdoor spaces like the campus farm where they have assisted undergraduate and graduate students with planting and soil preparation, and for the camp for the past two years, the girls were housed in a campus dorm for four nights. While Zakiyah noted that many of the Ann Arbor girls are from

educated families, she countered that there are many who are not and that physically spending time on campus provides access to the possibility of college life. According to Alyx, the campus setting is

really important in terms of access to the physical space, and the kids, when they're there, I've overheard comments between kids and our chaperones...it's funny the little details they're interested in and what college life is like, and I think it's really important, all those interactions because what it does is it fills, it builds a picture that they can form in their minds of them at college one day.

The ECO Girls team thus views the university setting as a piece of the work of providing girls from lower income families with greater social capital so that they might consider the possibilities of a university education.

In some ways, ECO Girls is similar to other girl empowerment programs. Like GGC and Green Girls, ECO Girls reaches girls through more individual interventions that are designed to empower them. For instance, Tiya's assertion that one of their aims is to have the girls feel "affirmed in who they are" resonates with the GGC, the Girl Scouts U.S.A., and a plethora of other empowerment programs for girls that address topics such as self-esteem, self-acceptance, and body image. As Tiya noted, when she founded the program, she envisioned it as a space in which girls could be appreciated, be accepted, that would "allow them to speak" and provide an environment where their "voices [could] be heard." The focus on STEM and the benefits of a college education also presents a more individual intervention into girls' lives, even if those interventions might benefit families and communities in the long term.

At the same time, however, ECO Girls approaches these more traditional girl empowerment issues through an anti-racist, gendered, and class-conscious lens that politicizes girls' relationships to one another and attempts to carve out new patterns of relating. Unlike other empowerment programs for girls, ECO Girls does not pretend that all girls are the same or

subscribe to liberal discourses that suggest that girls belong to a sisterhood. One of ECO Girls' strengths, and a factor which made it stand out among the other organizations in this research, is its critical reflexivity on identity and difference. As an organization that works from a framework of racial and class diversity that is instituted at the levels of the staff/volunteers, the girls that it serves, and the curriculum, ECO Girls in fact builds its program through a feminist approach to difference that does not ignore race and class-based difference or treat the girls as if they are all the same, but rather actively searches for ways to investigate and break down the social barriers that divide girls so that they can relate across difference.¹² ECO Girls' approach reminded me of Black feminist and poet Audre Lorde and her writings on difference, where she argues that a feminist movement that privileges gender over any other category of identity in its attempt to create a unified movement undermines that very unity. Lorde points out that many white, middle-class feminists painted women as a homogenous group and have subsequently marginalized women of colour and poor women as "Other." She argues that exploring differences in race, class, sexuality, and age among women in the feminist movement will only strengthen it and better mobilize women's collective struggles.¹³

Although ECO Girls' pedagogy of difference is limited in its intersectionality (the staff did not speak about sexuality or ability), they did explore the intersections of class, race, and gender, as evidenced in the training that the staff and volunteers undertook. According to Zakiyah, the staff and volunteers that helped facilitate the five-day camp each summer received around twenty hours of training prior to camp from more seasoned staff members and invited guest speakers, and the volunteers who came through the Women's Studies 350 course typically did a day-long training and were supervised by Elizabeth as part of their course work. Zakiyah described the pre-camp training as an intensive course that put a lot of emphasis on how to

interact with the girls. LiLi, who went through this week-long training, recalled that it was “all about training the staff to be culturally competent and sensitive to these girls. Being prepared if issues of race come up, issues of class come up.” She noted that in thinking through these issues, the staff and volunteers were asked to reflect on their own positionalities and how they can relate to the girls across their similarities and differences, not only across race and class, but also age because, in addition to having their own unique experiences, the girls also respond differently to problems in their lives and have access to a different language to talk about these problems.

When I visited the ECO Girls camp in 2013, I saw that the staff, even after a long exhausting day, would meet every evening after the girls had gone to bed to debrief, talk about any problems that arose during the day, and plan any logistics for the following day. LiLi noted that at one staff/volunteer evening meeting during camp, the topic of group dynamics came up because several staff noticed that the girls tended to racially segregate themselves. LiLi noted that at their staff meeting, several staff asked themselves,

is this a good thing or is this a bad thing? And, I think because we are women of colour and because Alyx and I have said you know, we grew up in neighborhoods where, in communities where there weren't other people of colour, so when you see other people of colour who look like you, you grab on to them and you're like, “please be my friend! I'm also Asian American and you're Asian American, let's be friends!” and some of those girls might be feeling that way and I'm so excited to ...like we have this group of girls who are all of east Asian descent, they just followed the oldest girl of East Asian descent like crazy, because they were so excited to meet each other, and how ECO Girls just decided to deal with this, separating out, was just saying like, let's just give them time to pick the friends they want to be with, but just make sure that there's also time where we tell them, “ok, you have to be in this group” where we force the girls to mix up. So that is what we decided to do with that.

The team's sensitivity to racial group dynamics stems from their understanding that these micro patterns of self-segregation are linked to larger social patterns of racism and segregation. The team members possessed a critical awareness of how these social patterns of inequality

manufacture identity and difference in ways that replicate inequality, and their goal was thus to facilitate cultural exchange to undo these patterns of inequality. However, their tactic was not to ignore or erase the differences among the girls but rather to help them find new ways of relating across difference. Lorde argues that finding creative ways to relate across difference is critical for the survival of progressive social movements like feminism and for the survival of the earth:

our future survival is predicated upon our ability to relate within equality. As women, we must root out internalized patterns of oppression within ourselves if we are to move beyond the most superficial aspects of social change. Now we must recognize differences among women who are our equals, neither inferior nor superior, and devise ways to use each others' difference to enrich our visions and our joint struggles. The future of our earth may depend upon the ability of all women to identify and develop new definitions of power and new patterns of relating across difference. The old definitions have not served us, nor the earth that supports us. The old patterns, no matter how cleverly rearranged to imitate progress, still condemn us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges, the same old guilt, hatred, recrimination, lamentation, and suspicion.¹⁴

By thinking through identity and difference, ECO Girls works to undo old patterns of exchange through which girls have been socialized.

While the ECO Girls team was concerned to see that the girls were self-segregating, a surprising thing happened, according to LiLi, during the 2013 camp at the closing of the day. The team invited the girls to participate in an activity in which they stand in a circle and take turns tossing a ball of yarn to one another. The girl throwing the yarn is asked to say something positive about the girl who receives it. The staff, expecting the girls to say silly things to each other, were surprised to find that the girls on the contrary said very insightful things:

They'll throw the piece of yarn to someone that we thought...we never...we thought those two girls never ever talked to each other before, but they'll say, "oh you know what, you are actually really kind and you listen to people when we need help." "You're really creative." They just say such meaningful things. You don't usually expect, or you just didn't notice that the girls are having these interactions and, because you would think, "oh, this girl I always thought she was hanging out with her other Black friends" and "this girl is always hanging out with her other white friends" but they're throwing the yarn to each other and saying really nice things to each other.

Even if it is not always immediately apparent to the ECO Girls team, they are providing opportunities for girls to relate across difference by creating a multicultural space where they can meet girls who are both like and unlike themselves in different ways. This encounter is not always a comfortable experience, as evidenced in one spoken word activity in which the girls were invited to freestyle. A poet from the community had been invited to come do a spoken word activity with the girls, and as an icebreaker, he led the girls in a freestyle. With the girls clustered around him, he beatboxed, and several girls joined in, each taking a turn rapping lyrics off the tops of their heads with varying degrees of confidence. LiLi, who gestured towards the outer ring of girls who were not participating, some of whom were Asian, South Asian, and white, noted that this activity was “not for everyone”:

not every single girl in ECO Girls, in ECO Girls at camp knows how to rap and was comfortable with that rap activity that we were doing at camp, but with some of those girls, I doubt some of those girls would have had that experience outside of camp. Especially, there’s a few Asian-American girls who are from Canton, Novi, right outside of Ann Arbor. I know at school that they’ll never have this opportunity where they are from.

Although it may have been an uncomfortable experience, as LiLi suggested, it was also an opportunity for the girls who are otherwise separated geographically.

The girls’ discomfort with difference also manifested in other ways. Tiya noted that since it was founded, ECO Girls had a dramatic change in the racial composition of the girls who participate in the program. According to Tiya, what happened was that they

started losing the white girls. And I thought about this, wondered what is it, and I actually honestly think that, something about...well, the makeup of the group, they were, they were affluent girls, and those girls were used to or their parents were used to, let them to...kind of opt them out. Because it is kind of unusual to be in a social setting here in Ann Arbor where it’s going to be a majority of Black girls. And that’s my only theory. I mean it’s clear that they were kind of, one by one, kind of leaving. ... And my theory is that for some of the parents that might have been uncomfortable. But my hope with the project is that that would happen. That we would have girls from these different backgrounds and they would have

learned from each other. That they would each be able to share their social capital and their understandings of the world to each other.

This moment brings us back to Tiya's story in the beginning of this chapter about the two young white girls who were uncomfortable at her daughters' birthday party. The multicultural exchange that Tiya and her team facilitated in ECO Girls disrupts dominant social patterns of oppression, privilege and segregation, and this process necessitates a certain amount of discomfort because it forces the girls to confront their own privileges and develop new patterns of relating to one another. However, tackling systemic problems of such large proportions is no easy task, and along the way the organization will not be able to reach every girl or her family. However, the ECO Girls team provides strong evidence that the girls are learning from each other across difference – even if this experience may at times be uncomfortable – and are developing new friendships that may have never have occurred otherwise.

Furthermore, another way in which ECO Girls differentiates itself from other girl empowerment programs is that it does not impose white, middle-class ideals of civility on the girls. As Ruth Nicole Brown points out in her book *Black Girlhood Celebration*, empowerment programs for girls all too often are based in Eurocentric ideals of femininity that encourage expression and voice insofar as they are appropriately quiet at the right moments, respectful to authority, and feminine without being sexual. Although the space of ECO Girls is not free from regulation, as I will discuss later in this chapter, it is a space in which girls, and particularly Black girls, are not stigmatized or shut down for expressing themselves. This greater freedom was immediately visible from the moment I stepped into the field. From an adult perspective, the space of ECO Girls appears chaotic, and that was my impression when I arrived at the U of M dorm where around twenty girls were staying during the 2013 camp. They had just heard a talk from one of the volunteers about the origins, cultural uses, and plant properties of henna, and the

girls had free time afterwards to do what they pleased; some of the girls lined up to get henna on their hands, other girls talked and sang, and some ran around playing games with each other. The room, in short, was filled with the chaos of girls having fun. Later that day, after I returned from a break in the afternoon, I walked in on a loud group of girls clustered in the middle of the room who were doing the freestyle/spoken word activity. When a girl dropped a particularly good line, her lyrics elicited an excited “ohhhhhhhh!” reaction from the girls, who exchanged glances and celebrated with their joyful exclamations and their bodies in movement. As they listened, the girls in the cluster bobbed their heads and some moved their bodies and hands in time with the beat.

This activity reminded me of the approach that Brown takes in her “program” for African-American girls, SOLHOT (Saving Our Lives, Hear Our Truths). As Brown explains, SOLHOT works against the rules that are found in school and other programs that attempt to render Black girls’ bodies docile. Brown sees girls’ actions and expressions in the program as “types of knowledge about the ways the world works for Black girls living, working, and/or studying in a particular time and space” that create a “counternarrative of identity,” the purpose of which is to work against the common conception found in most educational spaces that Black girls’ cultures and identities are disruptive.¹⁵ The freestyle activity did not resonate with every girl, as LiLi pointed out. However, because ECO Girls teaches through the perspective of multicultural diversity, this activity, which resonated pedagogically more with the African-American girls, is but one cultural lens and pedagogical approach among many that are used in the program.

Multicultural environmental education and the politicization of space

Reflecting two critical goals of Principle 16 from the Principles of Environmental Justice (discussed in Chapter Two), ECO Girls teaches environmental education through the experiences of communities of colour, and particularly African Americans, to represent the environment through diverse environmental knowledges and cultural histories. ECO Girls teaches through diverse environmental experiences because it begins with the assumption that African Americans and people of colour have, as Kimberly Ruffin argues, been cast as environmental others and excluded from nature, and that the spatial patterns of environmental access are deeply shaped by race and class.¹⁶

One way in which the staff described girls' othering from nature was through their observation and analysis of how girls of colour, particularly if they are low income, are more likely to experience feelings of disconnection from nature. Tiya, for instance, observed that people in cities often feel "cut off from nature, even though nature is all around them," a view that was shared by the other staff members. However, the ECO Girls' team described that disconnection as a function of historical processes of systemic privilege and marginalization and situated it in a way that did not re-inscribe white and middle-class notions of nature. While their remarks about girls' disconnection from nature at first glance appear to resonate with those of the Green Girls staff, the ECO Girls team did not use stigmatizing language that suggested that the girls' communities and experiences are environmentally inferior, as Green Girls did, and did not suggest that girls should be taken girls into "greener" and more ecologically-intact environments outside their own communities. This approach, as I discussed in the previous chapter, closely resembles the white middle-class morality and imperative for social control that characterized, and continues to characterize, the Fresh Air and camping movements that expose poor, racialized

city children to supposedly “healthy” environments. Rather, ECO Girls contextualizes and historicizes girls’ unequal access and makes that unequal access the foundation for redefining the meanings of “nature.”

LiLi, for instance, shared a story from the ECO Girls camp the previous year whereby the girls from the city, and particularly from Detroit, did not have the same kind relationship to nature as did the more affluent white suburban girls. LiLi’s description of access contextualizes it within spatial patterns of race and class privilege and marginalization:

I feel like suburban girls have more opportunity to go on a camping trip or have been hiking in the woods, whereas city girls get so crazy about, “oh, we got to sit outside on the grass? It’s dirty!” “oh no, we have to drink *that* water?” They just get very uncomfortable about being outside. Usually they are the ones who are most terrified about being out at night. When we took them stargazing at night, it was usually the city girls who just were absolutely frightened to be out there in the forest, and you hear some of that language, too, among the girls. I remember a group of girls who had become friends saying, “oh, those are city girls, they don’t know what to do outside,” and I don’t know if they’re...if in their minds they quite realized that, that group of girls were all becoming friends that were outdoor lovers were all white suburban girls, didn’t realize that all those city girls were mainly, not all, but mainly Black girls from Detroit City. So, I think that kind of comes up in their language a lot, too. Just a comfortable-ness of being outside, being outdoors.

LiLi articulated how space is racialized and shaped by income inequality; notably, how nature is a space for the recreation and enjoyment of privileged white suburban families that can afford to go on hiking and camping excursions and how urban space is Black and poor and peopled by communities that are supposedly ignorant about and uncomfortable with being in nature. The racialization of space in her story is captured through the urban girls’ fear. Tiya argued that in addition to facing barriers of access to nature, many communities of colour are “viewed as people who don’t deserve to kind of access the natural world or don’t know about it, or shouldn’t have ready access to it,” and that these ideologies replicate racist spatial patterns. Recognizing that urban girls, and particularly urban girls of colour often grow up with the sense that nature

and environmentalism are not things to which they have a right, ECO Girls aims to connect them to the environment and uses a multicultural lens to do so.

ECO Girls' work in politicizing the girls' access to nature supports Carolyn Finney's point (discussed in Chapter Two) that representation, and more specifically, the absence and erasure of African-American environmental experiences in mainstream environmentalism is a serious problem that contributes to the systemic marginalization of African Americans. Because African-American environmental experiences have been erased and whitewashed, making them visible to the girls shows that the environment is part of their cultural heritage.¹⁷ Subsequently, Tiya has made it a priority in ECO Girls to expose them to environmental activists who are people of colour. As Tiya explained:

last year for Earth Day we went as a group and we teamed up with an organization called Greening of Detroit and ECO Girls went to Detroit and we planted trees with a large number of people, mostly people of colour, in a Black community. That's not overt. It's subtle. It is about saying that people of colour in their communities care about the natural world and are going to take care of it and are doing so.

Furthermore, Tiya recalled that the staff had heard about an African-American woman named Starlet Lee from Detroit who was a world champion tree climber at only twenty-two years of age, who had learned to climb when she took on a job as a pruner with a landscaping company. ECO Girls contacted her with an invitation to come speak with the girls. Starlet joined ECO Girls one afternoon to talk about tree climbing, and she showed the girls her equipment and brought them outdoors to do a tree climb demonstration. Tiya noted that Starlet was also a musician and singer and ended her visit by singing with the girls. Reflecting on this experience, Tiya noted that "We were able again to make this point, and surreptitiously, that Black people care about trees and know trees and can compete against people around the world in this kind of arena which has to do also with athleticism and sports that are not basketball." Tiya's point is

that Starlet's tree climbing experiences, like the Greening of Detroit group, helped the girls expand the range of athletic and environmental possibilities that are available to them beyond racial stereotypes.

These representations, however, are not simply about showing the girls that communities of colour are “participants” in environmental practice and organizing. Rather, many of ECO Girls' field trips politicize girls' access by introducing them to environmental justice work that asserts their right to the environment. For instance, ECO Girls made a visit to D-Town Farms, an Afrocentric farm in downtown Detroit established by Malik Yakini, the co-founder of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. Yakini began the tour of his farm with a discussion of the role that African-American people had in shaping U.S. agricultural history, from cultivating the land as slaves on American plantations to introducing new foods originating from different parts of Africa, such as sesame seeds and different varieties of rice. Next, he showed them the raised beds and hoop houses where vegetables are grown, the bee houses where honeybees are kept, and explained the biological process of composting and why compost is so important for sustainable farming. After doing some hands-on gardening activities with the girls, Yakini finished the tour with a talk about why it is important to be concerned about food and discussed the careers available to people who have an interest in food in their community. He also told the girls about the D-Town Harvest Festival and invited them to get involved by leading a demonstration at next year's festival. Experiences such as these that showcase the work of community activists who are people of colour and who are successfully leading projects that address problems in the city like food justice demonstrate to the girls that people of colour care about their environment, and that this environment not only concerns “the green world” but also encompasses the people who live there. As Tiya remarked, these representations of African

Americans counteract racist stereotypes that associate Black men with activities like basketball. By seeing representations of people of colour who are environmentalists and community leaders struggling to improve the social conditions of their environments, Tiya and her team hope that the girls can recognize that the environment is something that concerns them and something to which they have a right.

ECO Girls also politicizes girls' connection to nature by encouraging them to acquire and produce knowledge of their local environments and by fostering a relationship to land.

Explaining her choice to focus the program in urban Southeast Michigan, Tiya noted how important it was for ECO Girls to explore the local environment so that the girls can develop an attachment to place. Wanting to “contribute to a sense of the girls’ identity of [being] people in places,” Tiya had the girls create a placement where they drew a self-portrait in the middle of the page, and from there, the community radiated out of the self-portrait of the girl, encompassing her house, yard, street, neighborhood, city, state, and the lakes. Tiya noted that

it’s important for us to mark where we are. Especially because a lot of the girls who are in the program come from locations that, you know, are maligned a lot in the press. Like Detroit. So, I think it’s important to say this is where we’re from! And even beyond that, we can be from different...communities and cities in this region and still be connected.

The fact that Detroit’s maligned reputation could be a reason why girls weren’t developing meaningful connections to land was made evident on a trip to Belle Isle that I attended with ECO Girls during the 2013 summer camp. On a Thursday afternoon in June during camp week, we sat in the hot sun eating lunch on Belle Isle, Detroit. We could see Windsor across the water on the other side of the river, and the girls, who were intensely curious about the fact that I was from Canada, asked me a lot of questions about Toronto. I asked them where they were from, and as several of them were born in Detroit, I asked them how they liked it here. Their answers were

very mixed. One of the girls criticized all of the graffiti in Detroit, while another said she liked it and thought it was art. Another girl commented on how she thought the city wasn't very clean.

Urban excursions into Detroit, a city that is maligned, allow the girls to see beauty in this space and dismantle some of the stereotypes that they might have associated with it. Alyx fondly recounted the value of their field trip to D-Town Farms, not only because Yakini provided the girls with an understanding of food justice and the power of taking food production into their own hands, but also because “it was important I think for both the Detroit girls to have their city valued as a place to visit and as something like, we have things to learn in the city. And then also for the Ann Arbor kids to be taken there and, it's not to a sporting event with their parents, and it's not, you know, a scary field trip.” Reflecting on her own girlhood spent in Detroit, Alyx noted that her experience of home as a child would have been different had she been exposed to these kinds of experiences. Tree planting with the Greening of Detroit, farming at D-Town Farms, or even just having a picnic and playing games on the lawn at Belle Isle Park counteract images of Detroit as a place of violence and decay and contribute to girls' perception that there is an active community there struggling for social justice, which Tiya and the ECO Girls team hope will open opportunities for the girls to develop self-affirming connections to home.

The community mapping activity was not only intended to destigmatize Detroit; it was also more broadly meant to encourage the girls to develop a sense of “identity of being people in places,” a Tiya put it. Local specificity is an important goal in ECO Girls and it is used as a pedagogical tool to foster girls' sense of belonging to the ecoregion and to facilitate their environmental learning. Alyx observed how ECO Girls has conceptualized the environment as “a very specific place that we have a direct relationship with.” She explained that they have tried to have a focus on Michigan and particularly the Great Lakes and to reinforce the idea that we are

all part of nature to dispel the myth that nature is something to visit upstate in Northern Michigan. Nature exists in urban areas like Ann Arbor, Detroit and Ypsilanti, and ECO Girls conveys this idea to the girls by making use of their partnerships with local organizations and by taking the girls outdoors, both of which present opportunities for different kinds of environmental learning. ECO Girls has links with many community organizations in Ann Arbor, including the Leslie Science and Nature Center, the Matthaei Botanical Gardens, and U of M's Museum of Natural History, which they have visited on multiple occasions as part of their camps and during the school year.

In November 2011 in the first year of the program, ECO Girls visited the Leslie Science and Nature Center in Ann Arbor where they learned about Michigan's ecosystems. They began the day by learning about local species of plants and animals and their relationship to their ecosystems, and shortly thereafter, they saw live birds of prey which the Center houses in its outdoor rehabilitation enclosures. After seeing the birds, ECO Girls selected a peregrine falcon to "adopt" for the year. Two weeks later, ECO Girls convened again at the U of M's Museum of Natural History where they learned about different ecosystems, including a pine forest, maple and beech forest, sand dune and bog. After some hands-on interactive games indoors, Joe Reilly of the Natural History Museum took the girls outside to play some nature-themed games, which culminated in an activity where they sat down by the Huron River and drew "sound maps" that represented what they were hearing.¹⁸ Activities such as these serve several purposes. The most obvious is that they provide the girls with practical knowledge about local flora and fauna and their ecosystems. The girls not only learn information about nature, they also go outside and can touch and observe the trees as they are learning about them. Furthermore, by "adopting" a kestrel, the girls support local efforts in rehabilitating a raptor and form a personal connection to

a wild animal, and the sound map activity invites the girls to listen to and create their own interpretations of the language of the landscape. All of these hands-on and interpretive activities open opportunities for the girls to develop a sense of belonging to the landscape that they are in and simultaneously positions them as agents in protecting and shaping the landscape through their artistic representations of it.

While nature is not, as Alyx pointed out, “in northern Michigan and you have to go visit it,” the staff saw excursions into wilder, non-urban landscapes as an important element of the program. Zakiyah argued that there should be a balance of doing excursions both in urban settings and in wilder tracts of nature along the perimeter of the city or in northern Michigan because the latter presents opportunities to be able to forge what LiLi had earlier described as the “comfortable-ness” of being outside. According to Zakiyah,

being in Ann Arbor, you kind of get the best of both worlds in that sense, right? So, both two places [the Leslie Science Center and Nichols Arboretum] that Alyx mentioned are in Ann Arbor so you could pop in to quote-unquote “real nature” for two hours and pop quote-unquote back out. But I was saying, yeah, it’s about that balance of doing both. ‘Cause it is important for you to just be out in the dirt and the leaves and not feel completely afraid, you know? Just to experience all that adventure, but also to think about the environment as more than just that.

Excursions into both urban and non-urban landscapes, as Zakiyah suggests, are important for dispelling the girls’ fears of nature and increasing their ecoliteracy while affording them with new and fun environmental experiences.

The staff described the value of these wilder excursions through the example of the 2012 ECO Girls camp, which took place at the U of M campus Biostation in northern Michigan. One evening at the camp, after night fell, Alyx led the girls on a hike through the woods to look at the stars, and recounted how this moment was an opportunity to connect the girls to land and to alter their perceptions of the forest as a scary place. She remembered searching around for a spot that

would provide them with a clear view of the stars and that the girls were so spooked because many of them had never been in the wilderness before and were certainly not used to walking around a forest in the dark. After finding a good viewing space, they all lay down on the ground to gaze at the night sky and Alyx told them an Ojibwa star story, which had cultural significance to her because they were on their traditional lands. Alyx noted that it was memorable to be able to tell them the story and see them realize that nature

wasn't something to be afraid of just because we were up north in the dark. And I think that was pretty cool for me because I grew up camping in the outdoors and was never afraid [laughs] to be in a space like that, to be able to take this whole group out and change the way they looked at their surroundings was pretty cool.

This excursion into the forest in the dark provided the girls, some of whom may never have left the city before, with exciting environmental experiences. Exposing them to these new landscapes naturalizes their connection to the living landscape by asserting their right to learn about and enjoy the natural environment that is part of their state and in many cases, part of their heritage that is denied them. While it may be frightening for the girls who have not had experiences like this before, Alyx's telling of the Ojibwa star story also plays a mediating role in using cultural stories to help the girls forge a relationship to the land.

ECO Girls is unique in the sense that it is the only organization in this study to present the girls with Indigenous knowledges of the environment, much of which is facilitated by Alyx, who is a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. ECO Girls' emphasis on Indigenous knowledges is very much linked to its goals of using a cultural lens to teach ecoliteracy and to foster ecological consciousness in the girls. In the description of the Southeast Michigan ecoregion on the program's website, Alyx and two contributors Nick Reo and Rachel Afi Quinn provide a history of region through a First Nations' epistemology. Noting how Anishnaabeg people were "among the first people in the Great Lakes area," they write that they

have a “long memory of the land and its plant and animal inhabitants” that is passed down from generation to generation. The article conveys how First Nations peoples were the first inhabitants of the land and that they have knowledges about nature that are different from those of modern environmental thought. Alyx writes that

in the Anishinaabe language, known as Anishinaabemowin, there is no specific word for “nature.” Plants, animals, and people are all part of one system, recognized as being inseparable and interdependent (dependent on one another). Here is a quotation from the book, *Sacred Water: Water for Life* that explains this idea: “Kinship extends far beyond the human family and makes for an appreciation of the world that is cooperative, caring and interconnected.”¹⁹

Integrating Anishnaabeg episteme into its curriculum serves several functions. In taking the girls into the forest at night to look at the stars and in telling them an Ojibwa star story, Alyx is inviting them into her personal connection to land and is opening the opportunity for them to feel kinship with the land rather than fear. Alyx’s example illustrates well how ECO Girls uses culture to facilitate this connection, and how it aids in fostering an ecological consciousness in the girls. Furthermore, an element of these teachings that the ECO Girls team did not discuss, but in fact were doing, was politicizing Anishnaabeg history and First Nations connections to land, and doing so in a way that conveyed traditional knowledges about the environment that disrupts hegemonic Eurocentric environmental knowledges based in reductionist science and instrumental rationality.

While the girls did not speak about the politicization of the environmental experiences of African Americans and people of colour in the program, they did suggest that ECO Girls has given them access to new environments and environmental experiences that they did not have previously. Kea, for instances, explained how when they went up to the north campus of University of Michigan, they did the night hike in the dark with their flashlights and got to look at the stars. This trip was her favourite memory because

we got to see like, lots of the forest in the nature reserves. It was very pretty! Yeah, and we got to try new things, I got to try strawberry leaf tea, which was delicious. And I mean, it's just, you don't get to see those things very often. They're kind of, it's kind of a rare opportunity which is probably why I value it so much. I live in, you know, I live in the city [Detroit] so there are not a lot of opportunities that I get to be so close to nature.

Although Kea pointed out that there is nature in Detroit to enjoy, like the park at Belle Isle where “you get to see all these beautiful willow trees that are growing there,” her comment suggests that the camp in the north campus afforded her a very different experience of nature that is not usually accessible to her. Michonne also reported that the program forced her to confront her discomfort with some aspects of nature, as when they went to the bird rehabilitation centre “where they had all these birds everywhere and I am *terrified* of birds” and also on a hike in northern Michigan where “there were these frogs jumping out everywhere and it creeped me out!” Michonne added that she didn't like dirt and how she felt challenged by the activities that involved putting her hands into the soil. However, reflecting on these experiences, Michonne noted that her participation in ECO Girls has helped her get over her some of her squeamishness about nature: “it's been, like, little small things that like I've gotten over [laughs], 'cause I'm like “oh well.” You know, at first I'll be like, uncomfortable, and feel like, ‘no, no-no-no.’” But afterwards I'll be like “ok, maybe this isn't as bad as I thought.” For many of the girls, then, ECO Girls provides opportunities to develop new relationships, or deepen existing ones with the natural environment.

Environmental justice without advocacy and activism?

While the ECO Girls team articulated an environmental justice perspective in describing the situation facing girls of colour and low-income girls in Detroit, Ypsilanti, and Ann Arbor, the staff expressed ambivalence about whether the work that they were doing could be called

“environmental justice.” Reflecting on the place of environmental justice within the organization, Zakiyah commented, “I think environmental justice is such an important issue, and I don’t think we necessarily do it directly” because the program does not “talk about the term by itself.” When I asked LiLi the same question, she provided a similar answer, noting that she thought that the work of the program was environmental justice activism, but that “it’s a little difficult to transfer that message to the kids, ‘cause I feel like we’re doing it from the top, like the program coordinator, and the program manager, and the founder are all concerned about, we want to get girls of colour in here, but we haven’t done an activity about environmental justice directly.” Zakiyah explained that in the program the team members do not use the language of justice and equal rights, but rather, questions of injustice surface in subtle ways through the activities that they organize. LiLi similarly elaborated on how it is difficult to talk to the girls directly about class and race privilege and oppression because it raises uncomfortable questions about the girls’ different social locations and possibly their marginalization and also because it is more difficult to translate these issues into a language that will make sense for young women who do not necessarily think of identity and difference in the same way as adults. She noted that she thought that environmental justice instead “comes through in the way we do the activities and the way we treat the girls, especially for the younger ones. It’s just really hard to talk about that stuff so sometimes our activities are really simple and just teaching them, this is how a plant grows, this is how you make a greenhouse with plastic bottles. So sometimes it just stops there.”

Like LiLi, Elizabeth thought that the justice messages in the program come through in a “subliminal way. I don’t think it’s something where we come out and say...again that whole sense of all of us coming from different backgrounds, different ages, all of those things are giving them messages that I believe children pick up very easily and quickly.” Noting that these

young girls are most likely not out in the streets protesting toxic dumping in their neighborhoods – an activity that is typically associated with environmental justice – Elizabeth, like the others, felt that the kind of environmental justice service they are providing to the communities of Southeast Michigan is that of quality environmental education programming. This point was reinforced by Marjorie and Alyx’s observations that the environmental justice messages in the program came through trips like the one to D-Town Farms because these excursions allowed them to explore the environmental justice problem of food scarcity and food justice in their communities in a concrete way that was engaging and educational for the girls.

The notion that ECO Girls is not an environmental justice organization in the traditional sense brings us back to Tiya’s point that I quoted from earlier in this chapter that ECO Girls is oriented to fostering leadership and service rather than activism and advocacy. This point is important because the way she describes the work of ECO Girls departs significantly from how educators and activists have characterized environmental justice education. Although environmental justice education does indeed highlight leadership, and *may* incorporate service as part of the learning, what separates it from mainstream environmental education is its strong basis in advocacy and community organizing. The Laotian Organizing Project (LOP), for instance, which I described in Chapter Two, worked with Laotian girls in Richmond, California, to help them develop their leadership and community organizing skills. Preferring the term “organizing” to “programming,” LOP instilled an ethnic and race-based consciousness in the girls and taught them skills for analyzing power, organizing, and building community coalitions with the goal of bringing about change in their communities and accessing substantive citizenship rights. Similarly, HOPE for Girls (also discussed in Chapter Two), which was developed to address issues of reproductive health and justice in the Asian Pacific Islander

community in Oakland, California, worked with girls to develop educational and political campaigns to bring about change. Both organizations adopted a politicized citizenship for the girls rooted in challenging their exclusion from citizenship through public engagement.

For Tiya and her team, the goals of ECO Girls are much more open-ended. The purpose of ECO Girls, as she suggested, was not to advocate on any particular issue but rather to foster critical thinking with the hope that the girls will want to make positive changes in their lives and communities. As Tiya put it, “we want them to have the tools they need to be empowered to change the world for the better.”²⁰ Tiya used the “Meatless Mondays” as an example for how this approach is achieved in the program. For the meals served at events and during camp, ECO Girls often provided vegetarian-only meals, and while meat options were available to the girls on most days, they were not on the Monday. Elizabeth explained that ECO Girls is not trying “to press an agenda on the girls, to say ‘you must go out and do this.’ It’s more, ‘here are all the things going on,’ and then the girls decide.” The staff and volunteers used the vegetarian days to discuss the environmental impact of eating meat, and as Elizabeth put it, to suggest that girls eat more veggies, with the understanding that they will likely go on eating meat at home. Tiya explained that she and her team did not want to appear to be criticizing the girls and what their families do at home, and so their approach was to present vegetarianism as a “positive assertion” that the girls were doing something good for the environment by giving up meat for a day. The goal then, is to empower girls with the information about food production and its environmental impact so that they can become critical thinkers and make their own decisions about what they are eating, which is a more individual rather than collective environmental intervention.

Although ECO Girls, as Marjorie and Alyx suggested through the example of D-Town Farms, does expose the girls to environmental justice activism in the community, it does not

cultivate the same kind of activist citizenships that one would find in environmental justice organizations, which articulate very public identities and forms of engagement for young people. Rather, the ECO Girls staff articulated girls as subjects who are the recipients of a service (environmental education). They emphasized how the girls are learning about critical thinking, community engagement, and leadership so that they can bring about changes in their communities in the future. In other words, they articulate the girls as citizens-in-the-making. As Elizabeth noted,

because they are so young, I don't know how much of the activism they're able to do...I feel like we're building our little roots and shoots to grow into environmental activists. I don't think at this age, unless they're literally, and some of them have been out marching with parents, protesting something like a toxic dump or you know...But for the most part, right now, they're at the stage where they're learning what it means and then from there they can take it wherever they choose to, and that's the beauty for me is, letting them make their own choice.

Because of their age, Elizabeth suggested that the girls are learners more than they are political activists, and that the program is building a foundation for them to take action on environmental issues in the future. Similarly, in reflecting about ECO Girls and its program goals, Zakiyah noted, "I think it serves the community in that it serves girls that are part of the community. It serves girls who would be leaders in their communities in the future."

The emphasis on girls' potential as *future* citizens and community leaders, embodied in these statements and in the program's STEM focus (e.g., in preparing girls for future careers in the sciences), depoliticizes girls' citizenships and replicates the hegemonic idea that girls are not political actors. By assuming that girls can only bring changes to their communities in the future when they are adults, they are assuming that girls right now are not capable of making meaningful change, or at least underestimating their potential as social actors. As Emily Bent notes, when the assumption is made that political participation is dependent on biological age,

the only option is for children to “grow up and become political subjects,” a problematic position which is based on adult notions of citizenship. As Bent again argues, the normative association between girls and the future or “*potential* political subjectivity” is also problematic because it undercuts the reality that girls are “already speaking, acting and resisting the conditions of their political marginalization.”²¹ In other words, even if the girls are not with their parents protesting a toxic dump, they still actively speak out and contest injustices in their lives.

I witnessed the girls’ speaking political subjectivities surface in the program during the field trip to Belle Isle, Detroit, during the 2013 summer camp. That morning on Belle Isle, we had visited the Dossin Great Lakes Museum and learned about the importance of water in Detroit’s early human settlements up until the present day. We finished at the museum, had lunch, and afterwards assembled on the grass in a circle, where Tiya, continuing on the theme of water, gave a short talk about the Underground Railroad and the importance of waterways for African Americans escaping slavery, the Pottawatomie First peoples who inhabited the island, as well as the European hog farmers who used it for agriculture after colonization. Tiya then asked the girls whether they had heard the current controversy about the island in the newspapers. Some did not, but two girls informed the group that the island was at risk of being sold to private developers to build, among other things, a for-profit amusement park.²² Tiya explained that the repercussions of selling the island to a private buyer would mean that this formerly public space would no longer be free and accessible for Detroiters. This news obviously created distress for several of the girls and they began talking out of turn. One of the staff members asked if they could raise their hands and assured them that they would each be given a chance to speak, and so their hands went up, eager to ask questions and contribute their thoughts about this news. What ensued was a debate about the merits of selling the island, of keeping this space public, and what

alternative measures could be applied to generate more money for the city to prevent the impending sale.

This debate was not planned by the staff, but organically grew out of Tiya's talk and subsequently, from the girls' discovery (and worry) that their access to this public space was in jeopardy. This example shows that girls are deeply concerned about their community and that the policy decisions of adults do have deep impacts in their lives. It also highlights how girls' voices are not often considered when important political decisions are made about city spaces. This debate could have provided fertile ground for the ECO Girls who were passionate about this issue to head a campaign, or add their voices to an existing campaign, on preserving Belle Isle as public space. Because the issue was near and dear to several of the girls, their political engagement with it (beyond debate) could have altered the normative framework for thinking about girls' citizenships. It could have engendered in the girls and in policy makers the sense that girls' voices matter in policy decisions, that girls, too, are part of a democracy, and in fact that girls' participation in democracy is needed more than ever as the social rights of both adults and children are continuously being eroded under neoliberalism.²³ However, by associating the girls' political agency with the future, the staff positioned the girls through adult "hierarchical structures of age and gender," an experience that may be disempowering for many girls.²⁴

The age-based hierarchy that positioned girls as future political actors impacted program planning and implementation. In environmental justice organizations, adults typically play a mediating role in empowering the girls with the language and organizing skills to effect change, as both the Laotian Organizing Project and HOPE for Girls have done. The girls are the ones who collectively choose which issues are the most pressing in their communities and subsequently plan, organize, and execute their interventions. However, as LiLi observed, in ECO

Girls, “we’re doing it from the top”; in other words, it is the staff that make the curricular decisions. Tiya explained that in the beginnings of the program, the staff had discussions about “really having the girls think of themselves as the leaders in the organization,” but that intention got lost in the team’s focus on making events and the camps run smoothly.

Because it is the team that organizes the curriculum, and given that their focus is not on empowering girls as activists but rather on promoting service to the community and a green consciousness through multicultural environmental education, two distinct themes stood out in the girls’ narratives about the kind of education they receive in ECO Girls. The first is that ECO Girls promotes the practices of sustainable living and a consciousness of responsibility towards the environment, which, while important, presents a more de-politicized and regulatory approach to learning about the environment. Lela, for instance, told me how ECO Girls taught her about recycling and how it is important for sustainability: “Well, I learned about that it’s good to be re-useful, ‘cause if you don’t then the world would just have plastic and stuff all over, all the recycling all the things that you can recycle would be all in the river, all on the ground, and you can just recycle them and be resourceful.” Lela noted that learning about recycling was important for her because there are “things that you can recycle that I didn’t even know that you could recycle that now I know I can recycle. So, yeah. It helps me for what I need to do or what I know about, ‘cause usually I’ll just throw [disposable] plates and stuff in the garbage.”

In another focus group, Michonne articulated how the environmental learning in ECO Girls encouraged her to think critically about her environmental practices at home and how they can be improved to reduce her family’s carbon footprint:

I’m guilty of taking things for granted, but I am like trying, like me and my family, my whole family we’re like actually trying to like, erase our carbon footprint, because you know, uh, it’s pretty big right now! Because I know me personally, I like to go shopping a lot, but I don’t have a licence and I can’t drive,

so I'm putting that on my parents then, and they're going, and they're getting gas and they're taking me back and forth everywhere.

Michonne added that while she is vegetarian and tries to be environmentally friendly, she felt “guilty” about some of her consumption habits and how she was asking her parents to drive her all over the city, but was working to change her habits. Similarly, Shauna used the metaphor of a house to describe the sustainability values that she learned in ECO Girls. “You wanna live in a like a nice, clean place, sort of like...if you're inviting somebody to your house you don't keep trash everywhere, you try to be your polite...be polite try and clean up as best as possible and you um, just kind of what ECO girls is sending the message on, how to be you know, eco-friendly, and how to be, you know, just have a positive change in the earth.” While learning to “be green” is an important aspect of environmental consciousness, the fact that this point stood out the most for the girls suggests that they think of environmentalism primarily as a set of individual, private actions. The language that they use to describe their participation in these activities – that they feel guilty about their wastage, and being green is like being polite and friendly – gestures to the ways in which discourses about private consumption and the environment are enmeshed with learning “good” behaviour, something that young people are accustomed to learning in more hierarchical settings, such as the school.

Furthermore, what also differentiates ECO Girls from environmental justice organizations is that, in lieu of using an approach to community engagement that politicizes girls' citizenships through advocacy and activism, ECO Girls emphasizes service, which is a much more passive form of community engagement. Alyx noted that in ECO Girls, “we've tried to have not just an impact on the girls, but teaching the girls that it's important to serve their communities.” Tiya emphasized in fact that “having a commitment to bettering your community” is a core value that they relay to the girls in the program, and that it is something

that she does not feel they do enough, noting that she would like to see the girls participate in more service projects, such as a river cleanup and an invasive species removal. Alyx and Zakiyah described some of the service learning that the girls have done, which included making cards for the Children's Hospital for Valentines' Day, collecting non-perishables for a local food bank in Ann Arbor, planting trees for a Detroit nonprofit, and working in a community garden.

This message about the value of community engagement was not lost on the girls. The girls expressed how the program helped them develop an understanding that environmentalism and stewardship are about community participation. Taisha noted that "I actually liked planting trees. We planted trees for like this neighbourhood in Detroit and that was like really fun. It was hard work, and I was like aching and everything, but overall, like, outcome of it, I think that was really cool and really fun." While Taisha found satisfaction with the experience of planting trees with The Greening of Detroit, Shauna noted that while the planting they did at the farm near the botanical gardens was not her favourite activity, she still found meaning in it because "at least we're like, making a change at least helping out the plants and doing new things that we normally don't do on a daily basis, so I think it was pretty cool." Other girls used the language of care to describe their community engagement. Michonne felt that ECO Girls is an important program for the community because,

I think a lot of people just take it for granted, like the earth for granted and what we do to it. They don't really like sit and think about like, like what can we do to make it better, they just kind of like live there, you know, take advantage of it. But I think in ECO Girls it really teach you, you know, to take care of the earth because like, this is where you live and this is where you're gonna stay. You know, you should really take initiative with it also, like, you can't just do it by yourself. You have to be here and then you have, you know, spread the word or you have to, um, what's the word I'm looking for? You have to shout out to other people.

Kea similarly thought that ECO Girls' aim is to "build a connection to our natural environment so we can really understand and care about it, and influence those beliefs on other people." She spoke very articulately about how building a connection to nature is so important because, when "you build a connection to it, I mean, how can you ruin something that you really do love? I mean it's teaching us to kind of celebrate it and value it as the place that we inhabit that we can't ruin for our own sake." In describing their engagement with the community, the girls expressed how they thought that community engagement was a social experience that helped them to develop a relationship to place and a sense of responsibility to care for their environments.

The value of these kinds of environmental experiences cannot be understated, particularly because they assist girls with developing a relationship to place and a commitment to community, both of which are important foundations for civic-mindedness and environmental justice. At the same time, by focusing on leadership and service at the exclusion of youth-led advocacy and community organizing, the ECO Girls team articulates a citizenship for girls rooted in more private forms of environmental interventions and traditionally "feminine" forms of (public) engagement. As my discussion of GGC has shown, while leadership and service are forms of public engagement that historically provided women with access to the public sphere at a time when women were relegated to the private sphere, only articulating girls' citizenship through service and leadership reinforces a model of engagement based in the principles of community care and does not challenge girls' marginalization from politics. While ECO Girls' articulation of their future roles as community shapers exceeds the model of community care, by emphasizing only service and leadership, girls' participation is not defined outside the model of caring and they are not given sufficient opportunities to define how *they* want to engage with the environment and their community.

Despite the fact that ECO Girls articulates limited public identities for girls, its work, as I hope to have shown, is certainly political, as evidenced in the way that the staff encouraged the girls to analyze power and engage in social critique. Although Tiya noted that the staff and volunteers did not take an advocacy stance on any one issue to prevent the occurrence of contentious political debates about or outside ECO Girls, an approach which was rooted in their sensitivity to and respect for individual family cultures and practices, it would be oversimplifying things to say that the issues raised in ECO Girls did not give rise to controversial discussions.²⁵ Because ECO Girls examines the environment through an environmental justice lens, meaning through racial and class diversity and from the perspective of people whose experiences of the environment are marginalized, analyses of power and the politics of places are inevitable, and are in fact part of the program's goals to foster critical thinking.

In the 2013 camp, for instance, the girls were separated into groups and each was given a different article about an environmental problem that presented a "culture vs conservation" dilemma – in other words, an environmental problem where mainstream environmental sustainability goals clashed with cultural values and practices. The girls were asked to read their assigned article and then to give a short synopsis of their environmental problem aloud to the entire group and to mention some strategies that their group had discussed to possibly address it. LiLi was one of the facilitators in this activity and remembers that one of the articles was about moon bears:

In China one of the mystified animal products are moon bears, and they take the bile of the moon bear and put it in all sorts of traditional medicine, and I didn't want to just say [to the girls], "Ok, we should tell them to stop because this is an old, strange traditional tactic that's weird. Because we got them, because we would go in and say we might think, alright, we need to stop this practice because it hurts the bears...the bears are in cages all their lives. But we also came in and said [to the girls] well you know, if somebody came to the States and saw how we treated our animals in factory farms and that person happened to come from, let's

say India, and they do not eat meat, they don't even eat animal products like eggs, what would they think of our culture? So, we just kind of rattled their brain, got them to think about the difficulties and solutions.

The connection that the ECO Girls team draws between the inhumane practice of moon bear bile extraction in China and factory farming in the U.S. invites the girls to resist the stigmatizing discourses about China's treatment of animals and pushes them to critically think about the practices of factory farming at home and perhaps even reflect on their own involvement in this industry as consumers. It raises issues of power – of humans over animals, west over the east, and notions of “progress” over “tradition.” This example shows how ECO Girls does not shy away from exploring the power relations that structure places or evade discussions that can result in heated debate. It is in fact integral to the civic-mindedness that ECO Girls is attempting to instill in the girls. Even in the absence of a clear-cut position on the issue, the program, through activities such as this one, encourages the girls to think critically about environmental issues in ways that are dynamic and that take considerations of race, culture, and colonization into account.

Environmental justice and program access

A central goal of ECO Girls, as an organization that has environmental justice concerns at its center, is to reach low-income girls of colour by providing them with high quality educational programming. Tiya also noted that she hoped that ECO Girls could “be a really practical intervention into the lives of families who are struggling,” even if it is just for a day, a weekend, or a camp week, in providing quality child care and nutritious food for the girls to eat. Tiya, a parent herself, noted that she understands how difficult it is to manage child care and household responsibilities on the weekend and how expensive it is to hire someone to help her. So, Tiya

pointed out that ECO Girls provides a block of time in which the girls are taken care of, even if it is just three or five hours, so that a parent can go out and do their grocery shopping or run some other errands without having to pay for childcare. Tiya also explained that they ensure that the girls have a healthy lunch and snacks to alleviate food scarcity in the family for even just one day, and that they also send food home with the girls, as they did when they sent the girls home with apples after their visit to an orchard. Recognizing that everyday family responsibilities are made that much more difficult in low-income households, and that childcare is expensive and in many cases unaffordable, ECO Girls thus aims to provide working and low-income parents and their families with a little bit of reprieve.

This intervention is not only practical in the sense that it temporarily helps with childcare and food scarcity. Elizabeth, who has had extensive experience working in community programs in Detroit before coming to U of M, also noted how there is the educational piece to the program which helps working and low-income families who might not have as much time to invest in their children. Elizabeth suggested that,

the type of education that we try to provide with ECO Girls is something that I think is speaking to that sense of having the playing field be fair in terms of kids who don't always have active parents, and that's just a reality of our society these days. You know, finding new, creative ways to have the children be alert and aware of their environment, but also be able to become independent.

A core aspect of ECO Girls' environmental justice mandate is therefore to ensure that the program is creating access for low-income girls and girls of colour in urban areas with the hopes that, as Elizabeth put it, the program might help to level the playing field. Alyx similarly described how the program tries to facilitate access by providing scholarships to low-income girls to be able to participate in weekend events and in the camps:

I think that is one thing about ECO Girls that I've really liked is that we've made it financially accessible. And that we've, we have made a point of taking them places

where...there is, it's likely that they've never had a chance to go to before. I know during the camp and some events, I've heard many of the girls say "I've never done this" or "I've never been here" or "I've never had the chance to do this" and "this was awesome."

As Alyx pointed out, the scholarships opened the door for the girls to experience and learn new things that they might not have had otherwise.

However, while the scholarships create access for low-income girls, the ECO Girls staff and volunteers identified transportation as a barrier to some girls' participation in the program. Without an adequate mass transit system linking Detroit to Ann Arbor, many Detroit girls were unable to participate over the school year. During camp, however, far more Detroit girls were in attendance. Given that the camp lasts an entire work week (Monday-Friday) and is a sleepaway camp in which the girls are housed in a U of M dormitory, there is only one drop off and one pick up for Detroit parents to manage. The ECO Girls team had subsequently discussed a few potential strategies to make the program more accessible to the Detroit girls. One was to hold some meetings in Detroit, which ECO Girls typically does once a semester and which was met with success. The other was to arrange carpools or a bus to pick up the girls from Detroit to bring to the Ann Arbor meetings. However, this idea never came to fruition, according to Elizabeth, due to liability issues.

The program's inaccessibility for many Detroit girls during the school year means that the demographic is more weighted towards Ann Arbor children, which several ECO Girls staff and volunteers noted tend to be "university children," that is, the children of professors and therefore of a more privileged class demographic. During camp, however, the girls are much more diverse in terms of race and class, as more girls from Detroit and thus more girls of colour and girls from lower income families are able to attend. Because the organization has not been able to effectively reach girls from Detroit throughout the school year, some staff members and volunteers have suggested that the program was falling short of meeting one of its core goals.

Noting that the goal of the organization is “to reach out to the Detroit and Ypsilanti communities” and to “create more of a community feeling with Detroit,” LiLi noted that “I don’t really know how deep of an impact we had” in being able to reach that community. Marjorie also voiced these same concerns and noted how the transportation barrier is significant for children of low-income families in Detroit:

I think it’s reached its target population in part, but the economic divide more than anything between Ann Arbor and Detroit, or even Ypsilanti is so, *so* huge that you know, it’s, I don’t know what Tiya would say as to whether it’s, in her own goals for who ECO Girls should be reaching, whether that’s been possible, but when you don’t have gas to drive your child somewhere or you’re working two jobs and you don’t have flexibility on a Saturday, even get you from point A to point B and you asked a friend but that friend’s car’s broken down, I mean these things happen every day if you’re poor.

The program’s environmental justice goals are compromised when there are barriers that prevent girls from participating in the program. Meeting low-income girls’ transportation needs, however, is no easy task when there is an absence of good transportation infrastructure and a shortage of funds within the program to pay for additional transportation costs.

The dilemmas of program funding

The transportation problems in ECO Girls are connected to its funding problems. In 2013, ECO Girls had to cut its school year events down from twice a semester to only once, and the 2014 camp was cancelled entirely (and has not been offered since at the time of this writing). When Tiya founded ECO Girls, funding came from a few different sources. The lion’s share came from Tiya herself from the MacArthur Award that she received in 2011 and from her faculty research account that provides a certain allotment of funds to each professor through their affiliate departments. In addition to her own funds, Tiya was awarded a grant of \$20,000 from the School of Education at U of M, which she noted was one of the most important pieces of funding for the

program because it was the first and it was what got it up and running. A few other funding sources included the Michigan Humanities Council, which contributed \$7,000, the American Association of University Women, with its contribution of \$10,000, and two other organizations called Young Women for Change and The Women's Alumni Group, the latter which made a donation of \$10,000. However, as Tiya noted, the bulk of the funds has been her own funding which she had been contributing as a faculty member. As a result, Tiya confided that "our funding model right now is not sustainable." As she explained, a program like ECO Girls needs about \$75,000-100,000 a year to operate, and while Tiya has been successful in securing grants, it has been difficult to locate a source of funding that will cover salaries for staff. She is unable to hire anyone full-time and therefore "it's really hard to keep people who are really skilled and passionate, if you can't actually pay them so that they can be at their job." In ECO Girls' case, their funders mostly cover expenses such as food, activities and supplies.

Another layer to ECO Girls' funding problems is that much-needed funds are allocated to scholarships and to other freebies that are given away to the girls. Tiya observed that it is a goal of theirs to make the program affordable so that "people wouldn't feel there was a barrier," so ECO Girls has offered scholarships and has made arrangements with some of the parents so that fees are paid on a sliding scale. A full day event, for instance, costs about \$20, which Tiya observed is affordable because it gives the girls access to a day of quality programming and includes healthy snacks and a lunch. A problem, however, with the sliding scale fee payment system was that some parents were not paying. Tiya recalled how,

at one point we tried to remind parents, but if you can't pay we hope that you won't pay. And what happened was, one of the girls who I mentioned to you who had been with the program at first, an African-American girl, you know, in a struggling household, her mom said she wouldn't be coming anymore. So, I asked Zakiyah to call her back, let's find out what happened, and her mom said that she couldn't pay. And so even just bringing up the financial issue made her mom feel like, I can't do this anymore. So, we

really pushed this, said please bring her, don't worry and she did bring her back. She brought her back at that time, but it shows how sensitive that topic is. So, I've tended to lean toward, ok, we'll figure it out. We want to have the girls in the program continue. But what that means is we are usually operating with a budget that's in the red. And I'm usually scrambling afterward to try to, you know, get things square.

Balancing the program's need to sustain itself on a modest budget while still meeting its environmental justice goals is a difficult feat. Because ECO Girls is a small organization with a relatively small operating budget, the loss of income from parents unable to pay the tuition impacts the program.

However, as an environmental justice organization that has the goal of reaching girls of colour and low-income girls, tuition breaks either through non-payment or reduced fees is necessary. When girls register for ECO Girls, their parents are asked to fill out a form and there is a place on the application to indicate their household income. It is through the household income that the staff determine which girls are in financial need and require a reduced fee. According to Tiya, between half and two-thirds of the girls who attended camp in 2013 were considered to be in financial need and therefore eligible to have reduced fees, which reinforces the fact that there is a high need for organizations like ECO Girls that can help address issues of income inequality. Tiya suggested that there has been some attrition in the organization and that in one case at least, it had to do with the reality that a girl's family was unable to afford even a reduced tuition fee. Raising the issue of tuition fee non-payment is uncomfortable not only for the organizers but also for the low-income families. As poverty can often be a point of embarrassment for low-income families, a system in which staff are sending out reminders about payment might in some circumstances create a heightened sense of marginalization for the families. Tiya noted that it is her and her team's mandate that "if you can't pay we hope that you won't pay," and their efforts to enrol a substantial number of low-income girls into the program points

to ECO Girls' success in achieving their environmental justice goals of serving girls from low-income communities. However, those goals may be improved further by establishing a registration process in which low-income parents do not need to be asked for payment in the event that they are unable to pay.

The funding constraints also put internal pressures on the staff and volunteers in the program. While the staff have designated roles, the fact that they are part-time and that ECO Girls is still a young organization working out the logistics of how it will operate on limited funds means that key staff members are given a wide range of responsibilities. Marjorie thought that the program lacked some necessary resources that could raise the profile of the organization and make it more sustainable:

if ECO Girls were able to continue when you look five years forwards, you'd like to think that there were some stronger mechanisms in place both for...Tiya said the outreach for this particular event yesterday was much more aggressive and extended than for lots of events, so I just think it's a relatively new and struggling organization with a lot of potential but without the resources and even the organizational expertise in the core staff who are great at what they do, but they can't do it all.

Marjorie's suggestion was that the organization is still young and that it requires more resources and dedicated staff to manage things like outreach and funding. Because ECO Girls does not have staff or volunteers dedicated to fundraising, the job of soliciting funds from community organizations was at one point distributed among several volunteers (including herself) who may have not been terribly comfortable in this role and for which there was not adequate follow-up regarding their efforts to solicit funds.

Tiya noted that the staffing constraints also impacted the organization's ability to respond to other organizations' requests to form community partnerships because "we just can't keep up with all the emails because we need more people. We need twelve hired people. We would need people who...we need people with a different skill set in different areas." Tiya attributed this

problem to the fact that the program is anchored in the university. As she observed, ECO Girls “depends so much on the people who work at the university,” which includes herself and other faculty members who have a lot going on with their coursework and faculty responsibilities. According to Tiya, “that makes it kind of a top-heavy organization that can be really difficult to keep alive when faculty and staff have other things to do in which we always, of course, do.” While ECO Girls does have dedicated staff for some of the organization’s functions, Marjorie’s point about how the core staff “can’t do it all,” and Tiya’s point that faculty are already burdened with heavy teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities suggest that ECO Girls would need dedicated and paid staff who could each focus on grant writing, outreach and promotion, teaching and education, all of which are key to the organization’s success.

Funding problems aside, ECO Girls demonstrates that there are immense benefits to being anchored in, or at the very least connected to a university, and especially an activist-oriented university like U of M. At the most basic level, Tiya was able to use her resources and connections through the university to get the program off the ground. Without the conferences, the toxic tour organized by MELDI, her access to quality research, and all of the other resources and intellectual exchanges that led to the idea of ECO Girls, Tiya may not have developed, or have found the support to build such a unique anti-racist environmental humanities project for girls. Furthermore, Tiya and Elizabeth were also able to build ECO Girls into three U of M courses that mutually benefited the students as well as the program by providing undergraduate students with leadership experience and ECO Girls with a pool of volunteers. ECO Girls did not appear to have any problems attracting a diverse team of volunteers that believed in the anti-racist and environmental justice vision of the organization and, the fact that many of them stayed on after completing the course suggests that they developed a personal commitment to this work.

Although the faculty members were strained, as Tiya suggested, this strain also created a greater willingness to distribute responsibilities. Subsequently, the ECO Girls team was more flexible, more collaborative, and less hierarchical in their approach to taking on different tasks and working with the girls. At program planning meetings, the core staff members encouraged the volunteers to take the lead in planning and facilitating activities, and in fact, they saw their unique individual skills and diverse cultural perspectives as an asset to the program.

Currently, however, ECO Girls' organizational model is not sustainable, and Tiya has not been able to find a way to make it sustainable in the long term. Since ECO Girls went dormant in 2014, only one other event has been held since, an Earth Day event in 2016. Tiya noted that she has been contemplating different models that could make ECO Girls viable. One would be to run it through an undergraduate course, whereby students would dedicate their time to it for credit; to pass ECO Girls off to another entity, such as the Natural History Museum in Ann Arbor that already has infrastructure in place for out-of-school programs; to apply to a large grant that could guarantee funding for a fixed number of years; or to convert ECO Girls into a student club run by undergraduates who would volunteer their time to running the program. Many of these possibilities raise possible problems: would the Museum of Natural History or the undergraduate students maintain ECO girls' environmental justice, gender, anti-racist and diversity focus? Would a grantee impose limitations on the scope of ECO Girls? Would undergraduate students volunteering their time to running the organization have the time and commitment necessary to deliver the same kind of quality education ECO Girls has provided? These questions do not have straightforward answers, but they do raise the difficult question of the future of ECO Girls and the place of environmental justice therein.

Conclusion

In examining the environment through an environmental justice lens that considers how places and ecologies are shaped by the human and more-than human worlds, ECO Girls opens space for an environmentalism to which girls of diverse race and class positions can connect. ECO Girls exposes young women of diverse identities to one another to facilitate cultural exchange and contribute to undoing patterns of inequality, like racism and segregation, that separate them. Further, it also exposes them to strong women of colour and community leaders who are environmentalists to challenge their exclusion from mainstream environmentalism and environmental education and to expand the range of issues that are considered environmental. Through its activities that take girls into community farms, greening projects, or in its arts-based activities that explore the intersections between diverse human cultures and the environment, ECO Girls invites the girls to think about the environment through knowledges that disrupt the hegemonic position of Eurocentric science and western environmentalism, and to assert their right to access and define it.

Because it politicizes race and class through an environmental justice lens and has a keen interest in exploring issues of identity and difference among the girls, ECO Girls distinguishes itself from other girl empowerment programs. Unlike traditional models of education that attempt to discipline girls to conform to a white, middle-class ideal of civility, ECO Girls approaches girls through an anti-racist lens that does not stigmatize them but rather encourages their diverse ways of expressing themselves, which are facilitated through the program's multicultural curriculum and pedagogy. At the same time, ECO Girls, like the other two organizations in this research, demonstrates that it is difficult to politicize girls' citizenships within a larger social context that depoliticizes them. While ECO Girls certainly challenges the race, class, and gender-based marginalization of low-income girls of colour, it does not politicize

their citizenships and in fact articulates their identities as citizens-in-the-making, which creates an age hierarchy. Rather than politicize girls' citizenships as the environmental justice movement does in its community organizing with youth, ECO Girls encourages civic-mindedness and has an open-ended vision for community transformation that involves girls' participation, in the future when they are women, as community leaders, innovators, and planners. Although ECO Girls has a vision for social transformation, by defining citizenship in this way, it does not ultimately provide space to challenge girls' marginalization from citizenship in the current moment or give them a place at the table in the "adult" realm of democratic deliberation and participation.

ECO Girls' funding difficulties point to the reality that small organizations for girls are underfunded, but that this problem is particularly pertinent for organizations like ECO Girls that do not perpetuate dominant white and middle-class narratives of low-income-girls-of-colour-in-need-of-saving. At this moment, ECO Girls' future hangs in the balance, and the challenge remains for Tiya and her team to find a community partner or develop a new organizational model that can support the vision for justice and diversity through which ECO Girls was founded.

CONCLUSION

Power, Not Programs? The Possibilities of Citizenship in Girls' Environmental Programs

When I began this research, I set out to explore how environmental organizations for girls can intervene into environmental education by considering girls' gendered citizenships. I argued that in environmental education, girls' gendered experiences are missing, which is an effect of the field's long history of treating young people as homogenous citizens unburdened by oppression, and of not considering the social dimensions – and inequalities – of environmental problems. Further, I argued that girls experience a multitude of oppressions, many of which have environmental dimensions. Girls are subjected to age-based oppressions in their treatment by adults as citizens-in-the-making, and in a sexist society they are vulnerable to gender-based violence. Many girls experience not only sexism, but also racism, poverty, and class-based oppression, homophobia, heterosexism, ableism, and other forms of exclusion based on ethnicity and citizenship status. In light of the silence in environmental education vis-à-vis girls' gendered experiences of the environment, I set out to explore what environmental education organizations for girls might have to say about girls' experiences and how they might broaden and deepen the field. Because organizations for girls are most often rooted in a concern for girls' social exclusion, I wanted to know whether environmentally-based organizations for girls might make environmental education more receptive to thinking about social exclusion and justice.

Through her research with Black girls, Ruth Nicole Brown reflected on how, echoing the words of State Senator Nia Gill, “young people need power, not programs.” As Brown goes on to argue, “programming for programming's sake attempts to manage young people's lives,” and “programming for programming's sake defines young people as the problem.”¹ Programs, in short, have not always been good at empowering young people as citizens for democracy and

social change. In this research, I shared Brown's concern for the regulatory function of programs, which was reflected in my critique of environmental education and empowerment programs for girls. While I am not prepared to do away with the idea of programs for girls – a position I think many socially-critical service providers, teachers, and activists would support – I strongly agree with Brown that the hierarchical institutional structure and the pedagogies associated with traditional programs are problematic. In addition to exploring how this research contributes to environmental education, in this concluding chapter, I will briefly discuss some of the tensions raised by the programs and the gaps that remain with the hope that my critical engagement with programs for girls might open a dialogue on how programming might better facilitate girls' access to power.

Gendered and justice interventions in environmental education

The three programs in this research present a few different models for how gender concerns can be integrated into environmental education. GGC, which was the oldest organization of the three, presented a model for gendered citizenship rooted in a Canadian environmental identity and transnational citizenship for girls that is attuned to global gender inequalities. Part of a global Guiding movement that aimed to unite girls in a "sisterhood," GGC connected girls across borders to create a citizenship based in addressing global environmental and social issues, which also demonstrated some of the pitfalls of highlighting unity over difference. Green Girls, which is significantly different from GGC for its local specificity to New York City and its relatively short history, presented an environmental citizenship for low-income girls of colour that encouraged them to identify as scientists and stewards of their local communities. Green Girls strongly considered race and income/poverty as factors affecting girls' educational attainment

and access to higher education, particularly STEM, and therefore it used hands-on science and park stewardship to spark their interest in STEM. And lastly, ECO Girls, which was locally specific to Detroit and Ann Arbor and also served a high number of girls of colour and low-income girls, differed very much from Green Girls because it cultivated an environmental identity for girls rooted in a Black, multicultural, and feminist environmentalism. Recognizing that people of colour have been excluded from nature, and that girls particularly are not encouraged to enjoy or identify with science and the outdoors, ECO Girls explored the multicultural dimensions of environmentalism, including the work of environmental justice activists, so that girls can forge relationships to the environment and their communities.

Together, the organizations intervene into a purportedly gender “neutral” and male-dominated environmental education with their assertion that girls are excluded from the environmental sciences and discouraged from developing positive relationships to nature and the outdoors. They identified how girls’ gendering, their sexualisation/objectification, and the absence of positive representations of girls engaging with the environment create barriers to cultivating their environmental identities and to pursuing science academically and professionally. The programs all embraced a feminist critique of STEM that criticized the sexism and male dominance of the fields and the fact that the women working within STEM are marginalized, undervalued, and underpaid. Because of these gender inequalities, the three organizations in this study suggested that STEM is a feminist and environmental issue and that it is important for girls to gain access to these fields.

Green Girls and ECO Girls’ gender analyses of girls’ exclusion from the environment were also rooted in the understanding that this exclusion has important race and class dimensions. Green Girls and ECO Girls both highlighted how there are even fewer girls and

women of colour in STEM, and how low-income girls are not granted equal access to the sciences. Both programs, which drew on an environmental justice lens, suggested that race and income can determine the quality of education that girls receive, their personal health, the environmental health of their communities, their future career prospects, and their sense of entitlement to being outdoors. Subsequently, they work with predominantly low-income girls of colour from racially-segregated neighbourhoods. With the recognition that girls, and in the case of Green Girls and ECO Girls, low-income girls of colour, experience these different forms of exclusion, the programs advocated that a single-sex environment would enhance girls' opportunities to develop environmental identities, forge connections to the environment, and perhaps pursue STEM academically and professionally.

While the groups in this research did not use the language of reproductive health and justice to describe their work, they did address some issues relating to health which raise important considerations for environmental education. As Giovanna Di Chiro argues, reproductive justice, or reproductive freedom can mean a number of things. Although it traditionally has been defined as girls' and women's access to sexual health services and education, the right to have children and to be free from violence, a broader definition, such as the one that Di Chiro and the environmental justice movement offers, includes efforts to ensure the conditions for social wellbeing for communities, what she calls social reproduction. Social reproduction, she tells us, can mean the "the assurance of a liveable wage, affordable healthcare, decent education, breathable air, and clean water," among many other things.² ECO Girls, with its position that women "do most of the shopping in households," "decide how money is going to be spent," and "decide what items are going to be procured and how they're going to be used," articulated how women are often responsible for the social reproduction and health of their

families, a position which validated the work of the organization in exposing the girls to the conditions and to practices that could better support their health and the health of the environment. ECO Girls' and Green Girls' work involved exposing young women to public activities such as community organizing for food justice as well as more private ones relating to healthy food choices. Green Girls brought attention to the connections between the polluted environment in Long Island City and young women's health, and both programs suggested that low-income girls' access to quality education can potentially help them secure a living wage in the future. Even GGC, which is not an environmental justice program, raised important questions about the problem of violence against girls and women, and how many girls in the Global South lack access to the necessities of life (food and safe drinking water), education, healthcare, and menstrual supplies, all of which are critical for gender equality and their well-being.

Two important issues that the organizations did not address were gender identity and sexuality. While Green Girls did not mention sexuality and gender identity, ECO Girls provided a statement on its website indicating that "although geared toward encouraging girls to participate, all children from these areas [of Southeast Michigan] may apply to the program, regardless of gender," which is a vague reference that provides little insight into the program's position on trans girls and children who are gender non-conforming.³ GGC did recently release a statement on the inclusion of trans girls, but, as I discussed in Chapter Four, this statement means little if the organization is not actively organizing to address the social exclusion of trans girls and women in the program and in a largely transphobic public arena that erases the lives of trans people. This decision to issue a statement on trans girls' inclusion did not come without discussion and dissent, as evidenced on the organization's Facebook page in which members made transphobic and heterosexist comments.⁴

As such, by not addressing gender identity and sexuality, the organizations reproduced essentialized meanings of the category “girl,” which accompanied heteronormative assumptions about their sexuality. These assumptions were particularly evidenced in GGC, such as when one Guider in the Wychwood unit remarked, in defending GGC’s single-sex status, that she didn’t think that boys would be interested in doing some of the Guides’ badges like the fashion badge. I found that heterosexism largely went unchallenged in the program and was in fact encouraged by some of the Guiders, as evidenced in the “Advancement” night in which the girls from all ages in the Wychwood area, from Sparks to Rangers, celebrated their graduation at the end of the Guiding year. At the meeting, the Guiders of a Sparks unit (ages five to six) had the girls dress up as fairies in pink tutus and wings for their graduation to Brownies. Although heteronormativity was more visible in GGC, in all of the programs it went unchallenged, namely because they did not integrate gender and sexual diversity into the curriculum or expose the girls to people, events, and experiences that subverted essentialized gender and sexual identities.

Furthermore, the organizations also did not politicize disability. Neither Green Girls or ECO Girls mentioned girls with disabilities on their websites, and to my knowledge, did not incorporate activities touching on dis/ability in their program curriculum. GGC provided a statement of inclusion for girls with disabilities, and in fact its policy documents suggest that the organization makes serious efforts to ensure that girls of different abilities have access to the program. GGC was also the only program to incorporate disability into its program activities. However, as I discussed in Chapter Four, it does not politicize dis/ability and accessibility, as it problematically presents disability as a set of individual differences/challenges rather than a set of social processes that marginalize differently abled girls. Perhaps even more problematically, some of the curriculum documents that GGC has produced for exploring dis/ability reduces

disability to a set of games intended to provide opportunities for non-disabled girls to experience what it might be like to have a particular disability, and while the curriculum notes that it teaches girls to “take action for themselves or other persons with disabilities,” there is no mention of actions that girls can take in these documents.⁵ The service providers from each of the three organizations indicated that their organization did and would continue to accommodate girls with disabilities when a girl or a parent issued a request. Given that this approach puts responsibility onto individual girls, the service providers might consider taking a more proactive approach by ensuring that they are meeting in a space and doing activities that enable access for girls of different abilities.

All three of the organizations reported that they had girls enrol who had disabilities, but they suggested either that the request for accommodations required little, if any, structural changes to the program, or that they were not well-equipped for accommodating the girls. Alyx from ECO Girls, for instance, noted that they had several kinds of requests from girls, but that she was not sure “how effective we were since those kids didn’t stay. But I don’t know if that’s the reason that they stayed or if they left for other reasons.” As environmental justice scholars have pointed out, the social constructions of sexuality, gender, and dis/ability, and the marginalization that comes with the social exclusion linked to these categories of difference are important factors that determine our experiences of the environment.⁶ These issues should thus be important considerations for organizations that are concerned about girls’ environmental experiences and that politicize environmental issues in the lives of girls.

Individual empowerment and social transformation

I have also situated the organizations in this research within the recent and growing interest in girls' empowerment, and I argued that, for environmental organizations to “empower” girls, they must address the social inequalities that shape their lives and politicize them, exposing girls to the possibilities of full citizenship and social transformation – in other words, to justice. At the beginning of this research, I pointed out through the example of the work of environmental justice organizations with girls that this ideal is possible. In environmental justice organizations like HOPE for girls and AYA, caring adults created an environment for girls that invited them to engage in a social critique of power, challenge their marginalization, and organize on environmental justice issues that affect their lives and those of their communities, which challenge girls' exclusion and ensure that there is a next generation that will continue this environmental justice work.

This dissertation, however, has shown that the project of politicizing girls' citizenships is no easy task – and in some cases, perhaps not possible – to achieve within more traditional institutional settings. I argued that organizations typically relied on more individual approaches to empowerment, focusing on confidence and self-esteem, and were less likely to relinquish power and let the girls shape the focus of their environmental education. The words that the organizations in this dissertation used to describe girls' citizenships included leadership, citizenship, service, civic participation, and stewardship, which represented more top-down and passive forms of public engagement. Even ECO Girls, an organization facilitated by staff and volunteers who voiced anti-racist, environmental justice critiques of power, and who exposed girls to the radical work of grassroots environmental justice organizations in their communities, expressed worries about pushing a political agenda on the girls. The service providers felt more

comfortable describing their work as a form of multicultural environmental education that teaches social critique, leadership and civic engagement and empowers girls to make healthy choices. In all three organizations, the service providers were also more likely to position girls as citizens-in-the-making or future citizens, rather than citizens in their own right. In articulating their citizenships in this way, they distanced girls from the sphere of politics.

The more individual approaches to environmentalism in all three programs were encapsulated in their emphasis on STEM education, which I argued poses some problems. On the one hand, the programs rightly highlighted how girls and women are excluded from the STEM fields, and as Green Girls and ECO Girls demonstrated, this exclusion has important racial and class dimensions as well. STEM education is, as Robert Moses and Charles E. Cobb argue (see Chapter Five), a civil rights issue, particularly in the United States where low-income children of colour live in segregated neighbourhoods where education is gravely underfunded, which plays a significant part in streaming them into the unskilled workforce. Women historically, and particularly women of colour, also tend to be streamed into feminized sectors of employment that are not as well-compensated. By providing STEM education for girls, the programs open the possibility for girls to change the skilled workforce so that women of different abilities, races and class backgrounds have access to rewarding and well-paying careers.

On the other hand, STEM is most often depoliticized, and consequently, STEM education alone will be unlikely to address the other inequalities that affect girls' lives. Simply providing girls with educational opportunities, while ignoring the conditions for girls' exclusion, will not address the inequalities that create barriers to access and will not ensure that every girl will go on to study science and land a position in a STEM field. STEM, in fact, most often provides an avenue for individual success, as evidenced in GGC and Green Girls. As Claudia of Green Girls

noted, success in the STEM fields is about “excel[ling] in dominant society,” which can be more about individual success and conforming to the status quo than affecting the kinds of changes that transform other people’s lives. The fact that STEM can be so widely celebrated within (liberal feminist) empowerment organizations for girls and by the corporate sector is cause for concern. As education researchers Matthew Weinstein, David Blades, and Shannon Gleason argue, STEM education fits neatly into neoliberal capitalist market ideologies. Different social actors, from schools to governments and corporations, treat STEM as a form of social engineering that will produce the human labour and the capital necessary for corporate profit to ensure that first world nations remain competitive in the global economy. If the goal is to teach girls the skills and knowledge that will prepare them for success in the neoliberal economy, this education ultimately will not disrupt the social inequality and the human exploitation on which that economy subsists. As Weinstein, Blades, and Gleason suggest, educators might consider taking a more critical approach to STEM that “encourages students to be suspicious of and even critical of how science is used” to create a STEM agenda oriented to social justice and democracy.⁷

Although ECO Girls did not critique science, its empowerment curriculum based in environmental justice gestured towards the more radical potential of STEM for girls. While the empowerment work that was done on the ground in ECO Girls tended, like the other two organizations, to focus on girls’ individual interventions, such as helping the girls find their voices and an identity in STEM, it was also rooted in a politics of racial self-determination and oriented to community justice. ECO Girls, unlike the other two organizations, had racial and economic justice for low-income people of colour, and especially African-Americans in Southeast Michigan as a central outcome. As Tiya explained, the program was a direct response

to the race and economic injustices particularly in Detroit and her concerns about African Americans being a community that can sustain itself. While the staff and volunteers hoped that this education would benefit individual girls that they were serving, they also saw this education within the wider scope of benefiting and sustaining families and communities that are struggling in the wake of economic disinvestment. ECO Girls' empowerment program, measured against the empowerment of the other two organizations, therefore points to the ways in which empowerment can take different shapes and how the "meanings of empowerment differ greatly depending on the context and the individuals involved."⁸

The organizations in this research each suggested that female role models were critical for their work of girl empowerment. Role models were mobilized to provide the girls with positive representations of women who are like them or with whom they can identify to challenge gender, race, or class stereotypes. In Green Girls, for instance, some of the girls expressed their admiration for the staff members' scientific knowledge, which encouraged their interest in science study and opened their minds to the possibility of a career in the sciences. Role models can thus foster new "identities" for the girls. At the same time, this research also suggests that there are some potentially problematic power implications inherent in the concept of the role model. The notion of "role model" implies a relationship of power – of a woman who has reached a mark of success to which girls (who presumably haven't) can aspire. Brown describes this relationship in the context of Black girl empowerment programs as one that presents the "Black girl as empty vessel and Black woman as vintage wine."⁹ Power, in other words, is one-directional, oriented towards the girls who are positioned as the learners and emptied of (at least some) of their agency. This relationship of power is further complicated, as I argued in the Green Girls chapter, when the identities of the staff are different from and

privileged in relation to those of the girls. These power considerations raise questions about empowerment. If the goal of empowerment is to create the conditions for girls to access power, then what role can women, whether they define themselves as mentors, role models, or facilitators, play in making power less hierarchical and more horizontal in the organizations? What are the possibilities of empowerment if women were to position themselves as co-learners with the girls?

This research has also shown that the ways in which the organizations defined empowerment, agency, and girls' ecological citizenships was very much connected to, and sometimes limited by, the institutional structure within which the environmental programs for girls are embedded, the governance of those institutions, and their social context. GGC's white, Canadian, Western individualist, liberal pluralist, and transnational ecological citizenship rooted in global sisterhood, as discussed in Chapter Four, is a product of its history. GGC grew out of Britain's imperial expansion and, as such, it is shaped by European colonial ideologies about race, gender, and nation. Guiding today presents a "universalized" citizenship for Girl Guides across the world – a citizenship that is designed to appeal to all girls regardless of differences of race, class, religion, culture, or nation, but it is also a citizenship that assimilates girls. In the past, Guiding internationally celebrated girls' cultural/national "differences" while assimilating them into a white, British, middle-class, heterosexual and feminine citizenship that proposed to civilize and unite girls into one great international sisterhood. Today, GGC joins WAGGGS in advocating for an international standard for girls' rights while flattening out differences among girls and ignoring its own implication past and present in the colonialism and imperial expansion that is the source of many gender inequalities today.

GGC is not only a nation-wide program, it also has strong nationalist tendencies which encourage obedience and make social critique very difficult. The girls in the program participate in events like Remembrance Day and in rituals like singing the *O Canada*, and the same allegiance to nation is reproduced at the organizational level in which the organization founders, the Baden-Powells, are celebrated, and where membership is governed by a set of mandatory citizenship practices – the adherence to the by-laws, recitation of the Law and Promise, wearing of uniforms, accumulation of badges, participation in fundraising and in community service projects and international trips abroad. Although the Guiders could and did bring their interests and talents into the program, which gave the units their individuality, both the Wychwood Guides and Malvern Brownies units were very much governed by GGC's national policies, curriculum, and institutional structure.

Citizenship in GGC and in the Guiding movement more generally is also pre-determined by its long history of charitable service and volunteerism, which is strongly enmeshed with the organization's early history of relying on girls' and women's unpaid mother-labour, and linked to turn-of-the-century ideologies of heterosexual femininity and civility. Subsequently, GGC's long history, its national/imperial origins, the pride it takes in its traditions, in addition to its rigid hierarchical structure and resistance to critique, mean that citizenship is much more firmly defined than it is in the other two organizations in this research. While girls can and do occasionally develop their own service projects and find space to express their agency, there is little room to challenge, contest, or redefine the citizenship that the organization has carefully cultivated for over 100 years. As long as GGC resists self-reflection and critique regarding its implication in power and role in reproducing exclusion within the program, the organization is

unlikely to reach the goals that I have established in this project of environmental education for girls.

Green Girls' ecological citizenship for girls, when compared to GGC, is rooted in a greater awareness of poverty and its intersections with race. However, while Green Girls has articulated its race- and class-based environmental politics through the lens of environmental justice – namely, though girls' right to access green spaces and quality education – its program for girls' empowerment is based, in more recent years, in working with girls that it sees as “at risk” to introduce them to the skills for success that will help with educational attainment and open the possibility for employment in the STEM fields. As I argued in Chapter Five, Green Girls exposes girls to green spaces outside of their communities in a similar way that the Fresh Air Fund has to encourage them to identify with science and inspire them to become stewards of their local urban parks. The focus on park stewardship and educational success is rooted in a philanthropic lens that is the product of a combination of factors: City Park Foundation's (CPF) mission as a nonprofit organization to improve underfunded parks, the unique culture of wealth, elitism, and philanthropic giving in New York City, and the equally locally-specific nature of the private-public neoliberal governance of parks in NYC. As a private nonprofit, CPF relies on funding from corporate and private donors, and is governed by a Board of Trustees comprised of wealthy philanthropists and community leaders in the corporate, education, government, and nonprofit sectors who determine the agenda of empowerment and yet are far removed spatially and ideologically from the youth of colour and the girls that they serve with their programs.

This hierarchy of power is also reflected in the mostly white, middle-class staff members who create and administer CPF's education programs for youth, and who define the parameters for empowerment for the low-income youth and girls of colour based in white, middle-class,

ideals of uplift rather than a politics oriented to girls' racial self-determination and the empowerment of their communities. While the staff members insisted that the small size of the program allowed them to create space for girls to lead the way in shaping the program, it was the staff who made the curricular decisions, which did not, unlike ECO Girls, necessarily represent the perspectives or the concerns of low-income girls of colour and their communities, or promote their self-determination.

In a very different vein, ECO Girls' more radical approach to educating girls, rooted in the environmental humanities, Black environmentalisms, environmental justice, and an feminist intersectional analysis of identity, is very much linked to having been founded by a university professor and anchored within a university department. Tiya was able to use her knowledge and resources as a researcher, tenured professor, and as the chair of the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies (DAAS) to create a program that blended feminist and environmental justice academic theory and practice (praxis) in a community setting that responded to some of the needs of low-income girls of colour in Detroit and Ann Arbor. While ECO Girls was mostly an Ann Arbor organization geographically speaking, it was shaped by the race and class-based environmental politics of both Ann Arbor and Detroit and straddled these two disparate communities. The organization is also small and well-plugged into the community. It has an advisory board comprised of professors and community members from a wide range of fields who brought with them an interdisciplinary perspective, and some of whom research and organize on issues of environmental justice.

ECO Girls, however, is administered on the ground by staff and volunteers who work collaboratively, and together with the advisory board, they represented a racially-diverse group of people from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds, many of whom come

from or have worked with the communities they are serving. ECO Girls appeared to have a high retention rate for staff and volunteers because it invited their input in the regular planning and implementation of the program. Staff members and volunteers attended program meetings where they made decisions about the curriculum and where they were encouraged to contribute their skills and knowledge to the program by leading activities in their areas of expertise with the girls. The founder and program managers thus treated the other staff members and volunteers as valuable cultural resources.

Further, by anchoring the program in the department of DAAS and within three undergraduate courses, ECO Girls was also supported by undergraduate students who self-selected to volunteer their time to the organization because they supported its environmental justice, girl empowerment, and anti-racist mission. The course, which required the undergraduate students to turn in reflexive papers, provided checks and balances to ensure that they were engaging in thoughtful feminist praxis and therefore meeting the goals of the program. The downside to Tiya's decision to anchor ECO Girls within the university and to kickstart the organization using academic funds that were awarded to her, however, was that it made the program highly dependent on uncertain and unsustainable university resources, which is the reason that the program has gone into hibernation and faces a very uncertain future.

As Brown has shown in her work with SOLHOT, challenging power sometimes involves challenging institutional structures and forging new ways of relating that do not rely on old patterns of domination and oppression. This kind of work is not easy. It is not accidental that justice-based and anti-racist programs for girls such as ECO Girls, HOPE for Girls, LOP, and Girls Taking Green Roots (in Toronto) have either gone into hibernation or ceased to exist altogether. Securing funding and gaining public support can be very difficult when an

organization does not “fit” into the traditional program molds for girl empowerment, particularly if they challenge racism and poverty and other forms of exclusion. There are other programs for girls, however, that came to my attention during this research that warrant future investigation into what other organizations are doing to imagine more radical environmental futures for girls. One organization in particular, the Radical Monarchs, comes to mind.

In 2014, while I was conducting research for this dissertation, Anayvette Martinez and Marilyn Hollinquest founded Radical Monarchs (originally known as Radical Brownies) in Oakland, California. Displeased with the idea that her daughter wanted to join a Girl Scouts troop that was predominantly white and which she feared would not likely speak to her daughter’s experiences as a young woman of colour, Anayvette founded Radical Monarchs with her close friend Marilyn as a kind of spin-off of the Girl Scouts, for girls of colour ages eight to twelve. As in the Girl Scouts, the Radical Monarchs sport brown vests and earn badges, but with a radical twist: they wear berets that “pay homage to the Brown Berets and black panther movements,” the badges that they collect include topics such as “Black Lives Matter,” “Radical Pride,” “Environmental Justice,” and “Radical Beauty” and, rather than sell cookies and engage in service work, the girls organize and participate in social activism and political demonstrations promoting trans people’s rights, affordable housing, and disability justice, among other important causes.¹⁰ Anayvette recalls how she

dreamed about what a troop like that [would] look like beyond service learning or volunteering. What does it look like to actually be radical and to actually stand up for something, where she [her daughter] could build sisterhood with other young girls like her and have those connections. Because I made those connections but I made them much later. And so I thought about, what would it look like for an eight-year-old, a nine-year-old, ten-year-old to make those connections at such a younger age rather than have to wait for college.¹¹

Radical Monarchs, which Anayvette and Marilyn describe as an organization based in “*activism* organization for girls of color” and for which their “foundation is social justice,” challenges the

apolitical identity that empowerment organizations like the Girl Scouts ascribe to girls.¹² Its radical politics have in fact been threatening to some critics, including Fox News, which has accused the program of “exploiting” and “indoctrinating” the girls, and of turning them into “racists” for promoting Black Lives Matter and identifying with the Black Panther Party. On Twitter, others have suggested that Radical Monarchs is not “age-appropriate,” eliciting patronizing comments from some users suggesting that Girl Scouts are supposed to be selling cookies, not engaging in politics.¹³ These critics’ defensive responses to Radical Monarchs’ work with girls demonstrates the extent to which girls are depoliticized in countries like the United States. The kind of work that Radical Monarchs does, however, cannot be supported in an organization like the Girl Scouts. Anayvette and Marilyn, while borrowing some elements from the Girl Scouts, had to invent their own institutional structure for their radical and activist girls’ program to change the language of girls’ citizenships and to challenge hegemonic power.

If, as Brown suggests, girls need “power, not programs,” the programs in this research, to different degrees, show that they can do more to think more deeply about power, oppression, and marginalization in girls’ lives, not only to improve girls’ access to environmental education, but also to better “empower” them. It is my hope that this research has created an opening for dialogue with environmental education programs for girls to think about girls’ ecological citizenships, girls’ environments, the place and meanings of gender in environmental education, and the power/politics of environmentalism, social transformation, and democracy. Programs do not exist in isolation from one another – their existence and their emergence are a function of policy, research, and social movements that create the need for such programs. As environmental programs for girls continue to emerge and proliferate, there is fertile ground for them to engage

with one another and to challenge the conditions of girls' marginalization to create more just and democratic futures for girls.

Notes

Introduction

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- ³ UNESCO, *UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014: DESD at a Glance*, UNESCO, accessed December 11, 2015, unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001416/141629e.pdf.
- ⁴ Kathryn Blaze Baum and Tavia Grant, "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Toll 'Way Bigger' than 1,200: Minister," accessed April 7, 2017, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/toll-of-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-way-bigger-than-1200-minister/article28761649/>.
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- ⁷ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 234.
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- ¹⁰ Jessica K. Taft, "Girlhood in Action: Contemporary U.S. Girls' Organizations and the Public Sphere," *Girlhood Studies* 3, no. 2 (2010), 18-19, doi: 10.3167/ghs.2010.030202.
- ¹¹ Taft, "Girlhood in Action," 21
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 23.
- ¹³ Alex Latta, "Reading Environmental Justice as Citizenship: An Arendtian Perspective," Presentation, Annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association, Toronto, York University, June 2006.
- ¹⁴ Julian Agyeman, *Sustainable Communities and the Challenge of Environmental Justice* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 80-1.
- ¹⁵ David A. Gruenwald, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Critical Pedagogy of Place," *Educational Researcher* 32, no. 4 (2003): 6 ; Rebecca A. Martusewicz, Jeff Edmundson, and John Lupinacci, *EcoJustice Education: Towards Diverse, Democratic, and Sustainable Communities* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 22.
- ¹⁶ I am excluding interns here as Green Girls was the only organization with interns and while I did extend the invitation to be interviewed, none took me up on this offer.
- ¹⁷ Running-Grass, "Environmental Education for Environmental Justice: A Three Circles Perspective," *The Journal of Multicultural Environmental Education* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1995), 5.
- ¹⁸ Bronwyn Hayward, *Children, Citizenship and Environment: Nurturing a Democratic Imagination in a Changing World* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 113.
- ¹⁹ Daniel R. Faber and Deborah McCarthy, *Foundations for Social Change: Critical Perspectives on Philanthropy and Popular Movements* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 10.

Chapter One

- ¹ Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* (New York: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2005), 1.
- ² Louv cautioned that "nature deficit disorder" is "by no means a medical diagnosis," and noted that it was at the persuasion of his publisher that he included it in the book. Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 36.

³ Ibid., 36.

⁴ A few of the works discussed in this chapter in fact predate the publication of *Last Child in the Woods*. However, these works were not organized into any kind of movement and did not have as much visibility until Louv wrote about them. Further, the number of publications on children and nature has greatly increased after Louv's publication in 2005. Cheryl Charles, Richard Louv, Lee Bodner and Bill Guns, *Children and Nature 2008: A Report on the Movement to Reconnect Children to the Natural World*, accessed June 20, 2016, <http://www.childrenandnature.org/uploads/CNMovement.pdf>.

⁵ Throughout this chapter, I use the term the "New Nature Movement" to refer to this environmental movement founded by Richard Louv. In his writings, he uses both terms interchangeably. "Mission and Vision," Children & Nature Network, accessed June 10, 2016, <http://www.childrenandnature.org/about/>.

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¹¹ Sharon Wall, *The Nurture of Nature: Childhood, Antimodernism, and Ontario Summer Camps, 1920-55*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 5.

¹² Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921), *The Project Gutenberg*, accessed May 21, 2016, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22994/22994-h/22994-h.htm>.

¹³ Turner, *The Frontier in American History*.

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¹⁵ William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 77.

¹⁶ Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 16.

¹⁷ Ibid., 17.

¹⁸ Ibid., 64-65.

¹⁹ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, (Frogmore, St. Albans: Paladin, 1975), 18.

²⁰ Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 16.

²¹ Williams, *The Country and the City*, 22.

²² Ibid., 60.

²³ Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 2

²⁴ Ibid., 100-103.

²⁵ "Obese" and "obesity" are normative terms used by the Centre for Disease Control and by the New Nature Movement that perpetuate the stigmatization and oppression of people who identify as fat or are identified by others as such. In the next chapter I touch on feminist critiques of the discourses of "obesity" in contemporary environmentalism and their stigmatizing effects. Ibid., 47.

²⁶ Joe L. Frost. *A History of Children's Play and Play Environments: Toward a Contemporary Child-Saving Movement* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 2.

²⁷ Frost, *History of Children's Play*, 239.

²⁸ Robert Michael Pyle, "Eden in a Vacant Lot: Special Places, Species, and Kids in the Neighborhood of Life," in *Children and Nature: Psychological, Sociocultural, and Evolutionary Investigations*, ed. Peter H. Kahn Jr. and Stephen R. Kellert (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2002), 317.

²⁹ Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 123.

³⁰ Ibid., 27-29.

³¹ Frost, *A History of Children's Play*, 6.

³² Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 204.

³³ Frost, *A History of Children's Play*, 230.

³⁴ David A. Sobel, "Beyond Ecophobia: Reclaiming the Heart in Nature Education," *Orion Magazine*, 1995, http://arts.envirolink.org/arts_and_education/DavidSobel1.html.

³⁵ Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 2.

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- ³⁶ Pyle, "Eden in a Vacant Lot," 306.
- ³⁷ Ibid, "Eden in a Vacant Lot," 321.
- ³⁸ Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 21.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 24.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 24.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 16.
- ⁴² Daniel C. Beard, *Shelters, Shacks and Shanties*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), *The Project Gutenberg*, accessed May 26, 2016, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/28255/28255-h/28255-h.htm>.
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- ⁴⁴ Richard Louv, *Childhood's Future*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 173-183.
- ⁴⁵ David Sobel, "Look, Don't Touch," *Orion Magazine*, 2012, accessed March 28, 2016. <https://orionmagazine.org/article/look-dont-touch1/>.
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- ⁴⁷ Ibid. Nabhan makes a similar argument in *Geography of Childhood*. See Gary Paul Nabhan and Stephen Trimble, *The Geography of Childhood: Why Children Need Wild Places* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 9.
- ⁴⁸ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 102.
- ⁴⁹ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 96.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 108-9.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 102.
- ⁵² Anthony Vidler, "Psychopathologies of Modern Space: Metropolitan Fear from Agoraphobia to Estrangement," in *Rediscovering History: Culture, Politics, and the Psyche*, ed. Michael S. Roth (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 11.
- ⁵³ Historians suggest that Darwin's ideas did not directly support recapitulation theory. However, John Morss suggests that recapitulation theory was consistent with Darwinism, and that Darwinism also legitimized racist thinking about the supposed superiority of white Europeans that forms the basis of recapitulation theory. He argues that while Darwin appeared to reject "recapitulation as an explanatory mechanism" for child development, he "arrived at conclusions which remained highly consistent with it" in his observations that some human beings of what he considered the "lower" order exhibited characteristics associated with children. John R. Morss, *The Biologising of Childhood: Developmental Psychology and the Darwinian Myth* (East Sussex, UK: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1990), 32, 15-16.
- ⁵⁴ Lesko. *Act Your Age!* 60. The meaning of "civilization" has changed over time, as Raymond Williams illustrates in *Keywords*. The term has been used to express the possession of manners, a historical process, as well as an achieved condition (modernity). As Gail Bederman argues in *Manliness and Civilization*, around 1890, at the time of G. Stanley Hall's writing, civilization "had taken on a very specific set of meanings which revolved around three factors: race, gender, and millennial assumptions about human evolutionary progress." It did not simply refer to an achieved condition (ie. industrialized society), but rather "a precise stage in human evolution—the one following the more primitive stages of "savagery" and "barbarism." Raymond Williams, *Keywords, A Vocabulary for Culture and Society*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 23-25. Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917*, Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1995, 25.
- ⁵⁵ Leslie Paris, *Children's Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 21.
- ⁵⁶ W. Barksdale Maynard, " 'An Ideal Life in the Woods for Boys': Architecture and Culture in the Earliest Summer Camps," *Winterthur Portfolio* 34.1 (Spring 1999): 22-3.
- ⁵⁷ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 107.
- ⁵⁸ Ann Wierda Rowland, *Romanticism and Childhood: The Infantilization of British Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 29.
- ⁵⁹ Rowland, *Romanticism and Childhood*, 57.
- ⁶⁰ Turner, *The Frontier in American History*.
- ⁶¹ Gary Paul Nabhan and Stephen Trimble, *The Geography of Childhood: Why Children Need Wild Places* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 7-10 ; Stephen R. Kellert, *Birthright: People and Nature in the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 134.
- ⁶² Pyle, "Eden in a Vacant Lot," 311-12.
- ⁶³ Rowland, *Romanticism and Childhood*, 42-3.
- ⁶⁴ Edward O. Wilson, *In Search of Nature* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1996), 166-167.
- ⁶⁵ Kellert, *Birthright: People and Nature*, 30.

- ⁶⁶ David Sobel, *Nature Preschools and Forest Kindergartens: The Handbook for Outdoor Learning*, (St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press, 2016), 202.
- ⁶⁷ Louv, *Childhood's Future*, 184.
- ⁶⁸ Although Louv dates the second frontier between 1893-1993, he argues that the second frontier actually ended with the end of the baby boomer generation born up until 1964. Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 19.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 123-24.
- ⁷⁰ Italics are mine. *Ibid.*, 102.
- ⁷¹ Morton White and Lucia White, *The Intellectual Versus the City, from Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 13-15.
- ⁷² Peter Boag, "Thinking Like Mount Rushmore: Sexuality and Gender in the Republican Landscape," in *Seeing Nature Through Gender*, ed. Virginia J Scharff, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 49.
- ⁷³ Maynard, "An Ideal Life," 17-8.
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- ⁷⁶ "Remember the Children, Fresh Air Fund Open," *Toronto Daily Star*, June 24, 1907, 1.
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- ⁸² Pyle, "Eden in a Vacant Lot," 319.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, 314.
- ⁸⁴ Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 148-150.
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- ⁸⁷ Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 225.
- ⁸⁸ Frost, *A History of Children's Play*, 81.
- ⁸⁹ Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, *Teaching Children Science: Hands-on Nature Study in North America, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 113.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 113.
- ⁹¹ Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 172.
- ⁹² Ruth A. Wilson, "Aesthetics and a Sense of Wonder," *Exchange Magazine*, 2010, <https://www.childcareexchange.com/library/5019324.pdf>.
- ⁹³ Sobel, "Beyond Ecophobia."
- ⁹⁴ Richard Louv, "Bring Down the Barriers: Five Causes of Nature-Deficit Disorder; Five Challenges for the New Nature Movement," *Richard Louv* (blog), September 13, 2013, <http://richardlouv.com/blog/bring-down-the-barriers-five-causes-of-nature-deficit-disorder-five-challenges/>. Kellert, *Birthright: People and Nature*, 83.
- ⁹⁵ Kellert, *Birthright: People and Nature*, 129.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 323-24.
- ⁹⁷ Frost, *A History of Children's Play*, 194-5.
- ⁹⁸ Kellert, *Birthright: People and Nature*, 157.
- ⁹⁹ Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, 284.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 280.
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 286.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 247.
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Chapter Two

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- ⁵ Rebecca Schild, "Environmental Citizenship: What can Political Theory Contribute to Environmental Education Practice?" *The Journal of Environmental Education* 47, no. 1 (2016), 25.
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- ²⁶ Sherilyn MacGregor, *Beyond Mothering Earth: Ecological Citizenship and the Politics of Care* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2006), 85.
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- ²⁸ Alex Latta, "Locating Democratic Politics in Ecological Citizenship," *Environmental Politics*, 13, no. 3 (2007): 380, doi:10.1080/09644010701251631.
- ²⁹ John Barry, "Resistance is Fertile: From Environmental to Sustainability Citizenship," in *Environmental Citizenship*, ed. Andrew Dobson and Derek Bell (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2006).
- ³⁰ Not to be confused with Republicanism in U.S. politics, the republicanism discussed by the Greens and other political theorists refers to the notion of protecting public space to enable citizens to participate in collective debate. John Barry's notion of republican environmental citizenship emphasizes an "explicit commitment to freedom" and working to uphold a "plurality in ways of life and views of the good." Republicanism in this sense is bound up in the language of "citizens doing their duty" and "defending the collective way of life of their free community." See MacGregor, *Beyond Mothering Earth*, 75 ; Barry, "Resistance is Fertile," 25-26.
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- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 384.
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- ³⁹ Richard Kahn and Brandy Humes, "Marching out from Ultima Thule: Critical Counterstories of Emancipatory Educators Working at the Intersection of Human Rights, Animal Rights, and Planetary Sustainability," *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 14 (2009): 180-181.
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⁵⁶ I refer to Tiya Miles throughout this dissertation by her first name in order to maintain consistency with the use of first names for the other participants. I recognize that calling Tiya by her first name breaks with the convention for academic writing, which is to refer to academics, who are knowledge producers, by their last names. However, I felt that it would be inconsistent and unfair to refer to Tiya by her last name while simultaneously referring to the rest of the participants by their first names. Furthermore, I recognize all of the participants, whether in a faculty position or not, as knowledge producers because they are all agents in shaping the work of the organization.

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Chapter Five

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Chapter Six

¹ For Tiya, "culture" in the program means several things. It refers to her anti-racist approach to environmentalism which is rooted in an environmental justice politicization of race, class, and the environment. It is also based on her assumption that humans experience "nature" through "culture," which means that human accounts of nature are different based on their racialization (which intersects with class and gender) and that experiences of nature are constructed through creative human practices. As she explains, "people relate to nature through cultural values and stories—things that their families did or their communities cherished." Culture thus also refers to storytelling, artistic practice and other forms of creative expression.

² "Principles of Environmental Justice," *EJnet.org*, April 6, 1996, <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>.

³ A legacy of racialized patterns of settlement that forced black communities into low-lying, swampy areas of the city and a lack of government investment in public transportation at the expense of building highways for suburbs meant that many of New Orleans' poor and black residents lived in the areas most affected by the hurricane and lacked a means of transportation to flee the disaster zone. Morse, Reilly. *Environmental Justice Through the Eye of Hurricane Katrina. Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute* (Washington: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Inc., 2008).

⁴ An article in the Guardian by Brian Doucet and Drew Philp accurately argues that “ruin porn” is “based purely on aesthetics and is almost always devoid of people. Employing the mismatched spoils of history, ruin porn ignores and overwrites the voices of those who still call Detroit home. When its ruins are fetishised as art, these injustices are, at best, ignored, and, at worst, mimicked. They ignore the humanity of residents’ current struggles, while replicating the history that created them.” Brian Doucet and Drew Philp, “In Detroit ‘Ruin Porn’ Ignores the Voices of Those Who Still Call the City Home,” *The Guardian*, accessed March 19, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2016/feb/15/ruin-porn-detroit-photography-city-homes>.

⁵ Taylor, “Making Multicultural Environmental Education,” 3-4.

⁶ Tiya Miles, “ECO Girls Project,” accessed March 20, 2017, <http://tiyamiles.com/eco-girls-project/>.

⁷ Rachel Stein, *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice*, 3.

⁸ Sandilands, *The Good-Natured Feminist*, xix.

⁹ MacGregor, *Beyond Mothering Earth*, 8.

¹⁰ ECO Girls, as discussed in Chapter 3, has four curricular layers, which include: 1) connecting with the natural world; building confidence and community across cultures; 2) experiencing neighbouring wild places, communities and cities through different cultural lenses; acquiring knowledge about how natural systems work and how humans are connected to them; 3) learning useful skills, problem solving; and 4) developing a critical consciousness about consumption and waste production, about imagining creative alternatives through a range of cultural experiences that foster “stewardship, sustainable and resilient life habits,” and building community citizenship through participation and service. “Conceptual notes for an ECO Girls Curriculum,” ECO Girls, accessed March 20, 2017, <http://environmentforgirls.org/curriculum.php>.

¹¹ Movement Strategy Center, *Looking Forward: Youth Leading*, 1.

¹² It should be noted, however, that ECO Girls does not, to my knowledge, intentionally explore or politicize differences of sexuality and ability.

¹³ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. 1984 repr. (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 2007), 117.

¹⁴ Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 122-23.

¹⁵ Brown, *Black Girlhood Celebration*, 27.

¹⁶ Ruffin, *Black on Earth*, 3-4 ; 18.

¹⁷ Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces*, 17.

¹⁸ “A Walk in the Woods,” *ECO Girls*, accessed March 18, 2017, <http://environmentforgirls.org/events.php>.

¹⁹ Cadotte, Alyx, Nick Reo and Rachel Afi Quinn, “The Ecoregion,” *ECO Girls*, accessed March 18, 2017, <http://environmentforgirls.org/ecoregion.php>.

²⁰ “Growing up Green,” *LSA Magazine*, Spring 2011, 44, <https://issuu.com/lmagazine/docs/11spr-entiremag/46>.

²¹ Emily Bent, “The Boundaries of Girls’ Political Participation: A Critical Exploration of Girls’ Experiences as Delegates to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW),” *Global Studies of Childhood* 3, no. 2 (2013), 175, doi: 10.2304/gsch.2013.3.2.173.

²² The city of Detroit, with its financial distress, was considering selling Belle Isle to private investors in order to pay down some of its debts. Fortunately, while the city was under emergency management, Kevyn Orr struck a deal to lease it to the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the duration of 30 years. While this is certainly the better case scenario, this decision still generated considerable criticism from city council and residents alike who mourned the loss of a city asset and were unhappy with some of the changes instituted by the DNR.

²³ Bronwyn Hayward, *Children, Citizenship and Environment: Nurturing a Democratic Imagination in a Changing World*, (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012).

²⁴ Bent, “The Boundaries of Girls’ Political,” 174.

²⁵ As Tiya commented, “we did not want to include discussions that were so direct that they would feel like they were criticizing what people do in their families, [what] people do at home.” For instance, refer to p.330 for the discussion about vegetarian meals in ECO Girls.

Conclusion

¹ Brown, *Black Girlhood Celebration*, 26.

² Di Chiro, “Living Environmentalisms: Coalition Politics, 278.

³ “Apply,” ECO Girls, accessed March 17, 2017, <http://www.environmentforgirls.org/apply.php>.

⁴ Girl Guides of Canada’s Facebook page, last modified January 26, 2012, <https://www.facebook.com/GirlGuidesofCanada.GuidesduCanada/>.

⁵ Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada, *International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Breaking the Barriers: Accessibility for All*, 2015, https://www.girlguides.ca/WEB/Documents/GGC/programs/Instant-Meeting-IDPD_2015_Final.pdf.

⁶ See Stein's wonderful edited collection. Stein, *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice*.

⁷ Matthew Weinstein, David Blades, and Shannon C. Gleason, "Questioning Power: Deframing the STEM Discourse," *Canadian Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education* 16, no.2 (2016): 209, doi:10.1080/14926156.2016.1166294.

⁸ Brown, *Black Girlhood Celebration*, 49.

⁹ *Ibid.*, xv.

¹⁰ "FAQ," *Radical Monarchs*, accessed March 17, 2017, <http://radicalmonarchs.org/faq/>.

¹¹ *Radical Brownies*. Directed by Linda Goldstein Knowlton, *The Guardian* video, 21:00. January 6, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2017/jan/06/radical-brownies-berets-badges-and-social-justice-video>

¹² *Ibid.*, *Radical Brownies*.

¹³ *Ibid.*, *Radical Brownies*.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Call for Research Participants

Invitation to Green Girls to participate in a research study

Study Name: *From Environmental Citizenship to Environmental Justice: Girls and Environmental Education Programs in Urban Spaces*

To the Green Girls and their parents/guardians:

Some of you may know me already from my visit to the program in July 2013 during one of the weeks of the Green Girls Summer Institute. For those of you who might not know me, I am a PhD student who is doing a research study about girls' environmental organizations. This research involves learning about the Green Girls program and as the girls are an important source of information about the program, I would like to invite your daughter(s) to participate in my study. Participation is completely voluntary. If your daughter agrees to participate with your permission, I will interview her with a few other girls in "focus group" format and will record the interview with a voice recorder. The girls remain completely anonymous and all identifying information will be removed to protect their identities. Please find a description of the study below, along with my contact information, and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the study.

Researcher

Leyna Lowe

PhD Candidate, Graduate Program in Gender, Feminist, and Women's Studies
York University, Toronto

Description of Study

This qualitative study is part of my PhD research and explores environmentalist organizations for girls in urban areas. The central goals of this research are to examine how environmentalist organizations for girls understand nature and the environment, and how they open opportunities for girls to connect with environmentalism and their local human and non-human environments and communities. As girls can be connected to environmentalism in many ways (e.g., as environmental citizens, stewards, for self-empowerment, for social and environmental justice), this study examines which connections the organizations are making, the origins and meanings of these different connections, and how they address social and environmental justice. Furthermore, this study pays close attention to how organizations and their service providers understand gender, race, and class in the connections that they make between girls and the environment. Given that Canada and the United States both have long histories of

environmentalism and connecting girls with nature through programs like the Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, I am also interested in the relevance of these histories in shaping environmental programs for girls today.

This study will be based on five case studies of girls' environmental organizations, one of which I hope will be represented by Green Girls.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact Leyna Lowe by email (email address) or by phone (phone number).

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Service Providers

Study Name: From Environmental Citizenship to Environmental Justice: Girls and Environmental Education Programs in Urban Spaces

Name of researcher: Leyna Lowe

1. Do you consent to have this interview recorded?

Section 1. For participants who self-identify

If the participant wishes to be identified by her/his real name, the following questions will be asked:

1. What is your full name?
2. How long have you been involved with (organization name), and in what capacity?
3. How did you become interested in working with (organization name)?

Section 2. Interview questions for anonymous participants and participants who identify

4. How long have you been involved with (organization name), and in what capacity?

Section 3. All questions

a. Questions about the participant

5. What does environmentalism mean to you? Would you consider yourself environmentally-conscious or an environmentalist?
6. Do you think that environmentalism is relevant to girls' everyday lives?
7. Do you feel that there is a connection between environmentalism and racism? Gender? Class?

b. About the organization

8. What is the significance of the name "(organization name)?"
9. (if applicable) What can you tell me about the history of your organization? Where did it develop? By whom? For what purposes?
10. (if applicable) How do you think has (organization name) changed over time?
11. Can you tell me a bit about the girls that your organization serves?
- Where are they from? Are they tuition paying or on scholarship? What are their cultural backgrounds? Do you offer services for girls with disabilities?

12. How would you describe the kind of work that (organization name) does?
 - Would you describe it as environmentalist?
 - Feminist?
 - Is this work political?
13. What kinds of lessons about the environment does (organization name) teach?
14. Would you say that the arts and culture are important components of this organization?
15. Why girls?
16. What do you feel programs such as this one offers to girls? What do you think they are learning?
17. Does the organization ever address issues surrounding girls' bodies, sexual health or reproduction?
18. Do you think the program offers anything to the community?
19. Would you say that (organization name) has ties to any groups in the community (ie. artists, community centers, other girls' organizations like the Scouts or Guides, urban farms, community gardens, etc)?
 - If yes, which one(s)?
20. Training:
 - Are volunteers provided with any kind of training prior to volunteering?
 - Is there any effort to ensure that volunteers/staff are racially diverse (e.g. having women of color as leaders?)
21. Do you think there is a need in our cities for more organizations such as this one?
22. During your time working with (organization name), is there an activity, field trip, lesson, or moment that struck you as particularly significant or memorable?
 - Why was it particularly significant or memorable?

c. Theoretical questions

23. Do you think citizenship is an important element of what this organization does in its work with girls? I have a few questions relating to this:

- What does citizenship mean to you?
- Do you ever think of the girls you work with as citizens?
- Do you think the concept of citizenship is important to the organization and the work you do?
- Can you think of any examples of activities, fieldtrips, or workshops in the organization that had something to do with girls as environmental citizens?

24. Do you think environmental justice is an important element in the work this organization does with girls? I have a few questions relating to this:

- What does environmental justice mean to you?
- Do feel that the work you do with girls in (organization name) is about environmental justice?
- Can you think of any examples of activities, fieldtrips, or workshops in the organization that had something to do with environmental justice?

Appendix C: Focus Group Questions for Girls

Study Name: From Environmental Citizenship to Environmental Justice: Girls and Environmental Education Programs in Urban Spaces

Name of researcher: Leyna Lowe

Section a. On a specific activity

1. How long have you been a (Guide, ECO Girl, Green Girl) for?
2. Can you tell me about your most favorite activity that you have done while a (Guide/ECO girl/Green Girl)?
3. What did you learn from doing this activity?
4. How do you think this activity is connected to environmentalism? To human beings? To animals, plants and nature?
5. Do you think this activity is important?
6. Do you think your involvement in these activities has a positive impact on:
 - You?
 - Your community: e.g., your family, your neighborhood, your friends, your school?
 - The environment?
 - Animals, plants, nature?
7. Is this activity something that you have done before or would want to do again? Why or why not?
8. Are there any activities that you did not like as much or would not want to do again?
9. What do you like most about (organization name)? What makes you excited to come to the activities and camps?
10. Would you say that (organization name) is concerned about the environment and promotes environmental awareness?
11. After participating in (organization name), would you say you are interested in science and/or environmentalism?

Section b. On a field trip

1. Did you enjoy the activities that you did today at (location)?
2. What did you learn from going to (location)?
3. How do you think the things that you were doing at (location) are connected to environmentalism? To human beings? To other living beings?
5. Is this activity/field trip something that you have done before or would want to do again? Why or why not?

Appendix D: ECO Girls Recitation

Eco Girls Recitation

by Tayana Hardin

These words of reflection were written to help the Eco Girls focus our thoughts and gather a shared sense of purpose at the end of our time together.

We are grateful today for

Ourselves

Others

The earth

Let us remember the Five Pines to help

Ourselves

Others

The earth

Let us walk tall

Like the trees

Be strong

Like the stones

Be curious

Like the stream

And fly to our dreams

Like the birds

Until we meet again,

Let us love and respect

Ourselves

Others

The earth

Appendix E: Program Synopsis for Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada (GGC)

Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada (GGC)

The two Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada (GGC) units that participated in this research include the Wychwood Guides unit and the Malvern Brownies unit. I conducted participation observation, interviews, and focus groups with them between May 2014- June 2015.

The Wychwood unit is located in the heart of Toronto in the neighbourhood of Wychwood. The unit consists of thirty girls, ages nine to eleven, who come from predominantly white and middle-class backgrounds. Because this unit is larger, it had a total of six Guiders who volunteer their time to the program. The Guiders who participated in this research include Loretta Ryan, Georgina Sigal, Amy (pseudonym), and Allye Vice, all of whom went through the program themselves as girls and consider themselves experienced Guiders. The Guiders were all white and ranged in age, the youngest of them in their twenties and the oldest in their fifties. Several Guiders also have full-time employment in the GGC in administrative positions, in addition to their volunteer work in the units.

The Wychwood Guides meet once a week during the school year in a church basement from 6:30-8pm. I interviewed a total number of thirteen girls from this unit in small focus groups.

The Malvern Brownies unit is located in Malvern, a neighbourhood in Scarborough in the northeast of the Greater Toronto Area. The unit is comprised of eight to twelve girls, ages seven to eight. This unit, unlike the Wychwood Guides, is much more racially and economically diverse, as more than half of the girls are Black and South Asian, and many are low income. Because this unit is smaller, it had but three Guiders, two of which participated in this study. Nikki Cahill, who is the main Guider, or Contact Guider, was responsible for managing the unit at the time of this research, and has years of experience volunteering as a Guider. The other Guider, Rini Ilango, who joined as a Guider three years ago, has no previous experience with the program. Rini is Indian and Nikki is white, and both are in their twenties.

The Malvern Brownies meet once a week during the school year in a school gym from 6:30-8pm. I interviewed a total number of six girls from this unit in small focus groups.

Appendix F: Program Synopsis for Green Girls

Green Girls

I conducted participation observation, interviews, and focus groups with the Green Girls staff and girls from June 2013- July 2014.

The Green Girls program was launched by the nonprofit City Parks Foundation in 2002. Green Girls serves a group of approximately thirty low-income girls of colour between the ages of ten to thirteen in Long Island City, Queens. The girls are racially diverse, with almost half identified as African-American (44 percent) and about a third Hispanic/Latina (33 percent). The remaining girls identify as Nepali, Caribbean-Chinese, white, Black-Latina, and Asian-white. As a group, the girls are mostly low income, and while many live in Long Island City, the program also pulls girls from other NYC boroughs. I interviewed a total of fourteen girls in small focus groups.

Green Girls runs a Summer Institute and an after-school program. The Summer Institute is offered once a year and runs for four weeks from the beginning to the end of June. The Institute takes place between Mondays to Thursdays from 9am to 3pm. A group of eight girls meets for the Green Girls after-school program during the school year (September-April) on alternating Fridays from 4:30-6:30pm. Both the Summer Institute and the after-school program are located at the Oliver Holmes IS 204 School in Long Island City, Queens.

The Green Girls' team is made up of four paid staff members hired to work in CPF's Department of Education, in addition to seasonal interns that are both undergraduate students and Green Girls alumnae. The staff and interns are hired and managed by the Director of Education (Debra Sue Lorenzen), who oversees Green Girls in addition to other City Parks Foundation youth education programs. The staff also split their time between City Parks Foundation's different education programs for youth, where they plan curriculum and teach. I interviewed a total of five staff members, including Debra Sue Lorenzen (Director of Education), Kaari Casey (staff member), Lindsay* (former staff member, *pseudonym), Claudia DeMegret (former Director of Education), and Danielle Rolli (former staff member). All of the staff members interviewed were white, with one indicating that she has an immigrant background, and were in their twenties, thirties, and forties.

Appendix G: Program Synopsis for ECO Girls

ECO Girls

I conducted participation observation, interviews, and focus groups with the ECO Girls staff and girls from June 2013- May 2014.

ECO Girls was founded in 2011 by Tiya Miles, a professor at the University of Michigan (U of M) and chair of the Department of AfroAmerican and African Studies (DAAS). The program, which typically meets on the U of M campus, serves a group of approximately thirty girls, ages seven to twelve, from the area of Southeast Michigan. The girls are ethnically and racially diverse with 57 percent of them identified as African/African American, 11 percent Afro Native, and 7.14 percent as Hispanic or Caucasian. Many of the girls are low income and come from the communities of Ann Arbor, Detroit, and Ypsilanti, and other areas of southeast Michigan.

Once a year, ECO Girls holds a week-long intensive summer camp in June, known as Camp Bluestem, in which the girls stay overnight from Monday to Friday in a U of M undergraduate student dormitory. ECO Girls also holds a single meeting every other month during the school year, typically on a Saturday, which lasts from three to six hours with the occasional overnight sleepover.

The organization is run and operated by a racially diverse group of staff members and volunteers. ECO Girls has three paid staff members, and the rest of the women involved in the program are unpaid volunteers or program administrators. The unpaid volunteers include faculty members and undergraduate students. A unique feature of this program is that it is built into three undergraduate courses, each belonging to the U of M departments of Sociology, DAAS, and Women's Studies, that are focused on community engagement and have a service learning component in which students gain experience working with a local community organization. A number of undergraduate volunteers come to ECO Girls through this channel, and they are supervised by Elizabeth James throughout their coursework.

I interviewed a total of six women in this research: Tiya Miles (program Founder and Director), Alyx Cadotte (Program and Camp Manager), Zakiyah Sayyed (Project Coordinator/Camp Director), Alexandra "LiLi" Passarelli (Program Co-Manager), Elizabeth James (Outreach Coordinator for DAAAS and Volunteer), and Majorie Horton (Volunteer, and Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Education at U of M). The staff members and volunteers identified as Black, Native American, Black and Native American, Asian-American, and White and ranged in age from their early twenties to their sixties. I interviewed a total of seven girls in small focus groups.

In 2014, ECO Girls went dormant after the Founder, Tiya, went on academic leave. ECO Girls has since only held one event, a meeting to celebrate Earth Day in April 2016, with no further activities planned.