

Provocative Innocence:
Deconstructing Youth Sexuality through a Patriarchal & Immanent Framework

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Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory study is to deconstruct dominant discourses of youth's sexuality through the exploration of a cultural text. Patriarchal and immanent frameworks form the theoretical basis for a deconstructive textual analysis and systematic mise en scène analysis of the chosen text, the film, *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003). I intend to explore the portrayal of youth sexuality by deconstructing discourses of sexuality that are simultaneously reflected and interrogated in the above mentioned media text. I have chosen this approach in order to deconstruct socially constructed ways of knowing and experiencing sexuality in order to uncover a multitude of possibilities for sexuality. In other words, this project will use deconstruction in order to reconceptualize sexuality.

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The purpose of this exploratory study is to deconstruct discourses of youth's sexuality through the exploration of a cultural text. Patriarchal and immanent frameworks form the theoretical basis for a deconstructive textual analysis and systematic *mise en scène* analysis of the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003).

My interest in the current research stems from a personal frustration with interactions and encounters with others where dominant discourses and/or judgments about youth seem to prevail in conversation and popular culture. As a young female academic I have also come to understand that North American perspectives of youth and their conduct, in general, are embedded within a patriarchal system that fosters inequality. In deconstructing sexual discourses it becomes evident that there is a multiplicity of sexual expressions that are not confined by the rigid constructions that have been created by dominant society for youth's sexuality.

Literature Review

This research project will accomplish its aims, first, by reviewing previous research in the area of youth sexuality and media; and secondly by collecting theoretical tools or frameworks and applying them as they fit with the topic of youth sexuality. This approach is consistent with Mark Seem's proposal in the introduction to *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) that in order for theory to construct new social arrangements, "theory must be... conceived as a toolbox, producing tools that work..." (Deleuze & Guattari, p. 22). Therefore, since the goal of this project is to re-conceptualize sexuality, it is imperative to begin with relevant theories that will assist in creating a new understanding of sexuality.

A large body of research has been conducted on popular culture and how it relates to

youth (Saukko, 2003). An example of this is the critique on discourses of female bodies that are often portrayed stereotypically in the media as sex objects (Saukko, 2003). The majority of research on media and teen sexuality addresses how media influences teen sexuality (Brown, 2002; Brown, Childers & Wasak, 1990; Durham, 1999; Pardun, L'Engle & Brown, 2005; Strasburger, 2005). A main theme within this research is the discussion of how the media acts as a socializing and pedagogical tool youth rely on for their understanding of sexuality and how this ultimately affects subsequent sexual conduct. Research in this area tends to draw on cultivation theory and cognitive social learning theory (Brown, 2002; Tolman et. al., 2007). For instance, research conducted by Durham (1999) explores the role of mass media on girls' socialization and the negotiation of sexuality, with emphasis on the social context of the peer group in which this socialization takes place. In order to conduct this research, Durham (1999) utilizes long-term participant analysis and in-depth interviews with girls and their teachers as her methods of analysis.

A second study by Pardun, L'Engle & Brown develops a measure called the Sexual Media Diet (SMD) to assess a youth's individual exposure to sexual content in media, based on a combination of media consumption and content. Their research claims a statistically significant association with adolescents' sexual activity and future motivations to be sexually active, with measures from the SMD.

On the other hand, research by Tolman, Kim, Schooler, and Sorsoli (2007) found that adolescent sexual behavior and feelings of sexual agency were not associated with viewing sexual talk and behavior on television, but were related to viewing the heterosexual script. The heterosexual script is defined as "...the dominant script in North American culture that defines what is culturally appropriate relational and sexual behavior for boys, girls, men and women"

(Tolman et. al., 2007, p. 84). This research also adheres to the perspective of media as a pedagogical tool. While acknowledging the important of this approach to media and teen sexuality, this thesis will address the topic from a different angle.

More in line with the approach of this thesis, other research has focused on deconstructing teen sexuality in film; in other words, how teen sexuality is represented or portrayed in film and television. Fleur Gabriel (2009) explores the discourse of ‘coming of age’ in order to examine the representation of young female sexuality in the films, *Lolita* and *Thirteen*. Gabriel (2009) works from a Derridean framework of deconstruction that is guided by a post-structural framework. Through media analysis Gabriel (2009) uncovers a conflict between, “...a desire to protect the innocence of youth and a demand that they ‘grow up’” (p.62). Giroux (1998) also notes this conflict by stating that youth are “lauded as a symbol of hope for the future while scorned as a threat to the existing social order, [and] youth have become objects of ambivalence caught between contradictory discourses and spaces of transition” (p. 25). Dominant constructions of sexuality are said to pose youth and their sexuality as ‘a problem’ (Gabriel, 2009; Giroux, 1998). Similar to the research I propose, Gabriel challenges the reader to realize that youth/age and sexuality are dominant constructs that require analysis and deconstruction in order to challenge rather than reproduce dominant conceptualizations of youth as victims, or as inherently vulnerable, innocent and asexual.

While Gabriel’s (2009) research presents many valid points there are some limitations. First, the research does not capture the entire complex process of the reproduction of dominant constructions. For instance, Gabriel (2009) claims, “...it is possible to respond to the perceived threat posed by media representations of sex and sexuality in relation to young people in a way that does not reproduce the conditions that produced the threat in the first place” (p.62). While I

do agree with this statement, I feel that there is a more complex process that includes ideological and immanent processes as well as an understanding that any media scene can both reflect yet simultaneously interrogate dominant discourses. In other words, the very same media representation that perpetuates a dominant construction may also be resisting such an interpretation and producing something new. This resistance might be termed immanence as creative force, a concept which I will explore later in this project.

Second, while Gabriel's (2009) research offers a promising start to the deconstruction of sexuality, it only focuses on the discourse of coming of age. There are multiple discourses directly relating to sexuality that are not included in Gabriel's (2009) analysis. For instance, Giroux (1998) outlines how youth have been portrayed in film from the 1950s to the 1990s. According to Giroux, youth are portrayed in film through dominant images of "...demonization, sexual decadence, and criminality..." (p.31). Like Gabriel, Giroux (1998) asserts that the modern construction of youth appears limited to the discourse of demonization whereby sexuality is defined as either commodified or problematic. This is even more interesting, as Giroux (1998) argues that mainstream film and advertising represent children's sexuality in such a way that resembles adult behaviors and privileges the adult male gaze.

In particular, Giroux (1998) analyzes the representations of teenage bodies in the 1995 Calvin Klein jean advertising campaign and the depiction of urban youth in Lary Clark's film, *Kids* (1995). Through deconstructive textual analysis, Giroux (1998) demonstrates how media functions pedagogically within a broader discourse of youth, and how these resonate with issues of sexuality, race and gender. Giroux (1998) critiques the process that both commodifies appropriations of stylized youthful bodies and/or deploys teenage sexuality as decadent and predatory. This research draws attention to the refusal of dominant representations to provide

images, ideas, narratives, and sites of struggle that challenge dominant perspectives and demand critical self-reflection, moral commitment and social responsibility from youth while also questioning its own authority and that of dominant ideologies.

An additional piece of scholarly work looks at the topic of youth sexuality in film. In the book entitled *Generation multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema*, Timothy Shary (2002) conducts a work of film criticism by viewing and analyzing hundreds of films using genre analysis to study the social representation of youth. Shary (2002) covers a wide range of social representations such as “youth and science: technology, computers and games”, “youth in school: academics and attitude, the portrayal of delinquent youth”, and most relevant to this proposal: “the representations of youth in love and having sex”.

Shary (2002) begins by providing a broad historical introduction of youth film beginning with a discussion of the construction of the distinct population referred to as “teenager” post-World War II. Shary (2002) discusses how the new ‘teen’ demographic emerges as a large consumer population and, later in the twentieth century, how movies are produced or created specifically for teen audiences and termed ‘teen pics’. Shary (2002) makes an important statement or observation that films address young people, but are not (usually) produced by them. Furthermore, Shary (2002) claims that films are filtered through adult perspectives that ultimately reinforce dominant discourses of youth and youth sexuality. He also explains how the negative discourses of youth act to reinforce power and ideology. In general, Shary (2002) provides an overview of teen film genres providing the reader with a ‘crash course’ or introduction to the major teen pics.

Research by Jessica Willis (2008) deconstructs youth sexuality in the film, *Juno*. Willis (2008) conducts a semiotic analysis of girlhood within the film, and argues that the film depicts

complex representations of female sexuality. According to Willis (2008), the girl figure in this representation signifies an amalgam of two traditionally dichotomized conceptions of “femininity.” Juno serves as a particularly intriguing example of the ways in which adolescent female sexuality is conceptualized within popular western culture during the early part of the 21st century. This research is significant in relation to my project as Willis (2008) explores the topic of childhood sexuality in film. However, my research differs in that it will focus more on youth sexuality than childhood or ‘girlhood’ sexuality.

An additional key scholar conducting film analysis on the topic of teen sexuality is Michaela Meyer (2003, 2009). Meyer (2009) conducts an analysis of the television series, *One Tree Hill*, a typical teen drama featured on Warner Brother’s television network. Meyer (2009) conducts a narrative reading of the female character, Anna, and presents the critical implications of her troubled representation. This research grounds its reading in observations about bisexuality, media representation and adolescent identity formation processes. In particular, Meyer’s (2009) research centers on teen sexuality in relation to ‘coming out’ or the process of identifying as homosexual or bisexual. Meyer’s (2009) critical analysis includes discussion of the intersections between race and sexuality similar to the goal of the current research project.

Another example of film analysis is an additional article written by Meyer (2003) entitled: “It’s me, I’m it. Defining Adolescent Sexual Identity through Relational Dialects in *Dawson’s Creek*”. As the title suggests, this research examines the usefulness of fictional television relationships for adolescent sexual identity formation as portrayed in the television series, *Dawson’s Creek*. Specifically, Meyer (2003) examines the construction of a gay character, Jack McPhee. Meyer (2003) finds Jack’s sexual identity to be constructed and modified through dialectical tensions in his relationship with Jen Lindley which allow him to express sexual

identity in terms of acceptance rather than in terms of political or legal rights. The difference in narrative form is discussed as highlighting potential differences between the formation of adult and adolescent sexual identity. This article draws on ethnographic work on gay men and their use of fictional media combined with a close reading of *Dawson's Creek* for sexual identity construction to argue that fictional representations could serve as a template from which gay adolescents enact personal relationships.

While the above studies explore the topic of sexuality, Deirdre Kelly and Shauna Pomerantz (2009) explore representations of girlhood in three acclaimed films: *Mean Girls*, *Thirteen*, and *Ghost World*. Their study explores discourses on girlhood to examine the current constructions of power made available to girls (Kelly & Pomerantz, 2009). From a post-modern, feminist perspective, Kelly & Pomerantz (2009) focus on the film's most obvious themes of girls as mean, girls as wild, and girls as alienated. The authors argue that the discursive formations embedded in these films work to naturalize negative behaviors as a normal part of girlhood and limit access to oppositional and feminist discourses.

As the above literature review demonstrates; there are a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to studying the relationship of popular culture and youth sexuality. It is the intention of this thesis to take a different theoretical approach to this topic. Consistent with several of the approaches above, I propose to deconstruct the discourses deployed in popular culture portrayals of youth sexuality. Theoretically, however, I intend to utilize frameworks of the philosophical concept of immanence and the psychoanalytic notion of the father law as the tools for my deconstructive exercise. Specifically, I intend to use these frameworks to deconstruct the discourses of youth sexuality in the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003). I am particularly interested in deconstructing dominant ways of knowing and experiencing sexuality.

To set the groundwork for this, I will now explore some of the dominant discourses in question.

Dominant Discourses of Sexuality

Discourses are culturally and historically specific and occur within the context of power relations (Macleod, 2002, p. 18). Discourse not only explains or describes, but also constructs knowledge and truth. This dominant knowledge or truth is internalized by the majority¹ and is considered to be common sense. However, in actuality, the ‘knowledge’ and ‘truths’ are social constructions influenced by the dominant class in an attempt to order our thoughts and behaviors. Discourses also overlap and contradict (Burr, 1995; Raby, 2002) which will become evident through the following discussion of discourses of youth sexuality.

Discourse and Sex, Sex Category, and Gender

Before getting into discourses of sexuality it may be useful to first discuss the concepts of sex, sex category, and gender, as they overlap in significant ways. West and Zimmerman (1987) provide some insight into the differences among the concepts sex, sex category, and gender. Sex is the classification of a person as either male or female, based on the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria. Sex category is the placement into the binary category of male/female through the application of the sex criteria. However, in everyday life, categorization is established and sustained by the socially required identification displays that declare one’s membership in one or the other category. Lastly, *gender* is the activity of conducting oneself in a manner that is consistent with normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

The assumption that sex equals gender is problematic. The dominant ordering of sex, sex category and gender attempts to reinforce compulsory heterosexuality. Dominant discourses are most often based on a binary construction that either adheres to or resists dominant constructions

¹ Please note that the majority is not inclusive and there are also alternative and subjugated discourses

of heteronormativity (Burr, 1995). According to Burr (1995), “heterosexuality is usually represented as normal, natural, and right, and homosexuality as perverted, unnatural and wrong (the two dichotomies are not synonymous, since some heterosexual practices are also seen as perversions” p.52).

However, Butler (1990) argues that gender, sex, and sexuality are culturally constructed and therefore, “...gender is neither the causal result of sex nor seemingly fixed as sex” (p. 6). Butler (1990) also suggests that the category of sex is constructed. Butler further asserts that, “sexuality is a historically specific organization of power, discourse, bodies and affectivity” (Butler, 1990, p.92). This quotation highlights the complexities that exist within sexuality as experienced by the individual while considering the societal influence of the dominant class. Judith Butler, commenting on the theories of Foucault, explains that the body becomes ‘sexed’ only once it has been subjected to discourses of sex as either a natural or essential sex (Butler, 1990). Davies (2003) provides support for this line of thought by stating, “...biologists have now found that genetic, hormonal and genital sex is not necessarily linked” (p.8). In other words, the body achieves meaning through discourses embedded in linguistic structures that occur in the context of power relations.

Discourse and feminist theories

Sex and sexuality are gendered concepts, and, as such, consideration of feminist theories and perspectives becomes relevant to the deconstruction of sexual discourse. There are many feminist perspectives. For the intents and purposes of this proposal a broad definition of feminism is adequate and may be defined as an approach to understanding how relations between women and men are constructed and how they may be changed (Cameron, 1992). One of the ways in which a concern with language² entered contemporary feminism was through the

² Language may be extended to discourse.

preoccupation of the early second wave with images or representations of women in cultural products (Cameron, 1992). The concern about language implicitly depended on a theory of how language works which rested on the notion of conditioning. Cameron (1992) explains the process of conditioning to mean, “if you are exposed repeatedly to stereotypes and distortions, you will come to believe them and take them for granted” (Cameron, 1992, p.6).

Third-wave feminism has come to represent an active process concerned with extending feminist gains beyond a second-wave agenda that was influenced by white and middle-class values (McRobbie, 2004). By building on the second wave, third-wave feminism adopts many second-wave ideals and applies them to current social and material conditions (Jensen, 2000). However, the third wave does differ from the second. The third-wave movement celebrates beauty, sexual power, and femininity, along with sexual difference and anti-hegemonic identities (Jensen, 2000). Third-wave feminism often draws on accounts of women’s lived experience and creates the impression of a singular women’s experience; that women face similar issues³ (Jensen, 2000). Similar to the second wave, this movement focuses on cultural critique. As Jensen (2000) explains, “feminism is everywhere in contemporary culture, just waiting to be acknowledged” (p.28). This assertion provides support for exploring and interrogating sexual discourses within the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003).

Post-feminism differs from third-wave feminism. It is imperative that I discuss post-feminism, since *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) is considered to be a classic post-feminist text (Kelly & Pomerantz, 2009). McRobbie (2004) argues that post-feminism suggests notions and experiences of freedom and choice have come to be closely associated with the category of young women, suggesting that feminism has aged and has become redundant, that it is no longer needed (McRobbie, 2004). This perspective seems representative of the majority of current

³ Although, some third wavers are aware of this tendency and are critical of a universalized women’s experience

attitudes toward sexual inequality and dominant sexual discourse as many young women have become disinterested in feminism (McRobbie, 2004). McRobbie (2004) offers a critique of post-feminism by stating that the female subject is, “despite her freedom, called upon to be silent, to withhold critique, to count as a modern sophisticated girl, or indeed this withholding of critique is a condition of her freedom” (McRobbie, 2004, p.260). In other words, young women believe that they are free and that they experience social equality between sexes; however, this is clearly not the case as sexism or sexist exploitation and portrayal persist. While young women continue to buy into a post-feminist mode of thought they remain distracted while dominant ideological representations and dominant structures of power are reinforced. Furthermore, challenges women endure are individualized even if they are actually based in structural inequality.

The film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) is a classic example of a post-feminist text. Kelly and Pomerantz (2009) argue that *Thirteen* (2003) limits girls’ struggles with sexuality to individualized problems, rather than structural ones. In many ways, *Thirteen* (2003) is a classic example of post-feminism because structural issues are ultimately reduced to individual problems that can be solved within the family (i.e. if the mother was only paying more attention, if the daughter could only think for herself). In describing *Thirteen* (2009) as presenting a taken-for-granted assumption of post-feminism, Kelly & Pomerantz (2009) state, “...girls are seen to be without politics and their problems are viewed as easily solvable if only they could get their individual acts together, and figure out things for themselves” (p.4). The work of McRobbie (2004), and Kelly and Pomerantz (2009) proposes that the issue of female subordination is not passé. This reading is very useful for this project in its interrogation of the dominant discourse of post-feminism imbedded in *Thirteen*.

Dominant Discourses of Youth Sexuality

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to discuss discourses of youth sexuality without acknowledging the discursive overlap with discourses regarding children and childhood. Indeed, childhood, adolescence and youth are overlapping yet distinct concepts. Each of these concepts is relevant within the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003). In *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) the boundaries of childhood, adolescence and youth become blurred as the characters in the film are represented as being 'thirteen' and, therefore, occupying the threshold between childhood and adolescence. In *Thirteen* (2003) the main characters are at times represented as innocent and child-like while also represented as adolescents at others. The following discussion will focus on dominant discourses of childhood and youth sexuality.

Children's sexuality to be protected.

A discourse that directly relates to the study of children and youth's sexuality is a discourse whereby child sexuality becomes something to be protected (Foucault, 1989). According to Foucault (1989), during the 18th Century, relationships between children and adults were reconceptualized. This reorganization was premised on the expectation that child and adult relationships must have strict and defined boundaries (Foucault, 1989). Within this discourse, childhood is viewed as something to be preserved and guarded as children represent the prosperity of future generations. These attitudes helped to construct a discourse of 'children's sexuality'. As Foucault states, "A specific 'children's sexuality' was established: it was precarious, dangerous, to be watched over constantly" (Foucault, 1989, p. 141). Foucault (1989) explains that this discourse led to the sexual mystery of childhood and adolescence where children's sexuality became a matter of importance and mystery.

James Kincaid's (1998) chapter, "Producing Erotic Children" in *The Children's Cultural Reader*, explains how the construction of children as innocent is closely linked to the

eroticization of children in North-American culture. Childhood innocence may be referenced by adjectives that describe the child as defenseless, dependent, mute, and pure. To this effect, adults must protect ‘innocent’ children from sex, sexuality, and sex predators in order to prevent the child’s pure innocent identity from becoming jeopardized.

This protection/isolation/special status of children seems to have led to an erotic centering of the child which causes the topic of childhood sexuality to be experienced as both ‘distressing’ and ‘titillating’. Kincaid (1998) explains that the attribute of innocence is becoming, “...a fulcrum for the nineteenth and twentieth century’s ambiguous construction of sexuality and sexual behavior” (p.247). Similarly, Kincaid (1998) states that purity or emptiness allows for the admirer to insert anything he or she desires into the vacancy. Furthermore, the reading repeatedly argues that children in our culture are defined, and longed for what they do not have, which is often associated with a universal conceptualization of the ‘child’ as, “bleached, bourgeois and androgynous” (Kincaid, 1998, p.248). This universal ideal conveniently distracts our society from the lived reality, diversity, and other issues, such as race, class, and gender. This political device also allows for distance from the viewer and erotic child subject which makes the enjoyment or voyeurism of the erotic child easier (nameless, faceless, and unrecognizable).

However, Kincaid (1998) explains that for the adult to conceptualize children as erotic is socially prohibited. Therefore, the erotic centering of children is redirected through media where adult voyeurism is satisfied. Of course, portrayals of erotic children are not always overt and messages are often embedded in cultural texts. The process I have outlined above seems quite ironic; for the construction of the ‘child’ as innocent leads to the production of the erotic child which threatens childhood innocence. On the other hand, one could argue that ideological social

constructions are social constructions of the dominant class, which upon closer examination are often contradictory (however, the purpose is to not have citizens notice or question dominant constructions but accept them).

Henry Jenkins' (1998) work complements that of Kincaid (1998) by providing a historical context for the shifting conception of children's minds and bodies in pre-and postwar child-rearing guides. Jenkins' carefully delineates the temporal and cultural shifts in the construction of sex and sexuality. The most significant shifts are the 'erotic containment' of post-World War I and the 1960 sexual revolution during the post-World War II period. Not surprisingly, these changes in the conceptualization and discourse of sexuality lead to direct shifts in the conceptualization of children's minds and bodies and informing how to best parent children.

Children and youth hyper-sexualized.

While the discourse of child sexuality as protected claims that children's sexuality is something to be concerned about and monitored, the discourse of children and youth as hyper-sexualized challenges this⁴. This psychoanalytic influenced discourse views children from the very beginning of life as sexually motivated (Foucault, 1989). For instance, Hatch (2002) explores the effect that the male adult gaze has on the child and draws on psychoanalytic theory to discuss the father figure/love object: the secure base in which young girls develop healthy sexuality. This contradicts the above discourse: child sexuality to be protected (Foucault, 1989) which asserts that relationships between children and adults must have strict and defined boundaries.

Within this discourse children's sexuality becomes natural and prevalent in every action

⁴ It is important to note that children still maintain some level of innocence; however youth being sexual often symbolizes a loss of innocence.

and thought a child may have. Foucault (1989) comments on this discourse by stating: “behind the desire to learn to read or the taste for comic strips, there is still and always will be sexuality” (p. 145). Often this discourse takes adult notions of socially constructed sexuality and assumes this is the same ‘sexuality’ children experience⁵.

While the psycho-analytic influenced discourse of children naturalizes child sexuality, theories conceptualizing teens as hyper-sexualized are quite different. G. Stanley Hall’s work from around 1904 contributed to the ‘discovery’ of the unique category or stage known as adolescence, considered to differ from childhood and adulthood (Côté & Allahar, 2006). Hall’s theories revolved around the ‘problems’ and ‘difficulties’ associated with the transition to adulthood (Côté & Allahar, 2006). Côté and Allahar (2006) explain that G. Stanley Hall’s theories are embedded within the discourse of youth as hyper-sexualized by stating, “...these ideas persist today, with many people believing that all adolescents are prone to often-uncontrollable biological impulses” (p. 3).

Hall’s work may also be paired with other developmental theories of brain development such as neuropsychology. These theories suggest that brain development occurs from back to front, with the frontal lobe developing last. Côté and Allahar (2006) elaborate on this research:

Most recently, medical technology has been used to attempt to map the human brain, and some researchers are attempting to argue that the ‘adolescent brain’ is different in significant ways from the ‘adult brain’. This line of research has led to statements like the following: “Simply put there is now biological evidence that adolescents do not have the same ability to make sound decisions and to prevent impulsive behavior” (Ortiz, 2003, Section 5, para 4 in Cote and Allahar, p. 17).

⁵ While this discourse often makes assumptions about child sexuality, Freud asserts that child sexuality is polymorphous compared to adult sexuality.

These theories and the above quotation have obvious implications when discussing adolescents as hyper-sexualized. Not only are adolescents seen to have raging hormones, but are also ill-equipped to make ‘sound’ or ‘safe’ decisions surrounding sexual conduct.

Furthermore, teens-as-hyper-sexualized is a gendered discourse: there are different ideas related to male and female sexuality. Within this discourse males are seen as being sexual predators: behavior that is often encouraged and approved of (Tolman, 2002). However, Tolman (2002) explains that females are seen as needing protection from boys while also being attractive for boys. The gender differences within the discourse of hyper-sexuality also reinforce heteronormativity. This gendered discourse of youth as hyper-sexualized will be re-considered in the deconstruction of youth sexuality through my reading of *Thirteen* (2003).

Sexuality as abstention.

An additional discourse that pertains to youth sexuality is that of abstention. Foucault (1985) explains that the discourse of abstention delineates that sexual activity is only permissible between married heterosexual couples, preferably for the purpose of procreation. The value system of this discourse is heavily influenced by traditional Christian traditions. An obsessive concern with “unproductive” and partner-less sexual activity is evident from the 18th century onward (Foucault, 1985). This is of historical significance as the 1700s mark the period of the scientific revolution where the Church’s teachings are threatened⁶. Furthermore, scientific progress leads to the discovery of seminal fluid which translates into concerns of wasted sperm and consequently loss of potential life (Foucault, 1985).

Therefore, within this discourse, those who are able to resist pleasure (especially pleasure that is considered to be partner-less and unproductive) and practice sexual restraint are celebrated

⁶ This is not the first time the Church’s teachings have been threatened (for instance the Renaissance period). However for the purposes of this discourse the scientific revolution marks a serious intellectual departure.

as virtuous heroes. These virtuous figures are said to be rewarded with a spiritual experience of love and truth that are absent in sexual experiences. This abstention also privileges them with a form of wisdom coming from a superior element that will afford them access to the essence of truth (Foucault, 1985).

The discourse of abstention is also commonly found in an approach to sex education known as “abstinence only” sex education. Abstinence-only messages teach youth that sex should be delayed until marriage, and discussion of birth control methods is usually limited to statements of ineffectiveness (Kohler et al, 2008; Trenholm, 2008; Pinkleton et al, 2008). These programs often fail to provide youth adequate information on sexual behavior, pregnancy, and HIV/STD prevention (Pinkleton et al, 2008).

This discourse is also gendered as there is more room for males to be sexual pre-marriage than there is for females, creating the double standard of player vs. slut (Tolman, 2002). More specifically, “...boys and girls are exposed to a set of rules, principles, and roles that are mapped out for the production of ‘normal’ heterosexual adolescent relationships, and sexual behavior, in which gender is the most salient factor” (Tolman, 2002, p.7). Tolman (2002) states:

Despite the incessant flow of sexual images and relationship advice, girls do not get many positive messages about their sexuality. They are barraged with an ever more confusing and contradictory set of guidelines for how they should manage their developing sexuality: don't be a prude but don't be a slut; have (or fake) orgasms to ensure that your boyfriend is not made to feel inadequate, if you want to keep him.

Ultimately, though subtly, the media continue to represent the belief that adolescent girls should be sexy for boys and not have their *own* sexual desires (p.7).

The discourse of sexual abstention as it relates to youth will also be deconstructed through the

examination of the film.

Dominant Discourses of Female Sexuality

In addition to deconstructing dominant discourses of youth sexuality, I will also be looking at a few dominant discourses of female sexuality and apply them to the youth context in the film. In other words, for the purpose of this project I am extending the discourse of ‘women’ as men’s property to all females in general to include female youth. The following section will discuss the discourses of women as men’s property and females as sexual objects.

Women as men’s property

Foucault (1989) outlines the discourse of women as men’s property by explaining that men view women as their exclusive property. This is linked to gendered understandings of abstention. In western society young women often experience a transition from dependency on the father figure to the husband figure (Kearney, 2002). This discourse prohibits women from having close relationships with other men. However, it is permissible for women to have physical relations with other women as this is less threatening to masculinity and male dominance (Foucault, 1989). Furthermore, this discourse claims that women can experience pleasure only if they perceive the male as their master and therefore requires that the male be present. This belief system partially explains why female bisexuality is considered more acceptable than male bisexuality. This discourse of sexuality will be deconstructed through the examination of texts in order to deconstruct youth sexuality

Females as sexual objects.

An additional discourse related to women as men’s property is women as sexual objects. Beginning in the period of antiquity, women experienced strict constraints dictated by a form of a male ethics (Foucault, 1985). This moral code views women as objects that men must

constantly train, educate and watch over or stay away from when under the power of another man (Foucault, 1985). By objectifying the woman as a sexual object many men (other than the woman's husband/father) may fantasize about the woman being their exclusive property. This is what relates the discourse of women as sexual objects to women as men's property. However, this discourse is dissimilar in that the women may be viewed by many men without belonging to anyone in particular.

Furthermore, throughout the work of Foucault it becomes evident that historically female sexuality appears to only exist in relation to male sexuality⁷. More specifically, Foucault (1985) explains that the ethics of a moral code discussed in the previous paragraph was a male ethics. Discussing the moral sexual code Foucault (1985) states:

... it [the moral code] did not try to define a field of conduct and a domain of valid rules—subject to the necessary modulations—for the two sexes in common; it was an elaboration of masculine conduct carried out from the viewpoint of men in order to give form to *their* behavior (p.23, italics added).

In the above quote, women may be considered to have been objectified by their exclusion, which by default insinuates that women do not have their own sexuality or that their experience of sexuality is less significant or only exists in relation or opposition to male sexuality.

In addition, Laura Mulvey offers a discussion of women portrayed as sexual objects on screen⁸. Mulvey (1975) explains how the act of looking itself may be pleasurable as well as masculinized. In particular, she outlines the concept scopophilia, which translates into the pleasure of looking. Drawing on Freud, Mulvey (1975) states that scopophilia may be considered as a component instinct of sexuality and can be associated with taking other people as objects

⁷ The same argument could be made for contemporary sexual relations.

⁸ I would like to acknowledge that men may also be sexually objectified but that this goes beyond the scope of this current project.

and subjecting them to a controlling and curious male gaze. Lastly, Mulvey (1975) describes the concept of “the look” as being a crucial part of traditional filmic pleasure. There are three different looks associated with cinema: the camera as it records the profilmic event, the audience as it watches the final product, and the characters as they look at each other within the screen illusion. Taken together, it becomes evident that in western cultures women are often viewed as sexual objects by both men and women (with a male gaze).

While Mulvey’s (1975) theory has merit, it has been heavily critiqued, even by Mulvey (1975) herself in “Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” in *Feminist Film Theory* (Mulvey, 1981). Mulvey’s (1975) theory is considered problematic as it does not account for 'feminine' enjoyment of cinema. Raunch culture (Levy, 2005) offers a critique of the male gaze and coincides with a post-feminist view of sexuality. Ariel Levy (2005) describes raunch culture as “a tawdry, tarty, cartoonlike version of female sexuality...” (p.5). Within this culture, the gaze is reclaimed by the female as willing participant and spectator. Within raunch culture, females are participating, consuming and enjoying sexual forms of entertainment that previously considered exclusively for a male audience. Levy states (2005):

Some version of a sexy, scantily clad temptress has been around through the ages, and there has always been a demand for smut. But this was once a guilty pleasure on the margins—on the almost entirely male margins. For a trend to penetrate political life, the music industry, art, fashion, and taste the way raunch culture has, it must be thoroughly mainstream, and half that mainstream is female. Both men and women alike seem to have developed a taste for kitschy, slutty stereotypes of female sexuality resurrected from an era not quite gone by. We don’t even think about it anymore, we just expect to see women flashing and stripping and groaning everywhere we look. (p.34)

In other words, raunch culture challenges the objectification of woman as a sexual objects. However, Levi (2005) warns that the freedom to be sexually provocative and promiscuous is not enough freedom, nor is it the only feminist issue. Raunch culture has allowed for a new role of the “lusty, busy, exhibitionist” (p.200). However, to be truly liberated within this discourse is to recognize that there is a range of options available for human desire (Levi, 2005).

Intersections of Race, Sex, and Gender Discourses

The previous discussion of discourse has so far centered on sexuality and gender. However now focus will shift to how these two social categories intersect with race. Race is a concept that is also a social construct and therefore considered to have no natural/inherent or biological meaning (Fields, 1990; Haney Lopez 2000; Roediger, 1991). As Ian F. Haney Lopez (2000) explains:

Races are categories of difference which exist only in society. They are produced by myriad conflicting social forces; they overlap and inform other social categories; they are fluid rather than static and fixed; and they make sense only in relation to other racial categories, having no meaningful independent existence. Race is socially constructed. (p.171)

However, while race is socially constructed and is not a concrete “thing” it is still imperative to acknowledge the real meanings and experiences that have been attached or associated with this concept (Roediger, 1991; Haney Lopez, 2000). Since races are categories of difference these categories become unequal especially as status and privilege are conferred by race (Roediger, 1991).

In, *The Wages of Whiteness*, Roediger (1991) explains that the 18th century definition of

“Freeman” implied either political or economic independence⁹. Therefore, it becomes clear that race is linked to class¹⁰ as one that does not own property cannot experience freedom. The implication here is that the ‘Freeman’ has an opposite: the slave (Roediger, 1991). At this time whiteness afforded some privileges. For instance, whites experiencing indentured servitude had greater protection, customs and terms of indentured servitude, recourse to magistrates, as well as an eventual end to bondage (Roediger, 2001). Therefore, those who lack this characteristic also lack the access to associated privileges. Often white Anglo-Saxon privilege leads to an illusion of an absence of race. However, white is also a race and as Coco Fusco adds, “...to ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it” (as cited in Roediger, 1991, p. 6).

The social renditions of masculinity and femininity carry with them racial overtones (Roediger, 1991). One manifestation of the privileged white status is its role in the feminist movement. Some white feminist theorists base many of their insights on gender essentialism- “...the idea that women have a single, unitary nature” or a monolithic women’s experience (Delgado, 2000, p.253; Harris, 2000). Second-wave feminism is characterized by binary constructions and is based on a privileged white perspective. This initial feminist movement was formed by women of bourgeois status (Skott-Myhre, 2009). Kathleen Skott-Myhre (2009) elaborates on the formation of this movement by stating, “it was actually an elitist group leaving out or marginalizing women of colour, lesbians, and women from lower socio economic structure” (p. 11). Following second-wave feminism is what has been termed third-wave feminism. Third-wave feminism recognizes and includes multiple intersections of identity categories such as race, class, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender into feminist thinking

⁹ Note that “Freeman” excludes women: during the 18th century the majority of women also did not enjoy political and economic independence.

¹⁰ While it is important to acknowledge the relationship between race and class, in-depth discussion of class is beyond the scope of this project

(Skott-Myhre, 2009). Therefore, it becomes evident that racism and sexism are interlocking, mutually reinforcing components of domination rooted in patriarchy (Caldwell, 2000, p.278; Hooks, 1990).

Beyond constructions of race, gender, and sexuality, youth are also categorized by age. The discourse of teenagers-at-risk conceptualizes all youth as being at-risk. The discourse of the teenager-at-risk is the belief that teenagers face many risks such as ‘drugs and alcohol, depression, eating disorders, sexual diseases [sic] , family struggles, and other stressors (Johnson in Raby, 2002). Raby (2002) also adds that “...youth-as-risk discourses construct certain teenagers as particularly prone to risk ” (Raby, 2002, p.435). Therefore, this discourse is applied unequally on the bases of gender and race. The following discourses will discuss groups of youth considered at-risk while focusing on how certain races and genders are particularly at-risk.

Black men as criminals/sexual predators.

While there are several non-white characters in the film *Thirteen*, the portrayal of black young men stands out in relation to the discourses we have been discussing vis-à-vis youth sexuality. To read the threat implied in the film by the introduction of black young men, it is important to acknowledge the intersecting discourses of race, masculinity and sexuality in American culture in particular. In this context black men are often stereotyped as sexual predators and criminals. These stereotypes contribute to the dominant discourse that all black males are rapists (bell hooks, 1990). The black male rapists are conceptualized as “...peripatetic phalluses with unrequited desire for their denied object–white women” (Dyson as cited in Hooks, 1990, p.58). bell hooks (1990) explains how black male rape may be considered an act of revenge. “As the story goes, this desire is not based on longing for sexual pleasure. It is a story of revenge, rape as a weapon by which black men, the dominated, reverse their circumstance,

regain power over white men” (hooks, 1990, p.58). Harris (2000) provides statistics stating that 89% of men executed for rape in US during 1930-1967 were black. Alternatively, 47% of black men convicted of criminal assaults on black women were immediately released on probation (p.270).¹¹

Furthermore, street crime is also considered to be the domain of black males. As bell hooks (1990) states, “mainstream white supremacist media make it appear that a black menace to societal safety is at large, that control, repression, and violent domination are the only effective ways to address the problem” (p.60).

The discourse of black young men, and the discourse of white innocent girls, are conceptualized as divergent. As previously mentioned, young black men are represented as over-sexualized, while white girls are symbolized as innocent and asexual. This positioning leads to young black males being seen as predatory, and young white females as innocent and in need of protection (especially from black males). The above discourses mentioned throughout this section share a similarity in the sense that power resides in the dominant: the white, bourgeois, heterosexual, male (Hutchingson, 329). In other words, here we see that power is conceptualized primarily within the father law.

Dual Theoretical Framework: The Father Law and Immanence

As I had proposed in my introduction, there are two theoretical frameworks that I will utilize to deconstruct the discourses I have been outlining so far: the psychoanalytic concept of the father law and the philosophical concept of immanence. While the father law facilitates the construction of dominant discourse, the law of immanence deconstructs such discourse.

The Father Law

¹¹ hooks mentions in an analysis how focus on white female sexuality and black male lust reinforces/links black men with rape.

The *father law*, or paternal law, is a concept best understood as the social constructions of the predominantly male dominant class or institutions that act to organize and limit behavior. It is imperative to note that "...male power within patriarchy is relative, men from poorer groups and men of colour are not able to reap the material and social rewards for their participation in patriarchy" (bell hooks, 1990, p. 63). Therefore, the male dominant class represents a Western cultural ideal; the white, Anglo-Saxon, bourgeoisie, heterosexual, male. This ideal male symbol becomes the God-like figure on earth¹². In fact, it could be argued that the Judeo-Christian tradition as a form of dominant rule is based on and reinforces a patriarchal model.

A biblical example of the male dominant figure organizing and limiting behavior that is symbolic of the father law is Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac in Genesis 22:1-24. Abraham is a patriarch of God (also known as the Holy Father and a singular male deity) who is told by God to sacrifice his only *son* which is considered the ultimate sacrifice¹³. Abraham follows the word of God obediently, as does his son Isaac, who obediently follows his father up to the hill to be sacrificed. At the last moment Abraham is offered a sacrificial alternate; however his willingness to go through with the act of sacrificing his son is a testament to his devotion to God. This hierarchy of God the father subjugating, Abraham the father subjugating his son to absolute rule is a dramatic example of the father law. The fact that the willingness to engage in an act of filicide is valorized and passed through the generations as exemplary is profound in its implications for future patriarchal power relations.

An example of how this rule of the father translates in a later historical period as patriarchal force is evident in the *patria potestas* (power of the father), a law from the Roman times where within the context of the patriarchal, authoritarian family, children were

¹² Thank-you to Shauna Pomerantz for this analogy

¹³ It is significant to note that much later, God sacrifices his son Jesus

conceptualized as the father's property or possession (Covell & Howe, 2001). This law afforded the father absolute control over the life or death of his children (Covell & Howe, 2001).

Therefore, the father law may be conceptualized as ordering and imposing dominant laws. The order comes from outside; a top down process, or what Deleuze and Guattari (1994) term: the transcendent. The transcendent is illustrated through the previous examples of God ordering Abraham to sacrifice his son or the father's absolute control over his children. Patriarchy and the discourses mentioned in the previous section are manifestations of this law. As Judith Butler explains, "Foucault argues that the desire which is conceived as both original and repressed is the effect of the subjugating law itself. In consequence, the law produces the conceit of the repressed desire in order to rationalize its own self-amplifying strategies..." (Butler, 1990, p. 64).

In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault (1978) elaborates on the concept of the father law in discussing 19th century notions of sexuality as integrated into two orders of knowledge: the biology of reproduction and the medicine of sex. The former order of knowledge developed from general scientific norms where traditional fears were recast within a scientific vocabulary. Not only did these discourses make attempts to prevent the emergence of truth, they also conceptualized sex as a problem of truth (Foucault, 1980). Foucault (1978) states that these discourses are "...the basis of all aberrant, naïve, and cunning discourses where knowledge of sex seems to have stayed for such a long time" (p. 57). That is to say that, as Butler argues above, the subjugating power of the father law produces sex and sexuality as a question of what is true and pure opposed to what is false and deviant. Even more powerfully, it produces a hierarchy of who gets to have knowledge of what is true and what is false.

In addition to the orders of knowledge, Foucault (1978) observes that the father law has

led the Western man to become a ‘confessing animal’. The regimes of the father law as a hierarchical production of knowledge opens the door to the right of the father to know. The father in the case of sexuality begins with the priests who must know on behalf of God and culminates with the scientist or psychoanalyst who must know on behalf of truth. This leads to an attempt to analyze and scrutinize every aspect of one’s thoughts, obsessions, images and desires. In short, this led to “a confessional science” (Foucault, 1978, p. 64). Such a confessional science is meant to control and confine sexuality; however, in actuality it creates a context for multiple discourses of sexuality to come forth. Restricting individuals and imposing ideals of acceptable and appropriate sexual conduct causes a rebellion against these restrictions. The multiple discourses of sexuality that were a result of this rebellion more accurately display a feature of immanence that will later be discussed.

Foucault (1978) explains confessional science as being produced through five different approaches, the first two of which are important to consider here. The first was through the clinical codification of inducement to speak, the second through the postulate of a general and diffuse causality. The second framework allows for explanations of anything and everything bad that could happen to those who engage in sexual practices. This approach seems present in the employment of scare tactics sometimes used within sexual education in schools to promote abstinence or, at the very least, safe sex.

The father law is therefore a hegemonic process where individuals are told exactly what is forbidden in their actions, which includes sexual feelings and conduct. Foucault (1980) adds that power is often exerted on sex through language and discourse and thus creates the father law. Harris (2001) elaborates on this view by drawing on Catherine MacKinnon stating that “the masculine point of view is point-of-viewlessness, the force of male dominance is exercised as

consent, its authority as participation, its supremacy as the paradigm of order, its control as the definition of legitimacy” (Harris, 2000).

Another manifestation of the father law and its processes is the concept of *desire as lack*. Deleuze and Guattari’s (1983) concept desire as a notion of lack is a function of the market economy to lead people to believe they are missing something important that they must obtain. This purposely organizes society’s wants and needs and leads humanity to fear they will not have enough even in the presence of abundant production. Freud’s theory of the Oedipus complex and Incest taboo are built upon conceptualizing desire through the notion of lack. In particular, Freud’s focus on the fear of castration and annihilation by losing the male phallus is a pertinent illustration of fear of lack as a central organizing element in desire. Significantly, the loss of the capacity to be the father eliminates access to the force of the father law. In a similar way to Deleuze and Guattari, Butler (1990) comments on Freud’s theories, “the incest taboo... initiates a loss of a love object for the ego that this ego recuperates from this through the internalization of the tabooed object of desire” (p. 58). Freud (1997) discusses objects of self-preservation and how people emphasize the fact that we need them. This conceptualization of desire can be applied in the deconstruction of sexuality in the popular media context. Often as humans we may desire relations with others because they seem forbidden or taboo, or perhaps this may account for the reason we do not act on our desires.

The ordering properties of the father law may also be conceptualized through consideration of what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to as: the order word. The order word is considered the elementary unit of language: the statement or order of commands. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) state that, “language is made not to be believed but to be obeyed, and to compel obedience”(p.76). Put differently, the order word first attempts to verbalize or describe the

indescribable, then uses words that command compliance and construct our understanding.

However, there is always something missing. In “The Postulates of Linguistics”, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain, “language is not life; it gives life orders. Life does not speak; it listens and waits. Every order-word, even a father’s to his son, carries a little death sentence—a Judgment, as Kafka put it” (p. 76). The order-word may be linked to the role language plays in constructing and reinforcing discourses of sexuality.

Previously it was stated that there is always something missing within the order-word or speech act. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain that regardless of the speech act made, there are multiple interpretations of that one statement or word, and each is then complicated by the context in which the words are spoken, from whom they are said as well as the word’s intended audience. Therefore once a word (at a specific time and place) is spoken it dies—it can never be replicated, re-stated, or interpreted in quite the same way. The order word is a manifestation of the father law. The example of the order word demonstrates that the father law is limited in capturing all experience (something is always missing). This is where immanence comes in. Immanence fills in the holes and/or cracks by accounting for a spectrum of infinite possibilities. This process reflects immanent acts and incorporeal transformations which operate in tandem with the law of the father and will be discussed further in the following section.

Immanence

Immanence acts as a useful framework for the deconstruction of youth sexuality. The law of immanence may be conceptualized as encompassing an infinite or multitude of possibilities. Immanence is the law of what is already in existence without interference of the dominant; the law of what *IS*, or what Deleuze and Guattari (1994) call the transcendental. Immanence may also be conceptualized as that which produces itself (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). In other words,

within immanence everything is in production and is capable of producing.

Deleuze and Guattari (1994) compare immanence to the act of throwing dice. In the moments preceding the throw of dice there are many unpredictable and possible outcomes each leading to a completely different chain of events. Implicit in this understanding is an underlying order of the universe that is independent from human organizations of power or social constructions. One may impart his or her own judgment or attempt to exert control of their actions; however each outcome is only one of the many possible outcomes within the plane of immanence. Within this analogy it becomes evident that one cannot predict what immanent possibilities will produce until the very moment they become produced. Within this framework even concepts are considered to be created and fabricated by humankind and are, in that sense, delusions. Certainly the discourses of the father law we have been examining fit into the category of delusions under an immanent understanding. That is not to say they do not have real material implications, but they are thoroughly immaterial in and of themselves. If language and socially constructed discourses are immaterial, what constitutes ground for immanence of what Deleuze and Guattari call the “plane of immanence?” This is actually quite difficult to articulate but Deleuze and Guattari attempt an elucidation in their concept of the body without organs.

The concept of the *body without organs* embodies immanence. “The full body without organs is the unproductive, the sterile, the unengendered, the unconsumable” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 8). It is this state of flux which typifies all of the infinite immanent possibilities that hang in the balance: everything that could be but is not yet. Each individual may at times be either an organ-machine or a desiring-production machine and at others be an organless body depending upon the situation. An organless body can be seen as a positive label and a negative one. A body without organs is positive in the sense that it is imageless and devoid

of cultural organizations or productions such as gender and therefore closer to the Immanent plane. However, being a body without organs is also negative in the sense that one is not able to actively produce anything.

Desire as production is the notion that desire does not lack anything; rather it is continually in the process of producing. Artists and revolutionaries who are often credited as being creative, rebellious or simply going against the status quo often view desire as production (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). This allows for an ever changing multitude of ways to produce or act on desire and resembles the principle of immanence. Desire as production can be related to Freud's concept of the unconscious. Each of us has instinctual urges in our unconscious that are constantly present and may influence our conscious behaviors. This relates to the law of immanence and all possible actions/events present even if one may not be aware of these possibilities. Therefore the unconscious where sexual urges and instincts may reside is actually consistent with the underlying immanent possibilities that exist. This reconceptualization of desire relates to the research I propose as the concept will be applied to the texts in order to locate and explore alternative displays of desire.

Just as being a body without organs is both positive and negative so is being a desiring-producing machine. This is because as a machine the body can suffer from being organized as having to produce. However, producing machines (including humans) can also operate with immanence principles because, according to Deleuze and Guattari (1983), machines only work when they are not functioning properly. This is because if machines are working they produce the same product continuously. However, it is best to deindividualize through multiplication and displacement related to immanence. If one produces the same product over and over again they become restricted. Viewing the body as a machine or an organless body will be used to

understand individual agency, expressions and motives of youth's sexuality.

Reading the body without organs and an immanent form of desire through a feminist lens we might turn to the work of Judith Butler (1990). Butler (1990) elaborates on Beauvoir's theory that addresses the concept of the body in relation to the topic of sexuality. Beauvoir states that "one is not born a woman but becomes one" (Butler, 1990, p. 111). From this Butler suggests that "women" do not necessarily need to be the social construction of the female body itself, and "men" do not need to embody the male body. Butler (1990) states "If sex does not limit gender, then perhaps there are genders, ways of culturally interpreting the sexed body, that are in no way restricted by the apparent duality of sex" (p.112). This fluid interpretation of multiple genders and sexualities resembles the notion of immanence as well as Deleuze and Guattari's (1983) concept of multiple and diverse assemblages. This also highlights the dynamic complexities of youth's sexual experiences. Taken together, the above theories offer an excellent platform for deconstructing discourses of youth sexuality portrayed in popular media.

The Father Law & Immanence

While the father law and immanence might be easily mistaken for a binary, one is not independent of the other. Rather the two concepts or frameworks overlap and co-exist making this one framework with a dual component. The duality is productive in that immanence produces all possibility in an infinite array of productive force. The father law organizes and structures this plentitude into increasing rigid and dominating structures that are then undone and released into new possibilities by the force of immanence. This is an infinite cycle. The dual framework of the father law and immanence links to this project in two ways. First, dominant discourses in the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) will be surfaced. These dominant discourses are seen to order and impose dominant laws which include the discourses outlined in the

beginning of this project, examples are: heteronormativity, patriarchy, and white privilege. The second aim of this project is to locate instances where dominant discourses are challenged and therefore surface subjugated discourses: what experience *IS* and may be outside of the dominant. In discussing dominant discourse it becomes imperative to address alternative or subjugated discourses. Some possibilities of subjugated discourses I might discover during analysis may be: women as subject, anti-racist, homoerotic, child/youth as adult.

Methodology

In “Working the Hyphens” Michelle Fine (1994) states that, as researchers, we must “...position ourselves as no longer transparent, but as classed, gendered, raced, and sexual subjects who construct our own languages, narrate these locations, and negotiate our stances with relations of domination” (p. 76). Therefore, before discussion of the current research methodology begins, it is necessary that I reflect upon my social location and what it brings to this research project. How does one go about describing themselves? This is not a simple task. I find the process of reflecting on my social location unnerving and difficult. Pillow (2003) admits that practicing engaged qualitative research is a messy and uncomfortable reality. Perhaps my difficulty arises from my belief that identity is fluid. I feel that once I reveal ‘who’ I am, once I put it into words, I am making a permanent claim and limiting other possibilities for my identity. Pillow (2003) recognizes that reflexivity implies an individual self that does not fit within a post-modern framework of multiplicity and diversity. Therefore, Pillow (2003) suggests that post-modern researchers turn to what is called uncomfortable reflexivity. Uncomfortable reflexivity is “...a reflexivity that seeks to know while at the same time situates this knowing as tenuous” (p. 188). In using uncomfortable reflexivity, I will challenge the representations I come to while also recognizing the political need to represent and find meaning (Pillow, 2003). Pillow (2003)

states that self-reflexivity is extremely important to the qualitative research process as a way of identifying how one's social location affects their research.

At this time, I most often identify as being white, female, heterosexual, a graduate student and a youth in my mid-twenties. It is important to acknowledge that being a white, middle-class academic affects my view of the study and how I engage with the cultural text. Being a young academic, I experience a continuous process of self-questioning and experience a fluid sense of identity. I often find myself contemplating and experiencing dominant discourses and subjugated identity categories.

This affects my view of *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) as I am coming to the text looking for multiple and conflicting meanings that are unstable in order to encourage fluidity and re-conceptualize sexuality. Living in a Western society as a young female, I am privy to dominant discourses of youth in cultural texts. However, my social location and position also afford me the ability to look at these discourses critically and gather certain tools and theories (outlined above) and bring them forward in my viewing of popular culture.

Being white and middle class also affects my relation to the text. By categorizing myself into the dominant white, I often catch myself experiencing the privileged perspective of "race-less-ness". However, as earlier mentioned, critical race theory reminds me that race is a socially constructed concept (especially including white-ness). Therefore, all 'whites' are not considered equal. As a white, young, female I experience a limited form of white privilege. My position as white necessitates that I make an extra effort to deconstruct race and recognize racial stereotypes and prejudice within the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003).

Additionally, my female gender comes to bear on my viewing of popular culture. Being female in a Western patriarchal society I often feel that society attempts to control and confine

my sexuality. I do not feel that dominant scripts of traditional femininity or female sexuality accurately define me or my sexuality. This is mostly because I do not feel that the dominant describes my idiosyncratic and fluid lived reality of gender and sexuality. While I recognize that heterosexuality and traditional femininity are the dominant constructions in Western culture, my education has made me aware of other possible femininities, masculinities, and sexualities. Therefore, it is possible that my gender location renders me sensitive to negative views and portrayals of young females, especially portrayals that are confining. The above positions are my current uncomfortable reality and have an effect on my research and how I view popular culture. It is also possible that the process of conducting this research can shift and change these positions. This is the current location from which I will perform my analysis of the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003)

In order to conduct this analysis, first a deconstructive textual analysis will be employed followed by a systematic mise en scène analysis in order to deconstruct discourses of youth's sexuality in the film. In this section the methodology will be reviewed along with the selection of texts to be analyzed. The two methodologies outlined in this section correspond to the dual framework of the father law and immanence, again reinforcing productive mutuality as opposed to separate methodologies. Both methodologies will be utilized to locate the dominant discourses previously discussed. This will then lead to the surfacing of subjugated discourses that contradict and disturb the dominant within the film *Thirteen*.

Deconstructive Textual Analysis

Paula Saukko (2003) explains that deconstruction is a theory, methodology and method and is also one of the most popular tools to critically analyze texts within cultural studies. Therefore, deconstruction as a method of analysis becomes useful for deconstructing discourses

of youth's sexuality. Drawing on Derridian deconstruction, Macleod (2002) describes deconstructive discourse analysis as, "implying and undermining the revelation of essence, destabilizing meaning as presence, and disrupting dominant, taken-for-granted notions of a subject" (p. 18). A Derridian approach to deconstruction questions discourses by "...exploring them in terms of their claims of presence, and their dependence on absences" (Macleod, 2002, p.20). Macleod (2002) also mentions that deconstruction concentrates on areas of dominance, contradiction and difference. Focusing on these areas allows one to disrupt current discourses and construct resistance. Saukko (2003) concurs by stating that deconstruction has three main advantages. The first is drawing attention to the dichotomous nature of critiques that may suppress one way of being and elevate others. Second, deconstruction is effective in analyzing contradictions in qualities that may be associated with a certain object or text. Third, deconstruction has the advantage of unraveling the imprecise, mazelike nature of discourses.

While discourse analysis certainly does all of the above mentioned tasks it also provides an opportunity to study ideology (Parker, 2005). Ideology functions through state institutions such as the school which teaches 'know-how'. This knowledge is imparted in forms that will ensure subjection to the ruling ideology (Althusser, 1971). Ideology may allow people to feel that they are speaking independently when their beliefs have actually been enforced and influenced by dominant ideas. This is why discourse analysis should include how people police language and how they are also active participants in ideology (Parker, 2005). While ideology is present in the form of language it also exists within cultural texts such as cinema. Therefore, I would argue that Althusser's (1971) theory of ideology is embedded in categories of sexuality such as the dominant sexual discourse of heterosexuality as portrayed in films targeted at youthful audiences.

Parker's (2005) seven basic criteria are applied to the analysis of discourses. Parker's (2005) seven criteria state that a discourse: is realized in text; is about objects; contains subjects; is a coherent system of meanings; refers to other discourses; reflects on its own way of speaking; and is historically located. In addition to Parker's seven basic criteria, Macleod (2002) incorporates Foucault's archaeological specifications to deconstructive discourse methodology. Foucault's archaeological specifications are used to delineate levels of discursive formation through considering the formation of objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and strategies (Macleod, 2002). These include such criterion as "Who is speaking? Who is 'qualified' to use this sort of language and what are the institutional sites from which the person speaks?" (p. 22).

While Parker's seven basic criteria inform Macleod's (2002) research, Parker (2005) also discusses four key ideas in constructing discourse analysis. These four points of focus are multivoicedness, semiotics, resistance and 'discourse'. When conducting a discourse analysis focus should be on the multivoicedness of language instead of finding or searching for themes. For discourse readers, points of contradiction indicate points that need to be considered seriously. Second, semiotics is the way language is put together in discussions and texts, and extends to how people are put together and categorized by language that is already organized into discourse. Third, focusing on resistance allows one to consider power and resistance¹⁴ within discourse in order to demonstrate how language maintains certain power relations and challenges others. Lastly, 'discourse' as an organization of language into social bonds leads to bonds where some people are included and others are excluded. For instance, the discourse of heterosexuality defines what is deviant; in other words one is deviant if not belonging to the social bond of heterosexuality.

As previously mentioned, Foucault's archaeological specifications, Parker's seven basic

¹⁴ This refers to a Foucauldian (1978) understanding of power as the product of force relations

criteria and Parker's (2005) four key ideas will be considered in the deconstruction of youth sexuality. Additionally, Parker's (2005) twelve steps to discourse-analytic reading will be applied to the film text. First, Parker (2005) outlines that the following questions must be asked before choosing a certain text to analyze:

- 1) Why is the text interesting?
- 2) What do we know of the material out of which it is constructed?
- 3) What might be the effects of different readings of the text?
- 4) How does the text conform to or challenge patterns of power?

In further addressing which texts to select, Macleod (2002) states that deconstructive discourse analysis discards methods of statistical sampling and generalizations since they do not accurately capture the complexities of human experience and conduct. Instead, texts are selected with theoretical principles, purpose and relevance. In the current project, a film text has been selected in order to explore discourses of sexuality.

The cultural text for analysis is the film *Thirteen* (2003) directed by Catherine Hardwicke and co-written by Catherine Hardwicke and Nikki Reed. The movie *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) depicts a thirteen-year-old girl's relationship with her mother that is put to the test as she discovers drugs, sex, and petty crime in the company of her cool but troubled best friend (IMDb, 1990-2010). *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) is an autobiographical film that was released on November 7th 2003 (IMDb, 1990-2010). The main character, Tracy, is drawn from Reed's own experiences as a pre and early teen. Evan Rachel Wood (Tracy) and Nikki Reed were both fifteen during filming (Wood turned fifteen during the shoot).

The film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) was selected as a text for analysis due to the content of teen sexuality presented as being from the perspective of a teen. Furthermore this film caused

controversy because it deals with “underage sexuality”, leading to questions surrounding why “underage” sexuality is controversial. Within this film teens (especially young females) are portrayed as sexually promiscuous. In some ways this film seems to challenge and reinforce heterosexuality and traditional/dominant practices of sexuality involving two partners, such as masturbation, group sex/foreplay. Furthermore, there are interesting comparisons and contrasts between youth and adult sexuality, and this difference is sometimes significantly blurred. Lastly, in the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) youth sexuality is portrayed as complex, including multiple identity categories or intersections of identity categories such as race and sexuality.

The text outlined above will be analyzed using deconstructive discourse analysis. After these questions concerning the choice of text have been addressed, Parker’s (2005) twelve steps to discourse-analytic reading will be applied to the film and television texts. While all 12 of Parker’s steps are embedded in the approach to the text, the analysis will focus on steps: 1, 3, 7, and 10. The twelve steps are as follows:

Step 1: Turn the text into words when dealing with images or patterns that are not spoken or written

Step 2: Elaborate on socially shared material connected to the text through a version of free association around some of the questions listed above used to choose the text

Step 3: Itemize and spell out the significance of the objects in text

Step 4: Keep focused on how those objects are constructed in the text

Step 5: Itemize the ‘subjects’ in the text

Step 6: Elaborate on what else may be said by subjects in the text

Step 7: Spell out the networks of relationships (e.g. which characters are associated with power?)

Step 8: Speculate how the characters are positioned in relation to one another, this may include

objections from ‘outsiders’

Step 9: Draw out patterns across the text

Step 10: Contrast the ways the same ‘object’ is positioned in contradictory ways of speaking

Step 11: Highlight how the ways of speaking may appeal to different audiences

Step 12: Name some ‘discourses’ as the kinds of social bond that make the contradictory arrangements between the subjects in this text possible (e.g. discourses of masculinity)

Once these steps for analytical reading have been employed, Parker (2005) outlines four things that should be avoided in discourse analysis as they would prevent a good evaluation. First, Parker (2005) emphasizes focusing on the research question and avoiding idle curiosity or voyeurism. Second, attempts should be made to link data to discourses instead of sorting into themes. Third, one is to avoid reducing things that are said to what the speakers really mean or attempts to explain why they said what they said. Lastly, discourse analysis should not attempt to discover the only reading of a text; instead it should account for other possible interpretations that might be made by other readers using other theoretical frameworks. Taken together, these are pitfalls to be avoided when conducting a discourse analysis.

Finally, theoretical tools have been gathered in order to deconstruct discourses of sexuality through examining popular culture. The theoretical tools used include the theories of Butler, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. After collecting these theoretical frameworks a *mise en scène* and deconstructive discourse analysis will be conducted on the selected texts. Parker’s methodology will be utilized to assist with the deconstruction of language (in the form of discourse). This links to the theoretical framework of the father law, which follows a linguistic structure; law which is not formally written but is rather linguistic in nature.

Mise en scène

Mise en scène literally translates into “placing on stage” (Giannetti, 1993). This concept refers to the “...arrangement of all the visual elements of a theatrical production within a given playing area – the stage” also known as the proscenium arch (Giannetti, 1993, p. 38). *Mise en scène* in cinema is similar to the art of painting as the image of formal patterns and shapes are presented on a flat surface are enclosed with a frame (Giannetti, 1993). *Mise en scène* methodology will be utilized in the process of turning the text into words (Parker’s Step 1). Consideration of the visual elements of the film is integral to the process of turning the text into words or describing the shot.

Selected scenes from the previous deconstructive discourse analysis will then be selected for a *mise en scène* analysis. I will integrate the two analyses by focusing on elements of the *mise en scène* analysis that complement, contradict or add additional meaning to the discourse analysis. A systematic *mise en scène* analysis of a shot incorporates fifteen elements that are quite different from the focus of a deconstructive analysis but nevertheless are complementary, and are as follows¹⁵:

1. *Dominant*: Where is our eye attracted first? Why?
2. *Lighting key*: High key? Low key? High contrast? Some combination of these?
3. *Shot and camera proxemics*: What type of shot? How far away is the camera from the action?
4. *Angle*: Are we (and the camera) looking up or down on the subject? Or is the camera neutral (eye level)?
5. *Colour values*. What is the dominant colour? Are there contrasting foils? Is there colour symbolism?
6. *Lens/filter/stock*: How do these distort or comment on the photographed materials?
7. *Subsidiary contrasts*: What are the main eye eye-stops after taking in the dominant?

¹⁵ The methodology of *Mise en scène* is borrowed from Louis Giannetti, 1993.

8. *Density*: How much visual information is packed into the image? Is the texture stark, moderate, or highly detailed?
9. *Composition*: How is the two-dimensional space segmented and organized? What is the underlying design?
10. *Form*: Open or closed? Does the image suggest a window that arbitrarily isolates a fragment of the scene? Or a proscenium arch, in which the visual elements are carefully arranged and held in balance?
11. *Framing*: Tight or loose? Do the characters have no room to move around, or can they move freely without impediments?
12. *Depth*: On how many planes is the image composed? Does the background or foreground comment on any way on the midground?
13. *Character placement*: What part of the framed space do the characters occupy? Centre? Top? Bottom? Edges? Why?
14. *Staging positions*: Which way do the characters look vis-à-vis the camera?
15. *Characters proxemics*: How much space is there between the characters?

It is essential to note that not all of the above fifteen elements are significant or meaningful in every shot, therefore the above elements will guide the analysis. *Mise en scène* links to the theoretical framework of immanence as it considers the assemblages of certain terrains on screen.

Integration of Methodologies

The two methodologies outlined, deconstructive discourse analysis and *mise en scène*, are distinct but complementary for the analysis of pop culture. The methodologies will be integrated in the following steps:

1. Mise en scène will be used to assist with step 1 of Parker's methodology: turning the text into words or describing the shot.
2. Conduct a deconstructive discourse analysis of the text following Parker's (2005) steps to discourse-analytic reading.
3. Return to scenes of previous analysis focusing on mise en scène elements.
4. Look for areas of content overlap or contradiction within the same scenes from previous analysis where the second analysis (mise en scène) can add depth/further meaning to the analysis.

Analysis

As mentioned in the methodology, the text that will be analyzed is the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003). Parker (2005) maintains that it is imperative to consider what is known of the material out of which the text is constructed. This step is important in contextualizing the film. *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) has also won many awards. Holly Hunter was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Actress in a Supporting Role. Both Hunter and Evan Rachel Wood were nominated for Golden Globes the same year, respectively for Best Supporting Actress and Best Actress in a Drama. Furthermore, the film won the Nantucket Film Festival: Screenwriting Award for Best Feature Screenplay in 2003 and the Independent Spirit: Best Debut Performance in 2004. The film was translated into Spanish and Portuguese, making it widely accessible. The film also boasts an official website¹⁶ and has a dedicated Facebook fan page with over one-hundred eighty-three thousand members that "like" the movie¹⁷.

While the film's popularity is evident, it also has generated a great deal of controversy and moral panic (Leopold, CNN). The film is considered controversial because it deals with

¹⁶ *Thirteen* (2003) website: <http://www.foxsearchlight.com/thirteen>

¹⁷ Facebook fan page URL: <https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Thirteen/103782849660211>

topics of underage sexual behavior, self-mutilation, and drug and alcohol use. This text was chosen in consideration of Parker's (2005) four questions to address when choosing a particular text to analyze. As previously discussed, this text has been selected for analysis as it contains scenes of sexuality involving two thirteen-year-old characters. A Cable News Network (CNN) article summarizes the film as follows: "Thirteen is about Tracy (Evan Rachel Wood), a girl who goes from being a Barbie- and teddy bear-loving child to sex and drugs almost overnight, partly thanks to the peer pressure of the popular Evie (Nikki Reed)" (Leopold, CNN). The scenes selected for analysis include sexual content involving heterosexual encounters, bi-sexual encounters, as well as a near-three-some involving Evie, Tracy and an adult male.

Deconstruction of the text will allow different possibilities to come forth. In other words, different readings of the text will go beyond the dominant discourse of youth's sexuality and allow for the interpretation of a multiplicity of sexual possibilities. Four scenes in the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) have been chosen for their sexual content. As *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) is 99 minutes in length the content is very rich. There are many scenes of interest. However, due to the scope of this research I have chosen four scenes that represent the sexual discourses I am interested in exploring. These scenes were selected because they reinforce and challenge dominant heterosexuality and traditional/dominant practices of sexuality involving two partners, such as group sex/foreplay. Lastly, within these scenes, youth sexuality is portrayed as complex, including multiple identity categories or intersections of identity categories such as race and sexuality.

The four scenes will be analyzed using Parker's (2005) twelve steps to discourse-analytic reading¹⁸. As noted previously, while all 12 of Parker's (2005) steps are embedded in the approach to the text, the analysis will focus in on steps: 1, 3, 7, and 10. Step 1 involves turning

¹⁸ See previous methods section for a detailed account of Parkers 12 steps of analysis

the text into words. Step one is where *mise en scène* methodology will predominantly be utilized. Once again, *mise en scène* is the arrangement of all the visual elements of a theatrical production within a given playing area. Consideration of the visual elements of the film is integral to the process of turning the text into words or describing the shot. Step 3 is itemizing and spelling out the significance of objects in text; step 7, spelling out the networks of relationships; and step 10, contrasting the ways the same 'object' is positioned in contradictory ways. Now I will begin my analysis of the film *Thirteen*. The scenes I have selected for analysis are: Brooke's boyfriend hits me, a date with Javi, a date with Javi continued, and losing control.

Brooke's Boyfriend Hits Me 41:40

In the following scene I will be analyzing the dialogue and social interaction between a mother and a friend of the mother's daughter. The mother expresses concern regarding her daughter's close relationship with a female friend, Evie. Evie explains to Tracy's mother that she has been spending excessive amounts of time at their residence because her guardian's boyfriend abuses her. In a subsequent scene, the mother (Melanie) pulls Tracy aside and questions her alone in order to see whether Evie's accusations of abuse are true.

The scene analysis will begin with step 1 of Parker's Methodology, turning the text into words. As mentioned in the methodology, *mise en scène* will assist in describing the shots. Once the text is put into words, I will predominantly draw on Step 7 and 12 of Parker's (2005) methodology. Step 7 is particularly relevant to deconstructing this scene as this step spells out the networks of relationships within the text. Step 12: will be utilized to draw out 'discourses' as the kinds of social bond that make the contradictory arrangements between the subjects in this text possible.

Scene.

In the previous scene leading up to Melanie's conversation with her daughter, Melanie expresses to Evie that perhaps she is spending too much time with Tracy and that it is time for her to go home. Evie then tells Melanie that she can't go home because her guardian is away at a conference and that Brooke's boyfriend beats her. Evie says, "I'm sorry Mel, I hope it's okay that I'm here". To which Melanie responds "well, I guess it's going to have to be isn't it?". Evie then confesses "her boyfriend hits me Mel". Evie then gets on Melanie's bed, while pulling her hair back and says "he grabbed my throat and he threw me against the van". Evie then glances up at Melanie with a wide-eyed gloomy and vulnerable expression that demands a sympathetic response. Melanie then gasps and says, "aw Jesus" and begins to move towards Evie. Melanie then meets Evie on the bed and pulls her hair away from her neck asking her in a quiet soothing voice, "where's your mother, baby?" Evie says that her mother passed away. Melanie shares that she didn't have a mother when she was Evie's age either, while she caresses Evie's forehead. Melanie tells Evie that she knows how hard it is, while holding Evie's chin in her hand before embracing her. The encounter becomes more intimate when Evie nestles her face into Melanie's hair. Tracy then enters the room and interrupts the awkwardly intimate embrace between her mother and her friend. Tracy glares at her mother and Evie revealing that she is not impressed by her mother's closeness with her friend.

The next scene begins as Melanie excuses herself from Evie in order to talk to her daughter in private. After a moment of awkward silence between Tracy and her mother, Tracy's mother asserts her authority as a parent by placing her hands on her hips and sternly asking a question regarding Evie's guardian, Brook: "Does Brooke have a boyfriend?"

To which Tracy hesitates and then responds without making eye contact: "No. She dumped him". The characters are staged with Melanie slightly turned away from the camera

facing her daughter and with Tracy facing the camera rather than facing her mother and fully acknowledging her. The mise en scène character placement and proxemics allow the audience to have a clear view of Tracy's facial expressions and/or reactions to her mother's questioning. Tracy's physical distance from her Mother and lack of eye contact suggests that she is unhappy with her mother as she is not willing to acknowledge her. This also suggests that she is not willing to share information with her Mother. In other words, Tracy's body language makes the awkwardness of this scene apparent. During this moment Melanie's boyfriend appears in the background of the scene.

Melanie challenges her further by asking Tracey "When?" Tracy becomes further agitated and responds with attitude, which is made apparent by the tilt of her head and a shake while she says, again without making eye contact: "Last week or something". Once again, Melanie is persistent and asks Tracy if she is sure. In an attempt to provide some kind of proof to appease her mother, Tracy responds with a rushed agitated tone: "Ya, he's in Orlando, now can I go to school". Learning that Brooke has a boyfriend ends the conversation and subsequent uncertainty that Evie's guardian has recently had a stable heteronormative relationship. Melanie seems relieved yet remains a little tense and unhappy with the quality of their interaction and replies "Ya".

Analysis.

It is possible that that Melanie is questioning Tracy because she is suspicious of Evie's claim of abuse. Evie may be acting deceitful in order to have repetitive sleepovers with Melanie's daughter Tracy. This is further substantiated in the previous seen where Melanie expresses she is unhappy with the excessive amount of time the two girls are spending together. Melanie was originally very callous and annoyed with Evie during their earlier conversation.

This is apparent when Melanie overtly tells Evie that she is not welcome in her home. However, Evie was able to manipulate Melanie and invoke remorse and physical attention from her by the end of their encounter. Evie's manipulation of Melanie plays on the discourse of children as innocence and in need of protection. This is substantiated when Melanie asks Evie where her mother is. Evie's manipulation of Melanie, along with the seriousness of Evie's allegations, are enough to make Melanie feel Evie cannot be trusted. In Melanie's exchange with her daughter, she learns Evie is a liar.

Here the discourse that a child's sexuality is to be protected is evident as Melanie is concerned about the relationship status of her daughter's friend. When Melanie senses that her daughter is getting 'too close' with Evie, she asks Evie to go home. Melanie also attempts to question her daughter in order to protect her from Evie's 'negative' influence. In spelling out the relational networks of this scene, it becomes evident that the mother is trying to assert her power and/or authority over her daughter in order to protect her. By standing with her hands on her hips, Melanie is in a firm stable position that allows her body to take up more space. This masculinized position of taking up space allows Melanie to be understood as being assertive in her role as parent and demanding that Tracy obeys her by answering her questions.

Once again, drawing on step 12 of discourses embedded in the text, the above dialogue can also be understood in relation to Freud's psychoanalytic discourse. Within this discourse, the father is the secure base from which young girls develop healthy sexuality. Both Evie and Tracy are raised by single women and neither of the girls have a stable/permanent father figure in the picture. Single women are represented in the film as horrible mothers (Kelly & Pomerantz, 2009). Melanie is portrayed as in the film as a single mother, divorced and dating a recovering drug addict that she allows to live in her home. The audience is reminded of this

when Melanie's boyfriend makes an appearance in the background of the scene. Melanie's relationship status and involvement with a recovering drug addict currently living in her home calls into question her parenting ability, judgment and ability to advise or comment on stable secure relationships. He has brought drugs into the family home in the past and his presence appears threatening to the safety of Melanie's children.

However, Melanie's relationship with her boyfriend could be read differently. It is possible that Melanie is trying to be a good parent by establishing a traditional nuclear family unit for her children. Melanie's ex-husband is portrayed as absent in the film. Therefore, Melanie may be attempting to provide her children with a male role model. Of course, whether her boyfriend meets the criteria of a 'good' role model is questionable.

The theory that lacking a love object or secure base leads to unhealthy sexual development is related to the assumption that adult sexuality is the same as youth sexuality. As previously mentioned, Kearney (2002) articulates that the discourse of women as men's property typically follows the pattern of females belonging to the father and later a husband. The absence of Tracy's father threatens the heteronormative pattern. Furthermore none of the main female characters in the film are legally married which again disrupts the discourse of women as men's property.

In addition, this scene supports the discourse of women as men's property which asserts that relations with other women are permissible (for example: Tracy's sleep overs with Evie in her bed with the door closed). If Evie were a thirteen-year-old male, this would most likely be forbidden. This discourse creates more acceptances for bi-sexuality between females (Foucault, 1989). This may be related to the assertion that female sexuality is not 'real' and is non-threatening as reproduction is impossible. This may also be the case as lesbianism and female bi-

sexuality are seen as less of a threat to masculinity.

A Date with Javi 45:23

This particular scene revolves around Tracy's date, Javi, a young black male from school. The scene begins when Evie receives a phone call on her cell phone from Javi asking to speak with Tracy. The call takes place when Evie and Tracy are together in Evie's bedroom. On the phone, Tracy and Javi decide to get together at Evie's house. After Tracy and Javi end their conversation, Evie's guardian leaves to go work. Evie and Tracy then begin to discuss and prepare for Tracy's date with Javi before he arrives. Once again, the analysis will begin with a description of the scene. The balance of the analysis will focus on the socially shared material of objects connected to the text and their significance, as well as drawing out embedded discourses (Parker, 2005).

Scene.

Tracy and Evie are in Evie's bedroom together when a male from their school named Javi calls Evie's phone and asks if Tracy is free to "hang out". Tracy and Evie invite Javi to come over. After ending the call, Evie fanatically exclaims, "you get to make out with Javi!!!" Tracy also screams with excitement. The dominant in the *mise en scène* is a lighted star flashing on the wall along with a disco ball in Evie's room. The eye is drawn to the bright lighted props to create a party or club atmosphere. Both girls giggle with excitement.

Once the girls settle down, Evie asks Tracy in an assuming tone, "you don't know how to kiss, do you?" Tracy then replies "oh, no no no no, oh yes I do. Me and Noel practiced with *Cruel Intentions* like 50 times".

Evie responds to Tracy sarcastically by saying, "right" as if to say that watching a film is not sufficient in knowing how to kiss. Sensing that Evie is not convinced of her kissing abilities,

Tracy says in a mocking tone “So... you want me to prove it lesbo?” This statement is very telling. By saying this Tracy thinks that the only other way to prove her kissing abilities to Evie is to kiss her. Due to Evie’s persistence, Tracy feels that Evie wants Tracy to prove it to her. Therefore, Tracy considers kissing Evie. However, Tracy also acknowledges that the act of kissing Evie is socially prohibited; the desire to kiss and/or the act would label her a ‘lesbo’. Tracy externalizes the awkwardness by calling Evie a “lesbo”. Evie responds in a playful voice, “hell no,” although does not deny or attempt to defend herself from the insult. Tracy takes another sip of alcohol and again both girls giggle. Tracy puts her drink down and flips her hair back, in a way that draws attention to her feminine long blond hair and reasserts her femininity. Tracy then grabs Evie’s chin and kisses her with her tongue. A few seconds pass and Evie giggles and says, “I barely even felt that”. Tracy is appalled and says “oh, so fucking feel this one then” while gently pulling Evie down to the floor and straddling her. When Tracy pulls away, Evie puts up her hands in a motion to surrender her earlier claims of doubt and says “oh, well ok”. And Tracy feeling triumphant in proving to Evie that she can kiss responds with, “Ha”.

Analysis.

Cruel Intentions (1999) is a drama/romance/thriller film. Tracy’s statement that she practiced her kissing by watching *Cruel Intentions* suggests that she got her information or know-how about sexual practice, more specifically, ‘how to kiss,’ from the media, a socially shared media text. This makes reference to a main theme within the research on youth, media, and sexuality that examines the sexual content of media consumed by youth and how the media acts as a socialization and pedagogical tool youth rely on for their understanding of sexuality, ultimately affecting their subsequent sexual conduct and encounters.

This scene starts with Evie persistently challenging Tracy’s kissing ability. It is

significant that Evie is portrayed as Latina in the film. By utilizing step 12 of Parker's (2005) method, this scene draws on the discourse of Latinos as sexualized. Being Latina and sexually aggressive towards Tracy, Evie's actions reinforce the stereotype that Latinas are overly sexual (Hutchinson, 327). Evie's character is also much more sexually experienced than Tracy, also supporting the discourse of Latinas as sexualized. On the other hand, Tracy, a white female, is portrayed as innocent and sexually inexperienced. Tracy's inexperience is substantiated by her confession that she views films to gain her knowledge/experience of kissing.

This scene may also be deconstructed through the discourse of women as men's property. Within this discourse women are prohibited from having close relationships with other men as this would challenge another man's ownership. However, it is permissible for women to have physical relations with other women as this is less threatening to masculinity and male dominance (Foucault, 1989). This is because female sexuality, including female bisexuality or lesbianism is not considered to be 'real' sexuality. This dominant thought is embedded within the playful, party or club atmosphere of flashing lights in the scene as the girls giggle constantly. This gives the impression that Tracy and Evie are just having fun and are only 'practicing' for their male dates.

In addition, this discourse also claims that women can only experience pleasure if they perceive the male as their master and therefore requires that the male be present (Foucault, 1989). During this scene a male is not physically present; however the scene takes place in preparation for Tracy's date with Javi, a black male. This partially explains why female bisexuality is considered more acceptable than male bisexuality. However, this discourse does not account for Tracy and Evie experiencing pleasure, fun or enjoyment from their kissing experience without the presence of a male. For instance, it is possible that Evie and Tracy really

want to kiss each other and see Tracy's upcoming date as a justification to act on their desire for one another. It becomes significant that two females are practicing their kissing abilities for a male rather than a scene depicting two males kissing to practice for their date with a female. Once again, the reverse would threaten masculinity, and in-turn the dominant discourse of women as men's property.

Tracy is shown drinking a beer before her kiss with Evie. This presence of this object (beer bottle) draws on socially shared discourse of alcohol consumption and reminds the viewer that both teens are drinking alcohol and that their judgment may be impaired. Both teens are also underage and are not legally old enough to drink in the first place. Using Parker's methodology, this scene draws on the discourse of Stanley Hall's developmental storm and stress theory (Côté & Allahaar, 2006). Tracy and Evie are seen as acting without the ability to make 'sound' and 'safe' decisions as they decide to drink alcohol even though they know it is illegal and may have consequences. This theory is embedded within the discourse of youth as hyper-sexualized as Tracy and Evie are prone to uncontrollable biological impulses. They show a desire for each other and their male dates within the same evening, implying large sexual appetites and raging hormones. In other words, the two teens are hyper-sexual and have poor judgment all around. Together, this leads Tracy and Evie to make-out with each other (which is considered socially taboo) prior to making out with their males dates.

Hall's work may also be paired with other developmental theories of brain development such as neuropsychology (Côté & Allahaar, 2006). These theories suggest that brain development occurs from back to front with the frontal lobe developing last. Therefore, under the influence of alcohol they may not be able to inhibit themselves from conduct that they otherwise would know is socially prohibited.

A Date with Javi Continued 46:28

While the previous scene depicts Tracy's preparation for her date, this scene is the actual date. Two young males meet with Tracy and Evie for a double date at Evie's home. This scene has been selected due to its complex portrayal of sexuality. This scene involves four youth, two males, and two females, of different races, being intimate together in close proximity. Therefore, this scene was selected as it conforms to and resists dominant discourses of sexuality. In particular, this scene involves discourses of black males as sexualized, women as sexual objects, and heteronormativity.

Scene.

The scene begins with a close-up shot of Evie and Tracy smoking marijuana and gossiping together on a couch. The gossiping leads to the laughter of four individuals as the camera shot widens and it becomes evident that Tracy and Evie are with two young black males who are drinking beer. The male characters are sitting on the floor beside Tracy and Evie.

The room they are in is dimly lit and as the shot widens further, candles are lit on the coffee table along with beer bottles in the foreground. The background and foreground scenery foreshadows sensuality as a dimly lit room with candles and quiet music 'set the mood' for romance. Javi then says, "what is this shit, man" and turns off the radio and begins to beat box a song for Tracy. Javi then turns the rap music on again.

Evie slides off the couch and straddles the lap of her male date. Evie begins to kiss him. Following Evie's lead, Tracy does the same and slides off the couch to sit beside her date Javi, and to kiss him. Tracy momentarily stops kissing Javi to look over at Evie and her male date. The camera does a close-up of Evie on the male's lap with his hands on Evie's thigh. Tracy then turns her back to the camera and gets on Javi's lap. Both females are now on-top of the males

with their backs to the camera. While Tracy resumes her make-out session with Javi, she keeps a close watch on Evie. The shot goes back to Evie and her date showing Evie taking off her shirt while saying “it’s getting kind of hot in here”. Tracey holds a beer to Javi’s mouth for him to take a drink, a sexual innuendo of Tracy holding Javi’s penis. Once again, following Evie, Tracy takes her shirt off. Then for the first time Evie pauses to survey Tracy and how she is doing with her date. The two females make eye contact and smile at each other. Javi then unzips his pants and the screen goes black.

Analysis.

During the above scene it is apparent that Tracy is inexperienced as she looks to Evie for her next move. It is significant that the only white character is represented as sexually inexperienced. The portrayal of Tracy as inexperienced and thus innocent de-sexualizes her while sexualizing the black males and Latina female within the scene. The mise en scène framing of the shot is tight and close. This type of frame creates the impression that there is no room to move around, to escape or to go back. Tracy’s date, Javi, does not seem concerned that Tracy is unsure of what she is doing and/or that she is simply following Eve. The relational networks are also imperative to recognize: that Tracey, a young white female is making out with a black male.

Step 12 of Parker’s methodology recommends that an analysis draw on discourses as the kinds of social bond that make the contradictory arrangements between the subjects in this text possible. This interpretation fits with the above theory, as Javi is consumed by his desire for his white female date and will not let any doubt or apprehension spoil his pursuit of her. bell hooks (1990) adds that focusing on white female sexuality in conjunction with black male lust reinforces the link between black men and rape. Once again, the scene depicts the journey of a white female’s sexual development as she ‘makes out’ with a black male, yet challenges the

discourse of black males as rapists as the females in the scene are in control of the sexual encounter.

In this shot the *mise en scène* staging positions are very significant. Both Tracy and Evie have their backs to the camera. By having the female characters turn away from the camera we cannot see their faces. This reading of the shot is consistent with Mulvey's (1975) concept of women viewed as sexual objects in film. The faceless female characters become objectified; they are faceless, void of identity. This further substantiates bell hooks' theory of the white women being conceptualized as a black male's denied object.

Looking at the relational networks between the characters, the romantic relationships between white females and black males in this scene may be alternatively conceptualized in a more positive light. Commenting on the oppressed position of black women, Frances Beale writes "as blacks they suffer all the burdens of prejudice and mistreatment that fall on anyone with dark skin. As women they bear the additional burden of having to cope with white and black men" (Beale, 1979, p. 92). In other words, white females are oppressed by white males because of their gender, and black males are oppressed because of their race. This theory asserts that since both groups are oppressed there is a leveling of power imbalances. Utilizing this theory it is telling that in the beginning of the scene, the *mise en scène* character placement of the scene depicts the females as occupying the upper portion of the frame. Occupying space at the top of the frame suggests control and dominance. Once things get sexual the females move down to the male's level, and the females are on top of the males, placing them in a position of dominance. This challenges the notion that the females are being taken advantage of. Since the females are on top of the males they are in a physical position of control as they are initiating the contact. This suggests that young females have the sexuality and force to be in charge. This scene also

violates social sanctions and creates an expanded range of sexual options and partners.

This scene depicts two heterosexual couples both making out side-by-side. While each couple in isolation fits the dominant heteronormative model, both couples being sexual together all in the same room challenges the model. In other words, the proximity of the characters is close; there is not much space between them. The two couples being intimate within the same space watching one another implies group sex. As previously discussed, Foucault (1985) articulates that the discourse of abstinence notes that intimacy should be private and between a monogamous heterosexual married couple preferably for the purpose of procreation. This scene challenges this as Tracy and Evie are intimate with their partners in close proximity while eagerly watching one another in the act with their respective dates.

An alternative reading could suggest that the two females are making a moral decision to double date, adhering to a 'safety in numbers' mentality that argues there is less risk of becoming victimized than if they were alone.

Losing Control 49:30 - 51:22

In this scene, I will be looking at an intimate encounter between Evie, Tracy, and an 'adult' male. This scene is of particular interest as youth and adult sexuality are portrayed simultaneously. As a consequence, this scene draws on discourses of youth as asexual and innocent and/or vulnerable while also portraying youth as hyper-sexualized. More specifically, discourses embedded within this scene include: child sexuality to be protected, youth as hypersexual, and women as men's property. The following analysis will begin by turning the text into words and will primarily draw on the significance of objects in text, networks of relationships and discourses embedded within the text.

Scene.

Tracy's male neighbour drives by Tracy and Evie, turns his head to check out the two females and smiles at the girls flirtatiously. Evie asks Tracy "Who's that" to which Tracy responds "Luke or uh lifeguard boy, his parents moved away and left him the house". Evie then gets up, grabs Tracy's arm while walking towards the neighbor and shouts, "hey Luke! Got any beer?"

The next scene depicts Tracy and Luke inside Luke's living room. Luke is playing an arcade game located in his living room while Tracy leans in the doorway with her legs and arms crossed in a self-conscious position as she watches Luke. Luke's character is portrayed as being an adult in his early 20's.

Evie then enters the room with shot glasses of alcohol. Luke gives Evie and his neighbor Tracy (both thirteen years old) access to alcohol, condoning underage drinking which is illegal in North America. While approaching Tracy and Luke, Evie says "Luke, you are so lucky" she then walks backwards while admiring the room and says, "I want your house". Evie serves everyone a drink, and after Evie and Tracy have theirs Luke follows and has his shot.

Evie and Tracy begin dancing provocatively with each other. The two teens grind their hips and butt against one another. Luke watches them briefly, and then growing uncomfortable says, "I think I'm going to call some of my friends". Evie quickly stops dancing with Tracy and moves over to Luke putting her hands on either side of him to physically stop him. Luke resists Evie but then Evie pulls him over to Tracy and says "how about we make a Luke sandwich?" The girls start to grind Luke as he says "How about you're jail bait?" Evie reassures Luke that she will never tell, and Tracy confirms by stating, "no, because your boyfriend would kill you". Evie further convinces him by saying, "come on Luke," and pushes him backwards towards the couch. Luke points his finger at Evie and says, "Danger Will Robinson". He still allows himself

to be placed on the couch and Evie climbs onto his lap and mounts him. Evie says, “it’s not illegal to kiss.” Luke challenges her by asking, “says who?”

Evie begins to make out with him while Tracey stands alongside and watches awkwardly with her arms crossed against her chest, to create a physical barrier of protection. Evie invites Tracy onto the couch with them to check out Luke’s “white boy ghetto lips”. Tracy says, “No, it’s Luke” reminding the audience that the network of relationship here is significant; Luke is the boy next door, like a brother, making this further taboo. Evie asks Luke where his bong is, and Luke points to his shelf saying, “right there” as he begins to make out with Tracy. Evie gets up to get the bong when Luke reaches his hand out to Evie and says “why don’t you get back over here girl”.

Analysis.

Luke’s character is at times portrayed as an adult. Luke appears ‘adult like’ as he experiences adult privileges such as owning a home. However, Luke is also portrayed as youthful and immature in playing arcade games which are often associated with younger users and are not typically found in an ‘adult’s’ living room. This is further substantiated by his decision to encourage underage drinking.

Evie admires Luke’s home. Evie’s admiration and fantasy and/or jealousy points out that Luke has privilege and freedom that the girls do not have access to. It is significant that Luke is a young adult white male and property owner. In, *The Wages of Whiteness*, Roediger (1991) explains that the 18th century definition of “Freeman” implied either political or economic independence. Race is clearly linked to class as one that does not own property cannot experience freedom. Luke’s position of power and privilege is very attractive to Evie and Tracy.

Luke clearly communicates that he is well aware that the girls are underage by stating

“How about you’re jailbait?” By utilizing Parker’s (2005) method of elaborating on socially shared material, this phrase reminds the audience that an adult participating in sexual conduct with a minor leads to persecution and/or prosecution. The phrase ‘jailbait’ refers to a minor that baits or tempts an adult to break the law and go to jail. The phrase draws on an analogy of fishing in which the fisher baits his line in order to attract fish. This suggests that the girls are “baiting” or tempting Luke. This also suggests that Evie and Tracy are being provocative. In a situation where young girls are involved with adult males, typically the female minor would be viewed as the innocent victim. This would be consistent with the discourse of childhood sexuality to be protected. Although, in this scene we see the opposite where the minors initiate, tempt, and convince the adult. This role reversal is sometimes used by sexual predators to defend or explain their transgressions: it was her fault; she tempted me.

In the beginning of the above scene the audience is told that Evie has a boyfriend. The fact that Evie has a boyfriend yet is still being sexually proactive towards Tracy and Luke gives the impression that Evie is a slut. This draws on the gendered discourse of abstention where there is more room for males to be sexual pre-maritally than there is for females, creating the double standard of player vs. slut (Tolman, 2002). More specifically, “...boys and girls are exposed to a set of rules, principles, and roles that are mapped out for the production of ‘normal’ heterosexual adolescent relationships, and sexual behavior, in which gender is the most salient factor” (Tolman, 2002, p.7). The discourse of women as men’s property stipulates that a female is the exclusive property of one male. While pursuing relations with a female outside of the exclusive relationship is somewhat permissible, Evie is going after a female (Tracy) and another male during a threesome make-out session.

When Evie first brings Luke to the couch, he says: “Danger, Will Robinson!” Danger

Will Robinson is a catch phrase from the 1960s' American television series *Lost in Space* spoken by voice actor Dick Tufeld (Wikipedia, 2011). In the film, a Robot, acting as a surrogate guardian, warns Will Robinson when the boy is unaware of an impending threat. "In everyday use, the phrase warns someone that they are about to make a mistake or that they are overlooking something" (Wikipedia, 2011). This phrase appeared once during episode 11 of season 3 *The Deadliest of the Species*. The Robot gave warnings intermittently to Will and the other crew members of the Jupiter 2, in the form of the expressions "Warning!" and "Danger!" (Wikipedia, 2011).

Therefore, Luke's statement reveals that he is aware of an 'impending threat' or that he is about to get himself into a lot of trouble. Luke's admission reveals that female minors are off-limits, while also demonstrating that they are appealing and attractive. As a result, this scene draws on the discourse of child innocence. This discourse maintains that children's sexuality is to be protected and that child and adult relationships must have strict and defined boundaries (Foucault, 1989). Within this discourse, childhood is viewed as something to be preserved and guarded as children represent the future generation. These attitudes helped to construct a discourse of 'children's sexuality'. As Foucault states "A specific 'children's sexuality' was established: it was precarious, dangerous, to be watched over constantly" (Foucault, 1989, p. 141).

Kincaid (1998), argues that the protection/isolation/special status of children seems to have led to an erotic centering of the child which causes the topic of childhood sexuality to be experienced as both 'distressing' and 'titillating'. This partially explains why Luke is so attracted to Evie and Tracy. This scene epitomizes the title of this thesis: provocative innocence. While Evie and Tracy are considered to be innocent and naïve because of their age, they are also

portrayed as sexually provocative.¹⁹

After kissing Luke, Evie invites Tracy to check out Luke's "White boy ghetto lips". The phrase "white boy ghetto lips" draws on the stereotype that black men have big lips. Lips are often considered to be a sexual body part as they are used in kissing and oral sex. Stereotyping black men as have large lips reinforces the stereotype that black men are overly sexualized as sexual predators (hooks, 1990). Conversely, individuals of European ancestry are considered to have narrow thin lips, implying a reticent sexuality. Furthermore, Luke is the first and only white male that the girls kiss in the film; the others are all black males (and each other). Consequently, when Evie says Luke has white boy ghetto lips, she is racializing him by comparing his lips to the lips of the black males she has kissed. This is significant as the audience is reminded that Evie and Tracy are making out with an adult white male.

In this section, I have analyzed four scenes from the film *Thirteen*: Brooke's boyfriend hits me, a date with Javi, a date with Javi continued, and losing control. The first scene is the dialogue between Evie and Melanie that leads to Evie's claim of abuse. In this scene, Evie is portrayed as manipulative, deceptive and persuasive. Evie's character traits and her closeness with Tracy, cause Melanie to become protective of her daughter. This series of events invokes the discourse that children are innocent and in need of protection. Alternatively, Evie is able to manipulate Melanie into feeling that she must also protect her from an abusive environment. Moreover, this scene draws on psychoanalytic theory and the discourse of women as men's property.

In the second scene, a date with Javi, I analyzed Evie and Tracy's discussion and preparation for Tracy's date with a young black male. This is the one scene where Evie and Tracy are shown kissing each other. Read through the discourse of women as men's property, the

¹⁹ This will be further discussed in the final chapter.

kiss suggests that the two young females are just having fun and are only ‘practicing’ for their male dates. In addition, Evie and Tracy’s kiss occurs while they are both drinking alcohol.

Consequently, this scene draws on Stanley Hall’s developmental storm and stress theory (Côté & Allahaar, 2006). This discourse implies that Tracey and Evie’s kiss is a result of ‘uncontrollable biological impulses’ and poor decision making.

Third, I read the scene, a date with Javi continued. This scene draws on discourses of young black men alongside the discourse of white, innocent, females. This scene was interpreted as violating social sanctions and as creating an expanded range of sexual options and partners.

Finally, I explored the near-threesome between Evie, Tracy, and an ‘adult’ male neighbour. This scene draws on white, male power and privilege as well as the discourses of sexuality as abstinence and childhood sexuality to be protected.

Discussion

In the above literature review and analysis I have demonstrated that research on popular culture and youth sexuality is well documented. However, to my knowledge, this project is the first to perform a deconstructive discourse analysis guided by a dual philosophical framework of father law and immanence to deconstruct discourses of youth’s sexuality as portrayed in the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke 2003). In this section I will provide an overview of theory and my analysis as it applies to my dual framework. This discussion will be divided into two sections: the father law and immanence. This will be followed by a third section that will address how the father law and immanence interact to produce desire and sexuality in the film. Finally I will discuss how my subject position has been changed/been impacted by my research.

The Father Law

The father law has many implications for how one comes to think about and experience

sexuality. Through ideology and ideological institutions, dominant discourses act to enforce adherence to heterosexuality. This subjection to dominant law, creates the impression that heterosexuality is the only legitimate form of sexuality and anything outside of heterosexuality is seen to threaten its dominance. Therefore, the threat that other subjugated forms of sexuality pose are criticized at all levels of the social: within the family, in the local community, in government institutions and practices, and especially in all forms of popular culture and media.

This has serious implications for individuals that do not fit the dominant model of heterosexual desire: they may²⁰ face ridicule and rejection, become outsiders that have chosen to resist the dominant model. In other words, the dominant model of heteronormativity is so heavily reinforced and embedded in the minds of communities that fear and uncertainty arises at the very consideration of feeling or proclaiming desire that falls outside of heteronormativity.

The dominant dogma does not concern itself with idiosyncratic differences or who people really are, or who they desire. The dogma asks everyone to feel and live the same way according to the same beliefs and principles; it asks us to live a lie. I have deconstructed the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) as a way to demonstrate that heterosexuality may be dominant, but it is neither natural nor the only form of sexuality. My research utilizes a dual methodology to locate dominant discourses within the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003). The study of youth sexuality in popular culture is important as each cultural text reflects common discourses that construct youth's sexuality. The resistance or instances that transgress typical understandings of teen sexuality are related to my immanent framework. The father law, that represents the upholding of dominant norms, occupies only a minute space within the immanent plane. In other words, the two constructions of father law and immanence are connected. This research suggests that

²⁰ This of course depends on many factors, such as access to resources and/or support systems.

embedded in cultural texts one may also find challenges to patterns of power²¹, also known as modes of resistance. Instances of resistance allow for a multiplicity of sexual expressions that are not confined to the rigid constructions that have been created for youth and their sexuality. I will now provide an overview of literature and sections of my analysis that can be read as the father law.

The father law is heavily embedded within *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003). The father law is a hegemonic process where individuals are told exactly what is forbidden in their actions which include sexual feelings and conduct. Foucault (1980) adds that power is often exerted on sex through language and discourse and creates the father law. The above analysis has exposed numerous examples of dominant discourses embedded within this text: sexuality of abstention, child sexuality to be protected, women as men's property, women as object and youth as hyper-sexualized.

The father law embedded within the text is exemplified by the manifestation of desire as lack. Desire as a notion of lack is a function of the market economy to lead people to believe they are missing something important that they must obtain (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983). This purposely organizes society's wants and needs and leads humanity to fear they will not have enough even in the presence of abundant production. In *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003), Tracy experiences desire as lack in her beginning stages of identity formation and body practices. Tracy attempts to reach an ideal look to gain the attention and acceptance of the popular Evie and her peers. Evie is considered to be attractive by her male peers (and Tracy) and so Tracy looks to her for how to become sexually attractive herself. Tracy also consumes clothes and fashion items she cannot afford, by stealing money and merchandise. It is evident that Tracy

²¹ I am referring to a Foucauldian (1978) conceptualization of power as force. This force is omnipresent yet becomes visible only at points of resistance.

experiences desire as lack, that she is missing something she feels she must obtain.

Through ideological processes, dominant discourse is reinforced on many levels within the film to ensure subjection to the ruling ideology of heterosexuality. Ideology is reinforced internally at the local level: this is seen when Tracy hesitates to kiss Evie and calls her a 'lesbo' before kissing her anyways. It is evident that Tracy has internalized heteronormativity. Tracy is aware that kissing Evie is taboo and would make her a 'lesbo'. Even though Tracy wants to kiss Evie, and does kiss Evie, she also feels that she is transgressing.

From the above examples, we may begin to see that our thoughts and judgments concerning youth sexuality in the film (and in general) are not always our "own" beliefs, and can reflect ideology from ideological institutions and their actions that reinforce a dominant sexual ideology of heterosexuality (Althusser, 1971). Ideology functions by allowing people to feel that they are speaking independently when their beliefs have actually been enforced and influenced by dominant discourses (Parker, 2005).

The discourse analysis that has been conducted in this thesis provides an opportunity to study and deconstruct the ideology belonging to sexual discourse. Ideology is commonly present in the form of language, (Althusser, 1971) and exists within the cultural texts we encounter on a daily basis that influence our beliefs about youth sexuality. This finding appears to complement Butler's (1990) notion of a sexed body whereby culture inscribes its meaning. Butler (1990) discusses that there is not anything natural or essential about heterosexuality: that it is only made dominant through discourse and ideology.

Feminism, Race and the Father Law

Since feminism and critical race theory share a common goal of critically assessing forms of oppression, the dominant discourses they tackle can be viewed as instances of the father law.

These dominant discourses are reinforced within the film to ensure subjection to the ruling ideology of heterosexuality

I have utilized feminist theories in my analysis of the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003). Feminist literature was somewhat useful as a majority of the film's content dealt with female sexuality. The dominant discourses of sexuality that were explored: children's sexuality to be protected, children and youth as hyper-sexualized, sexuality as abstention, women as men's property, women as sexual objects, and race discourse are all highly gendered. Third-wave and post-feminism were quite useful in making sense of dominant discourses that occur in the context of a Western patriarchal society. As a consequence, these dominant discourses are gendered, and therefore, such constructions have different implications for males versus females (Cameron, 1992).

For instance, the discourse of child's sexuality to be protected is associated with a universal conceptualization of the 'child' as "bleached, bourgeois and androgynous" (Kincaid, 1998, p.248). Such a conceptualization distracts our society from diversity (gender, race and class based differences). By focusing on an idealized universal childhood, the dominant dogma privileges/normalizes a white, bourgeois, experience of childhood over others. In this sense, the discourse of child's sexuality to be protected is a social construction that represents and benefits the predominantly male dominant class or institutions that act to organize and limit behavior. Power within patriarchy is relative, and children who are neither white nor bourgeois do not reap the material and social rewards of a 'universalized' conceptualized of childhood (bell hooks, 1990, p. 63).

While dominant discourse and ideology work to create and reinforce heterosexuality, both also construct childhood, youth, innocence and child sexuality. In a CNN article on the film

Thirteen (Hardwicke, 2003), a journalist writes: “‘*Thirteen*’ is about Tracy (Evan Rachel Wood), a girl who goes from being a Barbie- and teddy bear-loving child to sex and drugs almost overnight, partly thanks to the peer pressure of the popular Evie (Leopold, CNN).” This comment reveals that often the constructs of innocence and provocativeness are seen as incompatible. The two are considered dissenting as the dominant construction of childhood relies on the presence of innocence and asexuality. As previously stated, the universal child is conceptualized as bleached, bourgeois and androgynous. I would speculate that any controversy surrounding the film is based on the dilemma of childhood; of asexual innocence versus sexuality, signaling a corrupt loss of innocence. The age of thirteen is especially significant as this represents the transformation from childhood to teenage-hood. Viewing youth as sexual beings disrupts the dominant adult construction of child sexuality; that it is a sexuality that should be protected and preserved.

Thirteen (Hardwicke, 2003) at times resists dominant ideology while at other times reinforces the image of an innocent, bourgeois, androgynous, asexual child. While Tracy and Evie maintain some level of innocence because of their age, thirteen, they also do not fit the universal conceptualization of the innocent child: bleached, bourgeois and androgynous. Tracy is white, lower class, and female while Evie is Latina, lower class and female. Therefore the film does accomplish a level of controversy and resistance while simultaneously keeping the dominant conceptualization of innocence intact.

The psychoanalytic discourse of child and youth as hyper-sexualized views children from the very beginning of life as sexually motivated (Foucault, 1989). However, this discourse is gendered; there are different ideas associated with male and female hyper-sexuality. Within this discourse males are seen as being sexual predators, behavior that is often encouraged and

approved of, while females are seen as needing protection from boys yet also must be attractive for boys. The discourse of child and youth as hyper-sexualized is set up to reinforce traditional gender norms as well as heterosexuality. Males are encouraged to be the dominant sexual aggressor while females are discouraged from this behavior, limiting any potential competition. Furthermore, females compete with each other to be attractive for males, rather than attractive for both males and females, once again reinforcing heterosexuality.

The discourse of sexuality as abstention is also gendered. This discourse stipulates that sexual activity is only permissible between married heterosexual couples, preferably for the purpose of procreation. Sexuality of abstention is embedded in many sex education programs that teach youth that sex should be delayed until marriage, and discussion of birth control methods is usually limited to statements of ineffectiveness (Kohler et al, 2008; Trenholm, 2008; Pinkleton et al, 2008). This gendered discourse sets up a double standard where there is more room for males to be sexual pre-marriage than there is for females creating the label of player vs. slut. In *Thirteen*, Evie and Tracy resist the discourse of sexuality by being sexual with many male partners and each other. However, they are also labeled as sluts for their behavior; a label that carries a negative connotation in Western society and prohibits other females from participating in similar behavior²².

Gender inequality is also embedded in the discourse of women as men's property. This discourse prohibits women from having close relationships with other men. However, it is permissible for women to have physical relations with other women as this is less threatening to masculinity and male dominance (Foucault, 1989). Women as men's property claims that women can only experience pleasure if they perceive the male as their master and therefore requires that the male be present. This discourse was portrayed in the scene "A Date with Javi" where Tracy

²² This will be challenged in the immanence section using raunch culture.

and Evie kiss in order to practice for Tracy's date with a male. Therefore, this discourse gives the male a position of power over the female, while the female experiences more leniencies towards relations with other females. In other words, the discourse of women as men's property structures relationships between women and men, as well as relationships between women, and by association, reinforces heteronormativity.

Related to women as men's property is the discourse of women as sexual objects, which is also a gendered discourse. This discourse views women as objects or individuals that men must constantly train, educate and watch over or stay away from when under the power of another man (Foucault, 1985). By objectifying the woman as a sexual object many men (other than the woman's husband/father) may fantasize about the woman being their exclusive property. Laura Mulvey, a feminist film theorist, offers a discussion of women portrayed as sexual objects on screen. Mulvey (1975) explains how the act of looking itself may be pleasurable as well as masculinized. The discourse of women as sexual objects portrays women as overly-sexualized subjects that must be disciplined and watched over, which is consistent with patriarchal society²³.

The film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) can be read as a post-feminist text. Kelly & Pomerantz (2009) argue that *Thirteen* (2003) limits girls' struggles with sexuality to individualized problems, rather than structural ones. In many ways, *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) is a classic example of post-feminism because structural issues are ultimately reduced to individual problems that can be solved within the family (Kelly & Pomerantz, 2009).

My discussion of gendered inequality also considered critical race theory as it intersects with sexuality. Since race is a category of difference these categories become unequal especially as status and privilege are conferred by race (Roediger, 1991). The social renditions of

²³ This will be challenged in the Immanence section.

masculinity and femininity carry with them racial overtones (Roediger, 1991). One manifestation of the privileged white status is its role in the feminist movement. Some white feminist theorists base many of their insights on gender essentialism that denotes a monolithic women's experience (Delgado, 2000, p.253; Harris, 2000). Second-wave feminism is characterized by binary constructions and is based on a privileged white perspective (Skott-Myhre, 2009).

Black males and females, and Latinas are over-sexualized in dominant discourses. Black men are often stereotyped as sexual predators and criminals. These stereotypes contribute to the dominant discourse that all black males are rapists (bell hooks, 1990). Black women are often conceptualized as overly sexual, a low value is attributed to their sexuality and they are also vulnerable to rape due to a lack of legal protection. Similar to Black women and men, Latinos are conceptualized as over-sexualized, violent criminals. These class and race based discourses often suggest that to be a Latino male means to participate in gang activity, experience poverty, be deviant and use drugs (Hutchinson, 327). This racial stereotype was represented through Evie's character being portrayed as Latina, overly-sexualized and sexually experienced. Furthermore, Latino males are often considered to be very macho. The stereotype of Latino males as dominantly masculine assumes heterosexuality. Overall, these discourses afford the white, bourgeois, male privilege and status.

For the above reasons, it is not surprising that the film is rated R for restricted audiences regardless of the fact that it was co-written by a teen and the main actresses are teens. The film contains underage sexuality, and therefore the dominant suggests youth should be shielded from sexuality not only because they must be protected, but also because it challenges dominant values and practices. While the discourse of child sexuality as protected claims that children's

sexuality is something to be concerned about and monitored, the discourse of children and youth as hyper-sexualized challenges this. This psychoanalytic influenced discourse views children from the very beginning of life as sexually motivated. By considering the conflicting discourses of youth sexuality and the portrayal of youth sexuality in the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003), it becomes evident that not all youth ARE asexual and/or heterosexual in lived reality.

Consequently, the dominant construction of youth sexuality as asexual, innocent, and in need of protection is demonstrated to not have any universal validity and threatens its power of dominance.

While dominant discourses within the framework of feminism and critical race theory are useful to much of my analysis I am more so drawn to a theory of immanence as it moves beyond a focus on inequality and oppression. On their own, feminism and critical race theory are limited in their capacity to create unlimited opportunities for sexuality. While useful to a certain extent, feminism and critical race theory often focus on a system of inequality and oppression. As a result, these theories are not all-encompassing. By using them, a binary system of power imbalance and inequality becomes apparent. However, these frameworks do not have the ability to take us beyond these restricted relationships. This is why I will not focus as much on these theories. Instead, I will use the framework of immanence as a revolutionary tool that has its own politics. The theoretical edge of immanence is useful as a postmodern lens.

Immanence: Creating and Rediscovering Infinite Possibility

As previously stated, immanence encompasses an infinite or multitude of possibilities. Immanence is the law of what is already in existence without interference of the dominant; the law of what *IS*, or what Deleuze and Guattari (1994) call the transcendental. Immanence may also be conceptualized as that which produces itself (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). In other words,

within immanence everything is in production and is capable of producing. Within an immanent view of sexuality, heterosexual desire, femininity and masculinity, male and female, are only a few possibilities out of a multitude of dynamic assemblages.

The sexual content of *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) seems to incite an urgent need to protect innocence from sexuality. This may stem from awareness that youth and provocativeness can be linked. Once again, I would like to draw on Kincaid (1998) who maintains that the innocence of childhood sexuality is in its self “distressing” and “titillating”. The very limits and constructions that have attempted to shield youth from sexuality counterproductively creates a sense of provocativeness. Therefore, the film, and discourse itself provide a mode of resistance, a way out. This phenomenon is evident in the film when Luke, an adult male, is tempted to be sexual with two thirteen-year-old females, precisely because he knows it is “wrong” and off-limits.

Thirteen (Hardwicke, 2003) challenges dominant ideology while upholding the image of an innocent, bourgeois, androgynous, asexual child. While the females maintain some level of innocence because of their age, they also do not fit the universal conceptualization of the innocent child: bleached, bourgeois and androgynous. Tracy is white, lower class, and female while Evie is Latina, lower class and female. Therefore the film does accomplish a level of controversy and resistance while simultaneously keeping the dominant conceptualization of innocence intact.

The discourse of women as sexual objects may also be contested. Mulvey’s (1975) theory of male gaze has been critiqued by feminist raunch culture that accounts for female enjoyment of cinema. Raunch culture (Levy, 2005) offers a critique of the male gaze and coincides with a post-feminist view of sexuality. Within this culture, the gaze is reclaimed by the female as

willing participant and spectator. Within raunch culture, females are participating, consuming and enjoying sexual forms of entertainment that previously considered exclusively for a male audience (Levy, 2005). Raunch culture also interrogates sexuality as abstinence. Typically, sexuality as abstinence is a gendered discourse that prohibits females from being sexual pre-marriage. Females who are sexual pre-marriage are labeled as sluts. This acts to prohibit female sexual behavior in order to avoid this negative label. However, the slut label is re-appropriated and almost celebrated or embraced within raunch culture and consequently challenges the discourse of sexuality as abstention.

It is possible to conceptualize *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) through the framework of immanence. The official *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) website quotes Evan Rachel Wood (Fox Searchlight, 2011) speaking on the content of the film and youth identity in general saying “you’re not a kid and not an adult, so you don’t really know who you are”. This quotation exemplifies an immanent identity; an identity in flux. Tracy embodies immanence through being a body without organs. She is in a continuous state of instability and fluidity where all immanent possibilities hang in the balance. Both Evie and Tracy live in the moment and do not concern themselves with social norms or future outcomes. Tracy is independent from human organizations of power and/or sexual constructions.

Evie and her sexuality also personify the organless body. Evie lives in the moment and does not allow herself or her sexuality to be categorized; Evie and her sexuality are unpredictable. A body without organs is positive in the sense that it is imageless and devoid of cultural organizations or productions such as gender. Therefore, Evie’s body is closer to the Immanent plane.

Evie’s body may also be conceptualized a desiring-producing machine. Producing

machines can operate with immanence principles if they malfunction and do not produce identical products, as it is best to deindividualize through multiplication and displacement. This is precisely what Evie's character emulates through her social relations and fluid sense of identity. Machines continuously produce symmetrical and identical products. In conceptualizing the body as a machine, this representation inhibits one's capacity to act spontaneously and creatively along the plane of immanence. As a machinic body, Evie resists producing a similar pattern of thoughts and actions and instead seems to deindividualize though embracing change and uncertainty. She has a desire that produces and is productive.

Evie's desire relates to the notion of desire put forth by Deleuze and Guattari (1983): desire as production. In this sense, desire does not lack anything, rather it is continually in the process of producing. This allows for an ever changing multitude of ways to produce or act on desire and resembles the principle of immanence. Evie realizes her identity and desires are separate from what is dictated to her by dominant society, and this is precisely what she resists. As Foucault (1978) explains, society attempts to restrict individuals and impose ideals of appropriate sexual conduct through discourse and ideology. However, this act of restricting and prohibiting actually creates the context for rebellion against these restrictions. The multiple discourses of sexuality that were a result of this rebellion more accurately display a feature of immanence. This rebellion occurs as there is no natural or essential sex or sexuality only sexual discourse. Sexuality itself belongs to the immanent plane of multiple possibilities in its original form. Evie shows desire and affection for people of various ages, sexes, genders, and races. Through becoming aware that heterosexuality is a dominant discourse limiting our immanent possibilities one may, like Evie become more apt to resist these restrictions.

The Father Law Meets Immanence

The dominant only remains dominant by finding ways to ensure its messages/agendas are maintained and reinforced. Because of this necessary process, ideological messages permeate almost everything we come into contact with, making it difficult to differentiate our own beliefs and desires from what we have been expected to follow. In other words, idiosyncratic lived experiences occur along-side dominant constructions of universalized 'truth'. Ideology, through dominant messages, strongly encourages one to adhere to dominant rather than the idiosyncratic interpretations. However, these dominant messages are constructed and have no universal truth or validity. Popular culture is never removed from the culture it is produced in, including dominant discourse that attempts to limit and restrict youth's sexuality. This is why the father law and immanence interact within film (a cultural text) that carries the double role of both an immanent system of production and a dissemination system for father law. Since each individual is also within the cultural context, she/he has their own idiosyncratic perspective on the text yet simultaneously recognizes images and words that represent shared cultural themes.

The complex messages within media texts have implications for youth and their sexuality. In Western society, youth is seen as a period of self-discovery and identity development. The idea of "finding oneself" implies that each individual young person is lost and must find an identity along with beliefs and desires of their own. Individuality implies diversity. Youth use multiple resources in order to arrive at an understanding of who they are. These resources often include peers, parents and media. Embedded in these sources of information is ideology that reinforces dominant discourse. These dominant discourses and ideologies suggest that there is a right way and a wrong way to live, think and feel. The 'right' way is dominant and ideology functions to have individuals always follow what is socially acceptable. Therefore, youth receive two contradictory messages. First, they are individuals and must discover who they

are and how they are different. Second, youth receive a message that whoever they choose to be and desire must fit within dominant constructs and limits set for sexuality and gender.

By acknowledging the conflicting messages youth receive, it is telling that Western culture censors the content that youth have access to. It is interesting that *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) is a film based on a youth's experience, co-written by a youth, and includes young teen actors yet was rated R and restricted to adult audiences. I would argue that the film was rated R because it challenges heteronormativity and portrays young teens as sexual beings. It is obvious that the individuals with power and authority within Western society; also known as white, male, bourgeois, adults, do not want youth to have access to information and/or media that challenges their dominant agenda to conform to heterosexuality. Pomerantz & Kelly (2009) partially attribute the controversy of the film to "...concern over the sexual aggression and exhibitionism reportedly being displayed by teenage girls—described as “sluts” and “skanks” (p. 7).

The content of the film attracted crowds of mothers and their teenage daughters attending the movie together. The director of the film, Catharine Hardwicke, recommended the film to parents as a precautionary measure (Pomerantz & Kelly, 2009). "...Parents heeded this warning, terrified by the idea that their daughters might be as wild as the film's characters, the audience continually sees the girls, in their perpetual drug haze, as vulnerable to rape, and it is this fear that haunts the film, giving it an overwhelmingly sinister and moral tone" (Pomerantz & Kelly, 2009, p.8). Similar to what Giroux (1998) argues, it becomes evident that society constructs youth as subversive subjects, yet limits youth's access to subversive texts.

While on the surface the film may appear to be controversial, in many ways the content actually conforms to dominant discourses. For instance, the film presents Evie and Tracy as bisexual rather than lesbian. While Evie and Tracy's relationship is an example of resistance it is

counteracted with scene's where the females are also sexual with males. In particular, Evie and Tracy's kiss only occurs in order to prepare or practice for their male dates. This sends the message that female sexuality is not a real form of sexuality; and must depend on the presence of a dominating male figure, which in turn supports a heteronormative model. This begs the question of whether the film would be as well received if it captured the relationship of two lesbian teens or homosexual males.

The category of youth is a large target population for the entertainment industry (Shary, 2002). Genres of film are often created with a youthful audience in mind; the film *Thirteen* (Hardwicke, 2003) is one example. Often popular culture is only consumed at a superficial level and judged by the extent of the entertainment value. However, this research demonstrates that embedded in cultural texts are complex and contradictory messages that both reflect and interrogate dominant discourse, offering modes of resistance. The father law and immanence interact in interesting ways to produce desire and sexuality in the film *Thirteen* (2003, Hardwicke). Experiencing and thinking about desire in dominant ways is not wrong, it is simply limited. An immanent perspective does not dismiss heterosexuality; instead, the framework points to all of the possibilities for sexuality, including what has come to be understood as "dominant".

Where am I? Who am I?

In the beginning of my methodology section, I reflected upon my social location and what it brings to this research project. I found the process of reflecting on my social location unnerving and difficult. I utilized Pillow's (2003) method of uncomfortable-reflexivity in order to reveal a tenuous knowing of my 'individual' self.

I feel that my social location has been impacted by this research process. More

specifically, in some ways I have come to identify with Evie and Tracy. I say this because Evie and Tracy, and their desire, embody principles of the father law and immanence. It seems that I have become ‘comfortable’ with my ‘uncomfortable’ social position. While at times, I may identify as white, female, middle-class, heterosexual, a graduate student and a youth in my mid-twenties, these categories do not and should not prevent me from exploring other identities. I have come to learn that in order to experience immanence (and all of the possibilities therein) I must first embrace a fluid, changing (and yes, sometimes uncomfortable) identity. It is okay to contemplate and experience dominant discourses, subjugated identity categories, and everything in-between. Rather than avoid multiple possibilities because they create a feeling of discord, I should embrace these awkward moments and see them as possibilities with creative potential, not just for myself but as chances to be part of a dynamic assemblage. Who am I? Where am I now?

Future Research

While this research has important implications for deconstructing discourses of youth sexuality it is not without its limitations. First, due to the scope of this thesis the number of scenes analyzed was limited. The parameters of the project did not allow for the inclusion of additional theoretical perspectives and/or texts. Future research should explore the current text in more depth using additional objects and a comprehensive theoretical base in order to allow for the deconstruction of additional discourses of sexuality. The literature on queer theory would be particularly relevant to the current research topic.

Future research could also include participant based methods such as focus groups and interviews. This approach would allow for discussion between youth regarding their engagement with the text by examining dominant and subjugated dialogues that come forward from viewing

media texts. These dialogues would then be analysed with theory and discourse including those used in this research and beyond.

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