WOMEN OF THE BOOT: GENDER, POVERTY AND PLACE

by

Alison Hill

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APPROVAL

Name: Alison Louise Hill

Degree: Master of Arts

Title of Thesis: Women Of The Boot: Gender, Poverty And Place

Examining Committee:
Chair: I. Hutchinson, Associate Professor

_____

B. Pitman, Assistant Professor
Senior Supervisor

_____

A.M. Gill, Associate Professor

_____

I. Dyck, Associate Professor
School of Rehabilitation Sciences
University of British Columbia
External Examiner

Date Approved: February 25, 1997

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ABSTRACT

Despite the prevalence of poverty among women in Canada, and the growing number of studies of these women, literature is lacking in its consideration of the spatial aspects of women's poverty. In an attempt to address this rift and, importantly, provide a means by which the voices of marginalised women might be heard, this study considers the relationship between gender, poverty and place in the constitution of the experiences of impoverished women. Specifically, it focuses on a group of 11 women who have lived with poverty in the Boot, an inner city area of New Westminster, British Columbia.

Research involved ethnographic interviews with the 11 women, and depth-interviews with 19 key-informants, including political representatives, planners, service providers and police officers.

The conclusions of the study are as follows. First, the identity of the Boot as a deviant place eclipses issues facing women living with poverty in the area while furthering the cause of urban revitalisation. The women's invisibility is worsened by the lack of an active residents' association in the Boot.

Second, the women's life experiences revealed that patriarchal social structures have shaped their paths to poverty and experiences of poverty. Gender-based inequity in the waged labour force has maintained their economic marginality. Gender-role stereotyping worsens the women's already adverse situations. And, physical and sexual abuse by men has played a significant role in the construction

of these women's marginal socioeconomic status.

Third, the women interviewed were found to have laid claims to space in the Boot through their residency and involvement with public service agencies. However, substandard living conditions and the threat of rising rents compromise these claims. Moreover, exclusion from spaces of social interaction was shown to be prevalent. This exclusion was found to be rooted in the women's economic status and worsened by particular characteristics of the Boot such as the lack of safe public space and the visibility of illicit activities (i.e., sex trade, drug trade).

This study emphasises aspects of feminist methodology such as qualitative research methods, recognition of researcher subjectivity, and the importance of representing marginal women in Canadian society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ACRONYMS

BCMSS	British Columbia Ministry of Social Services
BOHRA	Brow of the Hill Residents' Association
DERA	Downtown Eastside Residents' Association
NWPS	New Westminster Police Service
QPRA	Queen's Park Residents' Association
NWCACWEV	New Westminster Community Action Committee for Women Who Experience Violence
WERA	West End Residents' Association

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The academy's recognition of the gendered dimensions of social processes has led to the development of a diverse body of literature which addresses issues of women's subordination in Western societies (see Johnson 1996; Armstrong and Armstrong 1994; Charles 1993; Walby 1990). One branch of this literature addresses issues of poverty, and includes statistical analyses of the incidence of poverty among Western women (eg. Dooley 1994; Northrop 1990; Rogers 1990; Taylor 1989). Also included is the examination of factors which lead to and shape women's poverty such as women's subordinate positions within the household and waged labour market (eg. Barusch 1994; Brodie 1994; Cohen 1994; Hutton 1994; Millar and Glendinning 1989; Kitchen 1992) and the rise in the number of female lone-parent households (eg. Lord 1993; Jones and Kodras 1990; Schaffner Goldberg 1990; Winchester 1990).

Although informative, this literature is lacking in its consideration of the spatial aspects of women's poverty. For example, variations in women's experiences of poverty in different locales have not been fully explored. As a result, the effects of place-based economic, political, social and spatial structures on low-income women are not well understood. While there are a number of studies which consider the activities of specific community groups which represent impoverished inner city

women (eg. Breitbart and Pader 1995; Schein 1995; Pope 1989), these tend to focus on the political factors which have impeded or sustained the group's activities without addressing the characteristics of the places in which these activities have unfolded.

Despite the attention given to the spatial dimensions of the public-private dichotomy of women's roles (eg. Winchester 1992; Wilson 1991), there has been little consideration of the ways in which impoverished women attempt to claim private and public space in the inner city, as well as how these claims are compromised. Furthermore, while issues of women's limited access to public space have been explored (eg. Ruddick 1996; England 1994; Hamilton 1992), along with the associated issues of women's fear of crime in urban areas (eg. Pain 1991; Valentine 1989; S. Smith 1987), research has not adequately addressed the social, psychological and economic costs that low-income women incur as a result of their limited mobility and limited access to spaces in the city.

Finally, while theories have been forwarded concerning the relationship between the identities of places and the identities of marginal groups associated with those places (eg. Sibley 1995, 1992; Crow 1994; Hoggett 1992), these theories have not been used in empirical studies of socially excluded groups (with the exception of Sibley 1992), such as impoverished women.

In an attempt to address these lacunae in the literature and, importantly, provide a means by which the voices of marginalised women might be heard, this study considers the relationship between gender, poverty and place in the

constitution of the experiences of impoverished women. Specifically, it focuses on a group of 11 women who have lived with poverty in the Boot, an inner city area of New Westminster, British Columbia (Figure 1.1).

Three research objectives guide the analysis. The first objective is to demonstrate the relevance of the representation of the Boot as a 'bad space' to the discussion of the experiences of impoverished women who live there. Implicit in this objective is the question of how the identity of the Boot as a deviant place was constructed, and how this identity affects impoverished women living in the area.

The second objective is to outline the impact that patriarchal social structures have had in the lives of the 11 women who have resided in the Boot, considering whether the women's paths to poverty and experiences of poverty are related to their subordinate position as women living in Canadian society.

The final objective is to examine the place-based experiences of the women interviewed, taking special consideration of the women's claim to space in the Boot as well as their exclusion from it. Issues relating to housing quality, security of tenure, the women's use of public service agencies, and factors which contribute to the women's social exclusion will guide this analysis.

The organisation of chapter one is as follows. First, the context of the study will be established by outlining a number of economic, social and spatial issues which are relevant to the study. This will be followed by an overview of aspects of feminist methodology employed by this research, and an outline of the study's method. Finally, chapter outlines will be listed.
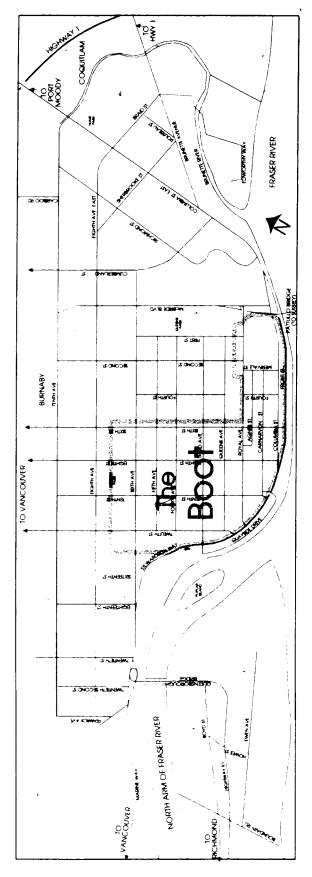
Figure 1.1 New Westminster, highlighting the Boot.
Base map courtesy of New Westminster
Planning Department.

NEW WESTMINSTER: A DIVIDED CITY

We're just a SkyTrain ride away from Vancouver, but miles apart in style and character. Founded in 1859, named by Queen Victoria, the Royal City of New Westminster was B.C.'s first capital. Nestled on the banks of the Fraser River, New Westminster retains its old time charm, with heritage lined streets and a quaint, homey atmosphere (Tourism New Westminster 1996:5).

Just think of it. New West was the capital of British Columbia a long time ago. Now look at it. Up in one part of town, way up the hill there, I call it junkie town because that's where all the junkies live. On the top there around Fifth and Twelfth, where they're building all of those condominiums now.

<div align="right">

Cristine, Woman of the Boot

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Heritage, charm and opportunity. These are the central elements of the popular image of New Westminster, used to attract developers, business people, home buyers and tourists to the City. However, there is a less glamorous side of New Westminster which includes poverty, poor health, substandard housing and concentrations of crime and illicit activity. This section will present both of these faces of New Westminster. First, the context in which this study is based will be established, addressing the relevance of economic restructuring, socioeconomic disparities, and the prevalence of crime and illicit activities to the discussion of women living with poverty in the Boot. This contextualisation will conclude with an overview of the significance of the process of gentrification which is taking place in the Boot.

Economic Restructuring

Formerly an industrial town with an economic base of wood processing and shipping activities placed firmly on the banks of the Fraser River, New Westminster has felt the effects of economic restructuring.[1] Included in the many implications of restructuring are changing spatial divisions of labour (see Hudson 1988; Massey 1988; Nelson 1986), and simultaneous processes of inner city decline and revitalisation (see Ley 1993; Leitner 1989; Davis 1987; Rose 1984). All three of these processes are evident in New Westminster. First, in the early 1980s there was a marked decline in industrial activities in the City. This decline is reflected in the decrease of manufacturing-oriented jobs and the number of hours worked in the manufacturing sector (Table 1.1).

Changes in Manufacturing Employment - 1970 to 1986[2]
New Westminster

YEAR	1970	1974	1981	1986
Labour Force	3629	3706	3461	2359
Person-hours paid (1000s)	7185	7099	6780	4703

Table 1.1   Statistics Canada 1990; 1985; 1978; 1974

Apart from reducing the number of production-oriented jobs in the City, this decrease in manufacturing activity has eroded New Westminster's industrial tax-base. Data are

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[1] In broad terms, economic restructuring refers to the internationalisation of capital and ensuing shifts in production methods and economic bases of regions (see for example Fainstein 1990; Oberhauser 1990; Rodwin and Sazanami 1989).

[2] The Statistics Canada Catalogue Series (31-209) from which the data are taken was discontinued after 1986.

not available for a long-term analysis of this reduction, however, even in the short term, a marked decrease in industrial taxes is apparent. From 1992 to 1996, the share of municipal tax revenue derived from industry fell by 22 percent. In the same period, the share of tax revenue derived from the New Westminster's residents rose by over seven percent (City of New Westminster 1996). Interviews for this study revealed that the reduction in industrial taxes has left the City in a precarious financial situation, where it is becoming increasingly difficult to pay for policing and fire-related services. This is especially significant considering that New Westminster has the highest per-capita expenditure on emergency services in the region (McManus 1996a).

Exacerbating this situation is yet another result of economic restructuring: rationalisation of federal and provincial government expenditures (Cohen 1994), leading to a reduction in transfer payments to municipal governments. For example, in November of 1996, the provincial government reduced its 1997/1998 grant to New Westminster by $1.3 million, an amount which represents three percent of New Westminster's total revenue for this period (McManus 1996a).

Paradoxically, while City Hall is facing this growing monetary dilemma, the private sector is benefitting from the changes in New Westminster's economy. Downtown New Westminster has become an important commercial, communications and financial centre in the metropolitan region, second only to downtown Vancouver, while commercial revitalisation and gentrification have been prominent in the City since the late 1980s. The following advertisement, which

appeared in a business magazine in 1991, illustrates this prominence:

> *Royal City Renaissance: repositioning heritage for success in the 1990s. New Westminster is experiencing growth unprecedented in its vivid history.... Revitalization is the operative word. And the results of this strategy are an array of opportunities for people and businesses making the move to New Westminster (Advertisement Feature, BC Business 1991:45).*

The areas being targeted for revitalisation, which includes both commercial and residential development, are in the City's Downtown, Uptown and Brow of the Hill neighbourhoods. Although located at the centre of New Westminster, these are marginal neighbourhoods, featuring concentrations of poverty, poor quality rental apartments and public service agencies. Also concentrated in these neighbourhoods are drinking establishments, crime, drug trade and sex trade. The pattern created by the spatial concentration of bars and illicit activities in the City caught the attention of the New Westminster Police Service (NWPS), which christened the area as the 'Boot'.

Socioeconomic Disparities

A recent health profile states that New Westminster "is much higher [than the provincial average] in virtually all indicators of poor socio-economic status, including proportion of single parent families, population on income assistance, and household income" (Simon Fraser Health Unit 1995:11). New Westminster women are particularly vulnerable to poor socioeconomic status, having lower incomes and relatively higher levels of morbidity than the City's men.

For example, in 1991, 43 percent of New Westminster's female-headed

households had an annual income of less than $20,000, compared with only 20 percent of male-headed households (PCensus 1993). Moreover, in 1991, the median annual income for New Westminster women with an income aged 15 years and older was $15,562, while the equivalent for men was $25,048 (PCensus 1993). Given the now well-established correlation between socioeconomic status and quality of health (Millar 1994; Macintyre et al. 1993), it is not surprising to find that women in New Westminster are relatively less healthy than the City's men. For example, the Simon Fraser Health Unit (1995) reports that the 'Potential Years of Life Lost' (PYLL) rate[3] for the New Westminster women is 42 percent higher than the provincial average. This high rate of 'lost years' for women is attributed to higher-than normal incidences of cancer (61 percent above the provincial average), accidental poisoning, which is generally drug related (300 percent higher than the provincial average), and heart disease (59 percent higher than the provincial average). Significantly, the PYLL rate for New Westminster men is only 18 percent higher than the provincial average, the main explanatory factors in their case being suicide and accidental poisoning.

While these numbers indicate that the experiences of the City's women are different than those of men, they do little to inform us of what those experiences are. Moreover, although research has found that the well-being of an individual is

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[3]The PYLL rate is based on the assumption that all people will live to an average age of 75 years. If a person dies at the age of 50, she is considered to have lost 25 potential years of life. All of these 'lost' years are summed and then divided by the population to determine the PYLL rate.

associated more with the characteristics of her neighbourhood than with the region as a whole (Macintyre et al. 1993), these statistics have not been disaggregated by neighbourhood, thereby giving little indication of their place-based significance. These shortcomings in the empirical data relating to New Westminster underscore the importance of conducting qualitative, gender specific research in the Boot.

Welcome to the Boot

The Boot? I don't call it the Boot. I sometimes refer to it as the Gaza Strip or the Bermuda Triangle.

Keith Coueffin, Chief Public Health Inspector

In establishing the significance of the Boot as an area of study, I will contrast it with the Queen's Park neighbourhood (Figure 1.2), taking special note of differences in income levels, quality of housing, health and crime. While this empirical contrast is
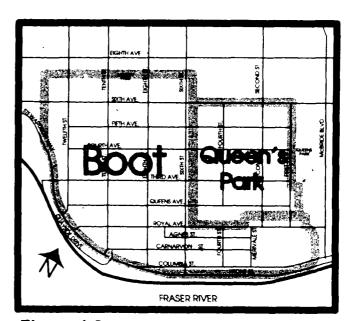
Figure 1.2 The Boot and Queen's Park

not focused on women specifically, it is important because it highlights the socioeconomic marginality of the Boot. Moreover, the outline of criminal and illicit

activities lays the ground work upon which discussions of the Boot's identity (chapter two) and the impact of illicit activities on the lives of the women interviewed (chapter four) will be based.

As stated previously, existing statistics relating to socioeconomic status in New Westminster do not allow for comparison between the different areas of the City. However, it is reasonable to assume that the lower than average household and family incomes found in the Boot explain New Westminster's poor socioeconomic standing. The following (Table 1.2) demonstrates the economic disparity between households and families living in the Boot and the equivalent in other districts:

Family and Household Income - 1991[4]
The Boot and Selected Districts

AVERAGE INCOME	Boot	Queen's Park	New Westminster	Vancouver
Household	$29,700	$42,800	$39,317	$45,583
Family	$41,400	$60,700	$51,309	$55,958

Table 1.2   PCensus 1993

The juxtaposition of the Boot with the upscale Queen's Park neighbourhood emphasises this disparity. Queen's Park is characterised by heritage homes and attractive gardens, with the average market price of a single detached house being $380,000 (Royal LePage Real Estate 1996). The neighbourhood's aesthetics are such that Queen's Park is popular as a tourist attraction and as a filming location for the entertainment industry. A short walk across Sixth Street is the Boot, where the

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[4]More recent data for household income are not available in a form which allows for the allocation of specific boundaries.

average price of a single detached house is approximately $260,000 (Royal LePage Real Estate 1996). However, the roughly 250 houses in the Boot[5] are eclipsed by the area's more typical residential structures: rental apartment buildings, containing almost 6,000 individual living units (PCensus 1993).

Most of these buildings were constructed in the 1960s and 1970s in response to a series of government-sponsored incentive schemes which provided financial assistance for developers and landlords.[6] Today, many of these buildings are in disrepair, while poor management often means that problems stemming from illicit activities are left unaddressed. This is a situation which is all too familiar to Keith Coueffin, the City's Chief Health Inspector.

> There's a history of a high percentage of problems in the area, and some of them have been pretty severe. There was one particular building where there was a murder, a number of violent crimes, vacant suites were broken into and used as party places, and holes were broken between the floor and ceilings as an intercom system. We did prosecute the owner with the Housing Bylaw, and he did a number of repairs and some cleaning house, but it still continues to be a problematic building.

However, these apartment buildings offer some of the lowest rental rates in the Greater Vancouver region (Table 1.3), attracting women who have low incomes to the area. Within the region, only the suburban municipalities of Coquitlam, Port Moody and Port Coquitlam have lower apartment rental rates (New Westminster

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[5] In 1991, about 270, or four percent, of the area's dwellings were single detached houses (PCensus 1993). With the demolition of dilapidated and fire-damaged houses, I estimate this number to be about 250 today.

[6] In 1991, 61 percent of all of the Boot's residential units had been constructed between 1961 and 1980 (PCensus 1993).

Planning Document 1995).

Average Monthly Apartment Rental Costs - 1995
New Westminster and the Metropolitan Region

APARTMENT TYPE	Bachelor	One Bedroom	Two Bedroom	Three Bedroom
New Westminster	$470	$564	$716	$856
Metropolitan Region	$530	$628	$809	$978

Table 1.3   New Westminster Planning Department 1996a

As the household and family incomes listed previously (Table 1.2) indicate, people living in the Boot tend to have significantly less money than those living in other parts of New Westminster. Miller (1994:25) outlines the relationship between income and quality of life: "Higher incomes are related to better health, in part by allowing people to purchase adequate housing, food, and other basic needs. A higher income often means security, supportive social networks, and more control over the decisions we make." Meanwhile, socioeconomically marginal groups have less access to adequate housing and food, and limited support networks, thereby increasing their risk of physical and psychological distress (Smith et al. 1993; Kearns et al. 1991). Moreover, research conducted in Auckland and Christchurch concludes that "living in a substandard dwelling represents an independent and additive source of stress to the lives of low-income urban residents" (Smith et al. 1993:610).

Another distinguishing feature of the Boot is the number of public agencies which operate there. Approximately 35 agencies provide a variety of services, including counselling and support groups, food and meal programs, clothing

exchanges, educational upgrading and job retraining, needle exchanges and methadone programs. To varying degrees, these agencies serve people from the local area as well as from throughout the metropolitan region. For example, New West Drugs, a methadone clinic on Columbia Street, is a regional service centre, while the clientele of New Westminster Reachout, a church-based service agency, tends to come from within the Boot.

Unlike their Queen's Park counterparts, residents of the Boot have greater exposure to criminal and illicit activities. Again, statistics are not available in a format which allows for comparison between New Westminster's neighbourhoods. However, interviews with police officers and 35 hours of patrol accompaniment with the NWPS indicate that a great deal of New Westminster's crime is concentrated in the Boot. The City's rates of violent crime, property crime - which includes break and enter, theft, and possession of stolen property - gaming and betting, possession of offensive weapons, arson and property damage are all higher than in any of New Westminster's surrounding communities (Gibeau 1996). Over the last ten years the City has consistently placed within the province's top three municipalities on three accounts: for the highest overall crime rate, for the highest per capita policing cost to the taxpayer, and for the highest number of police officers per resident (Gibeau 1996). The following (Table 1.4) compares illicit activity in New Westminster with that of neighbouring Vancouver:

Weapons, Drug and Assault Offenses Per 10,000 Population[7] - 1994
New Westminster and Vancouver

OFFENSE	Offensive Weapons	Heroin Related	Cocaine Related	Cannabis Related	Sexual Assault	Non-Sexual Assault
New Westminster (pop. 47,736)	11.5	11.5	11.3	50.3	19.5	170.3
Vancouver (pop. 510,184)	4.5	6.4	18.4	17	13.1	102.8

Table 1.4   Calculated from Ministry of Attorney General 1995

Moreover, in 1994, 199 cars were stolen for every 10,000 New Westminster residents - a rate that is twice that of Vancouver (Ministry of Attorney General 1994) and far higher than any of the City's surrounding municipalities (McManus 1995).

Finally, the regional centrality of the Boot, in combination with the easy access provided by arterial roads and the light rapid transit system, makes the Boot a suitable area for drug trade and sex trade. The surprisingly high numbers illustrate the extent of sex trade activity in the City. In 1995, 136 women were identified by the NWPS as actively working New Westminster's streets, while 47 'pimps' were identified as either controlling women in New Westminster, living in the City, or frequenting a downtown nightclub known for its drug and sex trade activities (Wickett 1996).[8]

Two explanations for these high rates of crime are outlined in a report

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[7] 1994 Population figures are estimated by the Ministry of Attorney General using 1991 Census Data from Statistics Canada (Attorney General 1994:72).

[8] In all, 227 prostitution-related charges were laid in New Westminster in 1995; 125 of those charges were laid against women (Wickett 1996:3).

compiled by the NWPS. First, the combination of a high ratio of poorly managed rental units, disadvantaged families, and alcohol serving establishments within the Boot is seen as being problematic (Gibeau 1996). Referring to the report, one police officer interviewed said, *"Although no one of these factors are absolute indicators of crime causing phenomenon, all together, I believe that they lead to crime."*

The second explanation relates to New Westminster's status as a so-called 'core-city', defined by the NWPS as a municipality surrounded by urban areas which have a significant residential population (Gibeau 1996). Indeed, New Westminster lies at the centre of the Greater Vancouver region (see Appendix A), while the Boot is located at the centre of New Westminster and contains the downtown core, two of the City's three light rapid transit stations, and sits in the middle of all the City's major arteries which are fed by Burnaby and Surrey (see Figure 1.1). Thus, thousands of non-residential people - estimates range from 175,000 to 400,000 - pass through the Boot each day. In terms of crime, the significance of this 'core city' status is that it leads to a "situation where a number of people, who are not residents, enter the core city to work or recreate and become victims or suspects of criminal activity" (Gibeau 1996:3). Periodically, the NWPS conducts intensive person checks of all people who are on the street between midnight and two in the morning. One officer interviewed said that the findings of these person checks is that 50 percent of all people on the street during these hours are not residents of the City, and that 50 percent of those people have criminal records.

Gentrification in the Boot

The way it's looking right now the Boot is going to get developed all to hell. And whatever affordable housing is there is going to be history.

Bill Engleson, West End Residents' Association -

The significance of the Boot's position at the centre of a 'core city' goes beyond the crime rate, where the community's centrality makes it attractive as an area of development. The introduction of light rapid transit to New Westminster in 1986 sparked
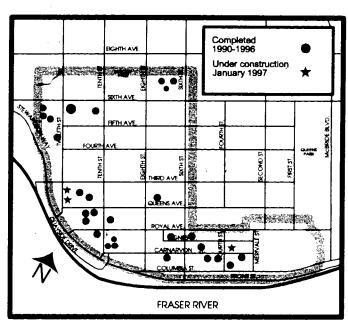
Figure 1.3 Condominium developments in the Boot

extensive development of market oriented condominiums in what were formerly industrial lands. By the 1990s, this residential development had spread into the Boot. The numbers speak for themselves: since 1990, over 30 new condominium developments holding over 1500 units have been built in the Boot (Figure 1.3). The new developments share the area with older apartment buildings, many of which have fallen into disrepair.

Examining the process of gentrification in the Boot is important for three reasons. First, it helps to establish the significance of the Boot as a node of redevelopment within the metropolitan region. Second, it acts as a base for the

discussion in chapter two concerning how the Boot and low-income people who reside in it are identified by the City's dominant groups. And third, it demonstrates the threat of displacement that gentrification poses to women living with poverty in the Boot, an issue which will be addressed in chapter four.

Literature dealing with gentrification (see for example Lees 1994; Ley 1994; Cameron 1992; Warde 1991) demonstrates that it is a "highly diversified process" (van Weesep 1994:75), which cannot be encapsulated in a single definition. The theoretical tenets of gentrification range from a multifaceted or 'chaotic' process which is mediated by social, economic and political dynamics at a number of spatial scales (Rose 1984) to a singular starting point of production: the availability of gentrifiable property (N. Smith 1987).

Indeed, the Boot is undergoing a process of gentrification, fulfilling at least three components of this process: rectification of the 'rent-gap' (Warde 1991), meeting of consumer demand (Ley 1993) and, most importantly, displacement of lower socioeconomic groups (Cameron 1992). The logic of the rent-gap, which is the difference between existing land rents and potential land rents, is revealed in the Boot, where low-quality buildings, including commercial and residential structures, sit on valuable inner city land. Put simply, redevelopment of these former structures into market housing provides property owners an opportunity to maximise the land's exchange value, thus closing the rent-gap.

Consumer preference is a concomitant factor, where the gentrified area must be seen to provide certain amenities for incoming groups such as proximity to work,

the presence of attractive historic buildings, or a distinctive lifestyle (Ley 1993).
Moreover, in "cities where condominium redevelopment rather than renovation is
the major transition process, history and culture are reworked and re-presented in
postmodern idioms, which frequently supply their own designer vocabulary of
historic and cultural reference to the built environment" (Ley 1994:238). Developers
of the Boot certainly do draw on the amenity of the area in terms of its proximity to
light rapid transit and services, as well as New Westminster's image as the 'Royal
City'. The following advertisements serve as examples:

> *Explore a community of charm and style. Timeless heritage architecture....*
> *Walking distance to shopping, and steps away from SkyTrain and the New*
> *Westminster Quay (Dalex 'Development Corporation 1995:32).*

> *Located in the heart of New Westminster. Carnarvon 7-2-0 blends*
> *architectural heritage with the conveniences of today's modern lifestyle such*
> *as SkyTrain, Douglas College, Westminster Quay, shopping and restaurants*
> *(S&B Developments 1995:33).*

However, gentrification tends to result in an increase in the cost of rental
accommodation in the surrounding area, thereby displacing low-income groups
(Winchester and White 1988). As van Weesep (1994:79) writes:

> For poor local residents [gentrification] forms a threat to their security of
> tenure.... Those who have traditionally depended on housing in the city feel
> increased competition. Their options are diminished by the conversion of
> affordable dwellings into luxury accommodation. Or, they are indirectly
> affected; instead of new subsidized housing, sites are now designated for
> more lucrative developments.

While both the supply of condominiums and the amenity of the area are
important aspects of redevelopment in the Boot, the issue of displacement has greater
relevance to this study because it is tied to other concerns in New Westminster

relating to the economic viability of the City. As stated earlier, New Westminster's industrial tax base has been reduced, forcing it to rely more heavily on revenues from residential properties. Meanwhile, the City's high levels of expenditure for emergency services is seen as being connected to the high ratio of low-income residents. The solution, as seen by those promoting residential development in the City, is to attract middle and high-income residents to New Westminster while reducing the availability of low-cost rental housing. This will enable the City to cover the costs of emergency and recreational services while, at the same time, reduce New Westminster's number of low-income residents. City Councillor Lynda Fletcher-Gordon's brief but critical assessment helps to clarify the pro-development position: *"The whole idea is that we have a large share of low [cost] rental housing that attracts a certain type of people. If we replace these undesirable people with desirable people, then that deals with the problem. I'm not sure that it will."*

Defining the Players in New Westminster

Finally, it is important to define the various actors involved in the debate surrounding commercial and residential revitalisation in the Boot as it helps to clarify the discussion of representation in the following chapter. The challenge of defining urban actors as they relate to urban growth has not escaped the attention of the academy (see for example, Hall and Hubbard 1996; Hasson and Ley 1994; Logan and Molotch 1987). *Urban Fortunes*, the much-quoted book by Logan and Molotch (1987), exemplifies the tendency of the literature to simplify alliances relating to

urban growth, where developers, members of the business community, politicians, civic employees, residents' associations and members of the elite come together to promote economic development in the city. Although more progressive in its recognition of the centrality and control of local government in the process of urban economic growth, Hall and Hubbard's (1996) analysis also leans towards a theory of urban coalitions.

While useful as starting-points in the discussion of urban growth, these theories are less valuable when applied to a city such as New Westminster, where alliances and interests are convoluted. In my own attempt at simplification, I have identified three groups which can be seen as having the ability to influence development-related decisions in the City. What must be made clear is that membership in one group does not discount membership another. The first group is made up of 'civic boosters', and includes members of City Council and the business community whose main interests lie in revitalisation, including gentrification, in New Westminster.

The second group is the elite, which is made up of individuals and groups from the middle and upper classes which are able to access, and potentially affect, the political workings of the local government. This definition of the elite differs from that of Logan and Molotch (1987) and Hall and Hubbard (1996) in that it recognises that members of the elite might not necessarily support the goals of civic boosters. This distinction is especially important in New Westminster as the residents' organisations interviewed for this study expressed opposition to the large amount of

residential development in the Boot.

The third group is made up of key civic actors, including politicians, high-ranking civic employees, and members of the business community. What these people have in common is that they are able to influence decisions relating to development in the City. However, as with the elite group, the interests of these key civic actors do not necessarily coincide with those of development-oriented civic boosters.

Underlying the actions and motivations of all three of these socially dominant groups are Western cultural values. Broadly stated, this value system upholds the ideology of individualism and capitalism, and emphasises the importance of private consumption (Sibley 1995). Indeed, in "highly individualistic, capitalist societies, such as Australia, Canada and the United States, where status is largely achieved rather than being ascribed... a major means of communicating social identity is through the private 'conspicuous' consumption of objects" (Duncan 1992:40). Included in this is an emphasis on home ownership as a means of gaining social status (Harris and Pratt 1993). In relation to issues of socioeconomic marginality, "part of the ideology of western society is that anyone, no matter how humble in his or her origins, can become wealthy" (Duncan 1992:49). Moreover, rather than a result of economic and social structures, poverty is understood as being a personal choice (Lord 1993) and is considered to be socially deviant (Fineman 1995).

The purpose of this overview of economic restructuring in New Westminster, the spatial significance of the Boot as an area of study, and the process of gentrification has been to establish a context within which a discussion of women living with poverty in the Boot can be placed. The following section will outline the study's methodology and research methods.

STUDYING THE WOMEN OF THE BOOT

When considering those who are most vulnerable to poverty in Canada, there is little question that the occurrence of poverty among women exceeds that of men (Taylor 1989:15). Indeed, "women are at far greater a risk of poverty than men; at any given stage in their lives, women are far more likely than men to be poor and their experience of poverty is also likely to be far more acute" (Millar and Glendinning 1989:363). The following (Table 1.5) illustrates the prevalence of poverty among women living in Canada:

Poverty by Family Type, Canada - 1994[9]

LIVING BELOW POVERTY LINE	Female Lone Parents	Unattached Women (over 65)	Unattached Women (less than 65)	Unattached Men (less than 65)	Unattached Men (over 65)
Percent	57.3	44.1	42.6	31.7	24.2
Number	317,000	345,000	484,000	526,000	66,000

Table 1.5   National Council of Welfare 1996

[9]Statistics are not available for lone-parent men, although men who are lone-parents are far less likely to become impoverished than women who are lone-parents (Kitchen 1992).

Much of the literature dealing with women and poverty is concerned with the concept of the 'feminisation of poverty', which is defined as an increase in the number of women living in poverty relative to the number of men living in poverty (see for example, Dooley 1994; Jones and Kodras 1990; Rogers 1990; Schaffner Goldberg 1990). Stemming from this concept is the argument that the rise in the number of female-headed lone parent families is the reason for the prevalence of women living in poverty (Schaffner Goldberg 1990), as female-headed families "tend to be poor due to factors related to underemployment, unemployment, and welfare benefits that are below adequate subsistence levels" (Lord 1993:2).

However, using the feminisation of poverty concept as a basis for judging the socioeconomic status of women is problematic as it dwells on numbers while ignoring the factors which have contributed to women's poverty (Northrop 1990). Instead, it is of greater value to examine social, economic and spatial processes which have shaped the subordinate status of women in Canadian society, thereby leading to or shaping an experience of poverty. Indeed, study of the gendered dimensions of poverty "involves far more than simply disaggregating data to produce statistics about the situation of women" (Millar and Glendinning 1989:363).

Prior to undertaking this research, I engaged in informal discussions with key civic actors in New Westminster, many of whom had access to the same socioeconomic indicators which I have presented here. However, these discussions demonstrated to me that little was known about the situations of low-income women who live in the Boot. Unlike Vancouver's marginal inner-core, which is represented

by the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association, there is no active residents' group in the Boot. Thus, issues relating to poverty in the Boot and the threat of low-income women being displaced from the area tend to remain outside of the civic debate, while issues relating to service expenditure, revitalisation and development are prominent. All of these factors emphasise the need to represent the complexities of these women's lives and give a voice to their experiences and concerns.

Methodology: A Feminist Approach

> *The political is not only personal, it is a commitment to deconstruct the barrier between the academy and the lives of the people it professes to represent (Kobayashi 1994:73).*

Having lived in the Boot since 1993, it was my first-hand knowledge of the area that prompted my involvement as a researcher. Shortly after moving to the Boot, I noticed an increase in the number of requests for monetary and in-kind assistance from both strangers and acquaintances, making me wonder if the prevalence of poverty was worsening in my neighbourhood. Meanwhile, the constant construction of condominiums alerted me to the process of gentrification. Threatening encounters with men exiting downtown bars and 'strip clubs' made me speculate on how secure other women felt when walking alone in the Boot. Further, my involvement in several community groups alerted me to the absence of women at drop in meal centres, and made me aware of the lack of discussion of issues facing New Westminster's lower-income residents, particularly women.

Certainly, throughout this study, the boundary between my political and

academic pursuits has been permeable. Facilitating my ambiguous positionality are aspects of feminist methodology which relate to the representation of marginal women, recognition of researcher subjectivity and qualitative method. Each of these aspects will be addressed in turn. First, feminist methodology underscores the importance of conducting research which aims to benefit those women being researched, while at the same time, contributing to the advancement of women's equality (Gilbert 1994). "It is a methodology where links are forged between knowing and doing. Orienting one's research to actuate this alternative science involves constructing research that is for the oppressed, not simply on the oppressed" (Moss 1993:48).

Second, feminist methodology critiques the idea that objectivity is possible or desirable, and instead, holds that the interaction between the researcher and those being researched is a mutual, intersubjective process (Gilbert 1994). This acceptance of subjectivity runs counter to traditional 'scientific investigation', a methodology which finds its roots in the Cartesian paradigm. Often referred to as positivism or rationalism, this methodology focuses on reductionism, which breaks down complex components into discrete parts, analyses them, and then makes predictions which are based on interpretations of these parts (Cloke et al. 1991). While the practice of this 'scientific' method is undertaken with the assumption that what is scientific in its method is objective in its conclusions, feminist methodology contends that no form of investigation is value-free. Rather, it is value bound, where the interaction between the inquirer and the investigated influences outputs and findings. Moreover, the

researcher's own biases will also have an effect on the research process. Indeed, "who we are, where we are and how we engage in research inevitably influence what we see" (Dyck 1996:1).

Third, feminist research is "necessarily qualitative" (Rose 1993a:534), promoting interpretive, interactive methods over abstract positivism. The final result of qualitative, interpretive analysis is a "presentation of the researcher's conceptualizations, which, at the same time, retain[s] the logic of the subjects' lives and maintains their views" (Dyck 1993:56).

Despite the beneficial aspects of feminist methodology, it is not unproblematic. First, there is the risk that the depth of information revealed during the qualitative research process may actually expose participants to a greater risk of exploitation than other more positivist research methods (Gilbert 1994). Second, the power-relationship between the researcher and those being researched cannot be ignored. While it is true that researching the experiences of women as a woman does facilitate a certain insider status, this does not negate the importance of other 'positionalities' - such as class, education, ethnicity, sexuality and dependencies[10] - which also have an impact on the research process. As Gilbert (1994:94) writes, the advantage "one gains from using a qualitative interview method does not negate the power dynamics inherent in the research process, nor does it allow us to ignore the difficult moral questions that we must face when doing this research."

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[10]By dependencies, I am referring to a person's status either as one who is dependent on others, such as a parent or the welfare state, or who has others dependent upon her, such as children.

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Method: Field Work and Analysis

How... might we present our work in a way that grants the speaking woman interpretive respect without relinquishing our responsibility to provide our own interpretation of her experience? (Borland 1991:64 cited in Gilbert 1994:95).

Field work for this project took place over a 13 week period between March and June of 1996, and consisted of interviews with 30 people: 11 women who were residents of the Boot and 19 key-informants, including political representatives, planners, service providers and high-ranking police officers. Eleven of the key informants were women and eight were men (see Appendix B for a list of interviewees). Follow-up interviews were conducted with three of the women residents and one key-informant. All of the interviews, with the exception of one which was conducted over the telephone, were recorded on audio tapes.

Criteria for selecting the 11 women were threefold: they identified their income as being low, they were living in the Boot community (with one exception; see Appendix B), and they were under the age of 60. This cutoff was chosen as the economic circumstances of older women tend to be derived primarily from their earlier roles in the family and in the waged labour market (Schaffner Goldberg and Kremen 1990).

The women of the Boot fit into three distinct age cohorts: Tracey, Anita and Samantha are between the ages of 19 and 22; Lynn, Judy, Cristine, Casandra and Laura are between the ages of 27 and 36; Sara, Isabel and Marie are between the ages of 50 and 55. To protect the women's privacy, the names listed here are pseudonyms. All of the women were given the option of choosing their pseudonym,

although only Casandra, Samantha and Sara chose to do so.

Nine of the women are of European descent and Cristine is a First Nations woman. Tracey did not reveal her ethnic background. None of the women identified their sexuality as being anything but heterosexual. In terms of living arrangements, Lynn, Laura and Marie live with their partners; Isabel and Sara have roommates; Cristine lives alone; and Tracey, Anita, Samantha, Casandra and Judy are lone parents. All of the women said that they have a low income; all but two of the women, Laura and Tracey, identified themselves as being poor. Finally, all but two of the women identified their main source of income as being social assistance benefits from the state.

Contact with four of the women was made through New Westminster Family Place, an agency located in the Boot which provides support services for parents of young children. The other women were contacted through meetings at drop-in meal centres, on public transit or through a mutual acquaintance. Ten other women made arrangements to be involved in the interview process, but later withdrew. The women's residences were distributed fairly evenly throughout the Boot.

It is likely that by making my initial contact with the 11 women through New Westminster Family Place, drop-in meal centres and during chance meetings in public places, the findings of this study are somewhat biased. However, without interviewing women who do not use these services, or who are not particularly comfortable with speaking to a stranger, it is difficult to suggest what this bias might be.

My intention was to conduct depth interviews with all of the women using an ethnographic style of interviewing. According to Shurmer-Smith and Hannam (1994:223), this attempts to catch "the subjective meanings of members of the community being studied by allowing them a voice; the ethnographer then attempts to evoke, rather than analyse, the local reality." This interview style was successful with eight of the women interviewed in that their thoughts and interests within the broader context of living with poverty in the Boot led much of the discussion. These interviews lasted an average of 80 minutes. Three of the women exercised resistance to the interview process, discussing issues related only to their movements in New Westminster and their likes and dislikes of the Boot community. These interviews lasted an average of 25 minutes (see Appendix C for interview schedules). Each woman chose the site of our interview. Some invited me to come to their homes, some preferred to come to my home, and one woman chose to meet me at a church where she was doing volunteer work.

Despite the general success of the interviews with the women, the interview process was not without difficulties. The juxtaposition of the women's marginal socioeconomic status with my own more privileged situation rendered a stark contrast while deepening a personal sense of their exploitation for the purposes of my work. In an attempt to compensate for our disparities, I found myself emphasising that I also live in the 'bad' part of town, and altering my regular way of speech - actions which I recognise as attempts to close the social gap between myself and these women. In this respect, Gilbert's reflections on her research of women living

with poverty mirror my own: "These were strange feelings and behaviour for someone who, as other geographers had pointed out, did not go into 'the field,' and. in fact, subsequently did my research in a place that I had called 'home' for [over three] years" (1994:91).

The key-informants included two City Councillors, the Mayor, representatives of political associations, City planners, service providers and high ranking City police officers (see Appendix B). The interviews with key informants fulfilled several important purposes. First, they provided information on local issues relating to crime, illicit activity, redevelopment and social concerns in the Boot. Second, the interviews revealed the ways in which the Boot is identified and, subsequently, represented, giving insight into the future of the area as it relates to revitalisation and gentrification. And third, the interviews provided me with an indication of the key informants' knowledge of issues facing women living with poverty in the Boot. Interviews with key informants lasted an average of 45 minutes (see Appendix C for interview schedules). All key informants were offered the option of anonymity. As with the women, key informants chose the site of our interview. Their choices included their homes, my home and the places where they worked. One key informant interview was conducted over the telephone.

All of the 33 interviews were transcribed in their entirety. A copy of each interview was returned to the appropriate interviewee for them to examine and make any necessary additions or omissions. Two interviewees, both key informants, chose to clarify or omit information from their interviews. I was unsuccessful in contacting

Casandra, Sara and Tracey in order to return their respective transcripts to them. Thus, they did not have the opportunity to examine their transcript or make any changes.

Opie (1992) outlines a number of methods which guide the way in which information from interviews can be interpreted, emphasising linguistic markers, such as sentence structure, and participant thought processes, such as ambivalence or contradiction, as indicators of what information should be featured. However, both of these methods of analysis require linguistic and psychoanalytical expertise, neither of which I possess. Thus, although I was aware of contradictions and ambivalence in the thoughts of some of those I interviewed, I decided to take what the women and the key informants said at 'face value'. Therefore, the interviews were analysed for the occurrence of two types of qualitative information: first, recurring themes and second, specific details relating to the Boot as well as the City in general. In cases where the interviewee obviously contradicted himself or herself, the information was not used.

Although I have taken great care in order to represent the views of the participants fairly and accurately, I recognise that my identification of 'important' themes and details is ultimately an exercise of my power as a researcher (Reay 1996; Gilbert 1994). Indeed, some of my choices of themes reflect my motivation to highlight the spatial aspects of the women's lived experiences in the Boot, including the ways in which the Boot is identified and represented by the City's dominant groups.

Finally, in presenting my research findings, I have tried as much as possible to use the words of those who participated in this research project. To ensure clarity, the words of all research participants have been edited in terms of sentence structure. However, care has been taken to maintain the spirit and intent of what was said.

CHAPTER OUTLINES

The ordering of the following chapters reflects my attempt to clarify the complex issues which have a potential impact on the experiences of women living with poverty in New Westminster's marginalised core. Each of chapters two, three and four are guided by a specific research objective, while chapter five summarises the study's findings.

Chapter two examines issues of representation, demonstrating how the identity of the Boot as a deviant place eclipses the experiences of low-income women who live there. Drawing from theories of social exclusion, the creation of marginal identities will be outlined, and then considered within the context of the Boot and its identity as a deviant place. Included in this analysis is consideration of the ways in which dominant groups represent women living with poverty in the Boot, and the relevance of the Boot's identity to the issue of revitalisation. Then, the power of community groups in New Westminster will be outlined, followed by an assessment of the possibility of mobilisation on the part of impoverished women living in the Boot. This chapter draws upon literature dealing with social exclusion and community mobilisation.

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Chapter three takes a step back from the women's current situation to consider the factors which have led to their marginal status, concluding that patriarchy has had a significant role in shaping the women's paths to poverty and experiences of poverty. This chapter leads with a brief discussion of the concept of poverty followed by an overview of poverty in Canada, drawing from literature dealing with economic restructuring. Then, three structures of patriarchy will be examined within the context of how they produce and maintain the poverty of women in general, and the women of the Boot in particular. First, gender-based inequity in the waged labour force, through lower rates of pay and disparate employment opportunities, will be examined. Second, gender-role stereotyping as it relates to expectations of women's altruism within the household, and society's acceptance of men's dismissal of parental responsibilities will be considered. Finally, the impact that men's physical and sexual abuse has had in the lives of the women interviewed will be demonstrated.

The theory which guides chapter three is derived mainly from writings on women and poverty and feminist analyses of patriarchy. Although valuable in terms of examining the women of the Boot's paths to poverty and experiences of poverty, these bodies of literature are notably silent on issues relating to space. Chapter four is an attempt to redress this silence, taking special care to draw out the geographies of the women's everyday lives and experiences. The underlying message of this chapter is that the women's marginality cannot be understood as the result of a single factor, such as poverty or patriarchy, but rather, is constituted by social and spatial

structures in which they live

First, the women's claim to space in the Boot through their residency and use of public service agencies is outlined. Then, the ways in which these claims are compromised is considered, demonstrating how poor building quality has an impact on the women's sense of well-being in 'their space', while rising rents and gentrification threaten to displace them from the Boot completely. This is followed by an analysis of the ways in which the women are excluded from spaces of consumption and, subsequently, social interaction. Unable to participate in any activities which require money, their mobility limited by their fear of illicit and criminal activities, and isolated from other people, the women's exclusion is profound.

The final chapter reviews the three conclusions of this study, emphasising the relationship between gender, socioeconomic status and place in the constitution of the women's experiences of poverty. Then, the ways in which this research contributes to the study of social geography are outlined, followed by an assessment of the future tenure of women living with poverty in New Westminster's Boot.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BOOT: (IN)VISIBLE IDENTITIES

> [T]he problem is not the propensity of groups and individuals to construct boundaries but the meanings that are ascribed to them once they have been constructed (Hoggett:1992:353).

> [Places] do not have single, pregiven identities... they are constructed out of the juxtaposition, the intersection, the articulation of multiple social relations" (Massey 1991:276).

The objective of this chapter is to demonstrate the relevance of the representation of the Boot as a 'bad space' to the discussion of the experiences of impoverished women who live there. As outlined in the previous chapter, the Boot holds concentrations of low-income households and low-cost rental apartment buildings. Also concentrated in the Boot are criminalised activities such as drug trade and sex trade. The question is do these characteristics play a part in shaping the identity of the Boot? And, if so, how does this identity affect women living with poverty in the area?

First, the creation of marginal identities will be considered, taking care to draw the theoretical argument back to issues of representation. Included in this discussion is an outline of the development of the Boot's identity as a deviant place and the representation by key civic actors of women living with poverty in the Boot. Then, the power of community groups in New Westminster will be outlined, and the implications of the absence of an active, socially-oriented community group in the

Boot will be considered. Finally, the possibility of mobilisation on the part of impoverished women living in the Boot will be assessed.

THE IDENTITY AND REPRESENTATION OF THE BOOT

Demonstrating that place can be both "formative as well as disruptive of identity" (Crow 1994:417), drug dealers, sex trade workers and transient renters have come to represent all low income groups who live in the Boot, while the experiences and needs of its impoverished resident women remain invisible. This section will argue that the visibility of illicit activities, in conjunction with the local newspaper's coverage of events in the Boot are two main components driving identification of the Boot as a deviant place. Then, the ways in which impoverished women who live in the Boot are represented by key civic actors will be considered, demonstrating how the identity of the area has an impact on the identification of this marginal group.

Constructing Marginal Identities In the Boot

Before outlining the principal means through which the Boot is identified by New Westminster's dominant groups such as civic boosters and the elite, it is informative to consider how marginal identities are constructed. In his discussion of social and spatial processes of exclusion, Sibley (1995) argues that object relations theory, a broad psychoanalytical concept, is a useful framework within which to analyse relationships between different individuals and groups within a society. Sibley's argument is supported by Hoggett (1992:348), who writes that the

"phenomenology of object-relating may provide a dynamic perspective for the analysis of sociospatial processes, for example, the construction of collective identities."

Sibley's simplified definition of object relations theory is that from birth, human beings establish various relationships with 'objects', defined as entities which are perceived by the individual as being separate from the self. Such entities can be "whole persons or parts of the body, either existing in the external world or internalized as mental representations" (Kahane 1992:284, cited in Sibley 1995:5). Analysing social relations using object relations theory leads to an appreciation for the "ways in which boundaries emerge, separating the 'good' and the 'bad', the stereotypical representations of the other which inform social practices of exclusion and inclusion but which, at the same time, define the self" (Sibley 1995:5).

Therefore, although the development of internal and external identities are rooted in an individual psychological reaction to the 'other', these identifications become manifested within the dominant society, and are reflected in the exclusion of specific social groups. Moreover, the identity of place and the identity of persons are interrelated (Crow 1994). Thus, the spaces occupied by socially deviant groups are also understood by the dominant society as being aberrant, and therefore, places to be avoided (Sibley 1995). Conversely, place reinforces the marginal identities of groups, where the peripheral, residual spaces with which particular groups are associated reinforces their status as the 'other'.

Implicit in the employment of object relations in theorising social and spatial

processes of exclusion is the connection between the identification of the 'other' and the development of Western social values. European-based societies "have always interpreted the world with the use of concepts that have dramatized the distinctions between themselves and others" (Anderson 1988:129), drawing upon these distinctions to define the boundaries of acceptable social behaviour. Those who act outside of these boundaries are viewed as being deviant, with this deviance serving to reinforce the "strength and 'normality'" of the dominant social group (Shurmer-Smith and Hannam 1994:123).

Through my research, I have identified two principal means by which the identity of the Boot as a 'bad space' has been developed. The first is through the visibility of illicit activities and abject poverty on the streets of the Boot, while the second is through the local paper's coverage of stories emanating from the Boot.

Although the vast majority of people living in the Boot are not involved in criminal activities, the visibility of the drug trade and sex trade in the Boot is a significant factor contributing to the area's deviant image. Indeed, the "principal components of the identity of place are physical features, observable activities of people and meanings that people bring to a location" (Crow 1994:407).

The visibility of drug trade in the area around the downtown's main transit station (Figure 2.1) is perhaps the strongest contributor to the Boot's identity. At any time between noon and the early hours of the morning, groups of people can be seen standing outside of the transit station. My own observations are that these people's untidy appearance, in conjunction with their occupation of space in the

middle of the sidewalk, is threatening to those passing by. Moreover, it is not uncommon for people walking through the station to be solicited by drug dealers, an action which would most likely be viewed as a threatening intrusion for those not interested in a transaction.
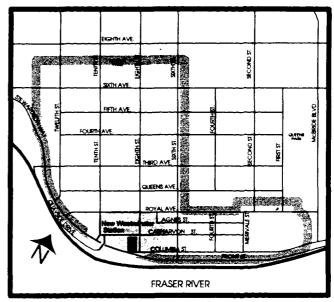
Figure 2.1 Area surrounding New Westminster Station

Although this area makes up only a small part of the Boot, its spatial centrality combined with the high visibility of people who are openly involved in the drug trade elevates its identity to become a representation for the area in general.

The visibility of people involved in socially deviant activities on the Boot's main streets also contributes to the area's poor image. Such activities include people who are panhandling or sleeping in bank vestibules, as well as sex trade workers standing on street corners. And, the visibility of the by-products of illicit activities, such as condoms and hypodermic needles, strengthens the identity of the area as a deviant place. Meanwhile, run-down buildings and low-quality apartment complexes provide a backdrop to these images which reinforces the Boot's indigent identity.

Media representation is another means by which the negative image of the Boot is developed. Local newspapers, such as New Westminster's semi-weekly paper,

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The Royal City Record/Now,[11] act as an "instrument delivering a sense of the space beyond our senses... a kind of symbolic forum, which actively connects spatially separate segments of the city" (Parisi and Holcomb 1994:377,379). Much the paper's coverage of the Boot concerns illicit activities such as robberies, violence, drug-related incidents and sex trade. In fairness, much of what is 'newsworthy' in Canada is related to crime and stories of despair. Nonetheless, the focus on illicit activities constructs a specific representation of the Boot as a deviant space, with this identity being delivered to the rest of the City.

Newspapers also act as mediators of public discourses, upholding middle class values while shaping "our collective and individual perceptions of social problems and injustices" (Laws 1994:610). Indeed, *The Record's* maintenance of values and the shaping of perception is illustrated by its coverage of two separate stories concerning women involved in the sex trade in New Westminster. In June of 1996, the paper carried the story of a woman working in the sex-trade who was confined, beaten and raped by a man. In this case, the paper's headlines read: "Hooker attacked by man" (The Royal City Record/Now 1996:4) and "City police charge man with brutal assault on hooker" (Neilson 1996:8). I contend that the term 'hooker' acts as a derogatory referent which amplifies the social deviance of the woman while sending a message of justification for the violence experienced by her. The paper's labelling of the woman as a 'hooker' sits in contrast to a full-page story which was run a few months earlier concerning the efforts of a local minister to "rescue a young

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[11] In the fall of 1996 the paper changed its name to *The Record.*

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woman from prostitution" (Wickett 1996:3). In this story, the woman's victimisation was emphasised, while the referent of 'prostitute' helps to rationalise the Church Minister's association with the socially deviant activity of the sex-trade.

In sum, visibility of people involved in activities which are deemed unacceptable by Western social values and the representation of the Boot by the *Royal City Record/Now* are two means by which the Boot is identified and subsequently represented by the City's dominant groups, such as the elite or key civic actors. Research has found that an individual's perception of community disorder will increase the fear of crime, and that it is this perception rather than actual victimisation which will govern an individual's concern with regard to criminal activity (Gibeau 1994). Extending this point, I suggest that the visibility of illicit activities in the Boot combined with crime-related coverage in the local press heightens the perception of disorder, thereby reinforcing the identity of the area as a 'bad space'. Drawing the argument back to the relevance of object relations, places associated with deviance are "avoided by members of the dominant society because they appear threatening - a fear of the 'other' becomes a fear of place[, while] the labelling of places as threatening confirms the otherness of the minorities with whom the places are associated" (Sibley 1992:112).

Identifying and Representing the Women of the Boot

Key civic actors who were interviewed for this study were cautious, and at times, vague, in their identification and representation of women living with poverty

in the Boot. The key informants' avoidance of issues relating specifically to this marginal group makes it difficult to present the ways in which they represent the women of the Boot. Thus, only two of the key informants' characterisations will be presented.

The first representation comes from two of the three police officers interviewed, who made a strong connection between the concentration of poverty and the concentration of criminal activities in the Boot. For example, one police officer interviewed cited the Boot's high number of disadvantaged families, people collecting social assistance benefits, and pregnancies to adolescent women as being contributing factors to New Westminster's high crime rate. *"It's the combination of a low income family in a high alcohol area in a run down apartment building with no personal ownership of the area that causes crime,"* he explained. The comments of another police officer concerning how the concentration of low-cost apartment blocks in the Boot facilitates sex-trade activities also point to a connection between poverty, place and illicit activity. *"It's easy for [women who prostitute] to go and hide in an apartment block where there are a lot more low income families. They blend in. Invariably neighbours don't complain because, they're not the same, but they're just basically cliquey people and they stick together."*

A second representation of women living with poverty in the Boot hinged on what several key informants, including politicians and representatives of business associations, termed as the 'transient nature' of the women. A 'transient nature' was defined by Mayor Betty Toporowski as a tenure lasting less than five years.

Councillor Casey Cook contends that transience leads to

> *a lack of long term values and people who have a social investment in that community.... I think that leads to a deterioration of relationships between people - and I don't want to negatively characterise, but I think that the whole issue of positive modelling and neighbourhoods being of support to each other falls by the wayside somewhat.*

Both of these representations of women living with poverty in the Boot have spatial aspects to them. In the first case, the representation of the women is contingent upon their occupation of space in the Boot. In the second instance, the representation is hinged on the length of time that they live in the Boot, where a shorter tenure is viewed as an indication of a 'lack of long-term values'. Interestingly, the spatial contingency of the first characterisation is somewhat contradictory of the second.

Despite the caution exercised by many of the key informants in their identification and representation of impoverished women, my involvement in a number of groups in New Westminster has exposed me to many negative representations by key civic actors and the elite of women who live with poverty in the Boot. Indeed, most of the women interviewed have encountered negative identification by others, and expressed frustration over what they felt were unjust and unfounded judgements of 'mainstream' society. The following exchange, in which Anita was speaking about how people look down on her because she receives social assistance benefits, illustrates her resistance to identification by others.

Alison	*What do you think that they are thinking?*
Anita	*That I'm basically a bum, and I don't like being called a bum.*
Alison	*Do you think you're a bum?*

Anita	No. If I was a bum, I would look like one, but I don't.
Alison	So what do you look like?
Anita	Just a normal person. Just like a person.

Judy's thoughts highlight the irony of her struggle to break out of the identity that others attribute to her. *"I find that I'm almost dressing up just so they don't think that I'm one of these welfare people just because I feel like if I wear a T-shirt and tights like I used to, they're going to go, 'Oh, welfare mum.' People react different if they see a mum that's clean and dressed up good, and they're on welfare."*

As expected, most of the women interviewed demonstrated an internalisation of Western social expectations as well as an ambivalence regarding where they fit into various social categories. For example, Isabel perceives that others look down on her because she receives social assistance benefits. Although she is troubled by such condescension, she has also internalised the inferior identity, stating that she is uncomfortable with collecting benefits. *"That money could go to feed children,"* she explains. *"It's all freebies! You're not working for it. You're sitting on your bum or whatever. I think you should have a little job and then you get your money."*

The Linkage Between Representation and Revitalisation in the Boot

If social hierarchies are embodied in bricks and mortar, not only do they become real, they become accepted as part of the everyday life and as part of the natural order. Often, urban landscapes are created by powerful agents whose interests are served by establishing such a reality (Winchester 1992:140-1).

The identification and subsequent representations of people and places are not static. Rather, representations will shift depending upon the goals of socially

dominant groups (Sibley 1992; Anderson 1987). Research for this study found that the civic boosters' representation of the Boot tends to draw on its identity as a deviant place as a means by which to strengthen the cause of revitalisation in the area, which includes commercial and residential development. For example, both of the representatives from merchants' associations who were interviewed (see Appendix B) drew on the identity of the Boot as a deviant place, and emphasised the importance of commercial and residential development as a means of 'cleaning up' the area.

Indeed, revitalisation is seen by civic boosters and some of the key civic actors interviewed for this study as a means by which to reduce the extent of crime, illicit activities and the number of low-income people living in the Boot, while attracting middle and higher income groups to the City. The argument is that altering New Westminster's socioeconomic profile in this way will increase the City's tax base while reducing its expenditures on emergency services. As outlined in the previous chapter, New Westminster is in a difficult financial position, where transfer payments from the province and industrial tax revenues are shrinking. Meanwhile, the City's property owners contend that residential taxes, which are set at about one percent of a property's assessed market value, are too high. Indeed, New Westminster does have one of the highest rates of taxation in the Greater Vancouver area (McManus 1996a). Meanwhile, the cost of providing police and fire related services - which in 1996 amounted to about $18 million and accounted for about 40 percent of the City's annual expenditures (City of New Westminster 1996) - is among the highest

in the region.

Mayor Toporowski contends that the high costs of emergency services are related to the high ratio of low income families living in the Boot. Her argument is that apartment buildings are more difficult to service, while low-income groups require emergency assistance more often. As she explained, *"This kind of population takes a lot more resources to service than they generate in terms of revenue."* The high number of low income families is linked to the supply of relatively low-cost rental housing, most of which is located in the Boot. The rationale is that by providing up-scale developments in the Boot, people with higher incomes will be attracted to the area. These people will add to the tax base while at the same time, be less of a drain on the police and fire services than the current residential population.

When asked about the possibility of new developments displacing low-income women from the Boot, Mayor Toporowski drew on the identification of the women as 'transients', arguing that the women do not tend to stay in the community for very long anyway. *"So, you could do a lot of upgrading and simply replace with people that don't have the same problems. You're not actually forcing people out."*

Interestingly, two key informants spoke of the opportunities that revitalisation in the Boot would bring to women living with poverty. As one police officer who is active in the New Westminster community explained,

> *There is an equilibrium point where that woman will pay extra rent - will go out and get a part time job or be more frugal and pay that extra rent to upgrade that area. She will see that and have the opportunity to bring herself up. The overall benefit to society is greater by pursuing an upgraded quality*

of neighbourhood than it is by not raising rents and allowing the persons on social assistance to stay there. Displacement is never one hundred percent.

And, one City Planner viewed the new condominiums in the Boot - the cheapest of which are priced at approximately $100,000 for a one bedroom unit - as providing affordable housing for the City, asserting that the *"pride of home ownership is a powerful motivator for people to improve themselves."*

Two tenets underlie these comments: the ideal of home ownership and an assumption of the capacity of all people to overcome poverty, with both of these views reflecting Western social values. Indeed, home ownership symbolises success, stability and social acceptability (Harris and Pratt 1993), all of which are Western cultural ideals. Meanwhile, the assumption that if one is properly motivated, she will be able to overcome her economic marginality finds its roots in the Elizabethan Poor Laws of the eighteenth century which understood poverty as a personal choice. "The ideology of blaming the victim is one of the most deeply ingrained principles of the original Poor Laws that has been passed down through the centuries" (Lord 1993:18). An addendum to this is the Western ideological position which maintains that wealth is accessible to all individuals who pursue it (Duncan 1992). Thus, although well-intended, the comments of these two influential civic workers reflect a lack of understanding for the situations of women who live with poverty and reside in the Boot, where social and economic structures make it profoundly difficult for them to recant their position at the margins of society. An overview of structures which form and maintain women's poverty is in the following chapter.

OBLIVIOUS AT CITY HALL?

> *Damn, you know, this Council - any Council - needs to have some solid recommendations about where we're going in this town.*
>
> *Lynda Fletcher-Gordon, City Councillor*

Worsening the invisibility of women living with poverty in the Boot is the reticence of members of City Council to discuss issues relating to poverty in New Westminster. One planner interviewed was blunt in her assessment of the politician's avoidance of social issues in the City:

> *I find it really frustrating as a planner because at some point I think you have to call a spade a spade and say, 'Look, we've got a lot of low income people here. What can we do or what are we willing to do?' You can deal with these issues head on if nothing else by just having honest dialogue and I find that there isn't even the willingness [on City Council] to do that.*

Speaking to the issue of providing public services such as personal counselling, drop-in meal centres or subsidised housing, another planner explains the position of City Council. *"There's a sense among people that if you build it 'they' will come. If you build a facility, it will be a magnet for social problems as opposed to recognising that we have some of our own home grown problems that we need to try and deal with."* Indeed, several members of City Council have expressed concern with providing services that might attract more people living on low-incomes to New Westminster. As Mayor Toporowski explained, *"I'm not opposed to [providing] the services to the people that we've got - I think that's our responsibility - but I am concerned about attracting more of a problem that we're not dealing well with already."*

Netty Tam, the Executive Director of the Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Society also spoke of how public services attract people to the Boot. In addition, her words are indicative of the civic booster's representation of people who use these services. *"We're not against social groups or social agencies, but it's all concentrated in the Downtown area. It's a haven and, not to be rude or anything, it's one stop shopping. They cash their welfare cheques, they go to the bars, they do their fixes. And they're all down here on, say, Welfare Wednesday[12]."*

Given the political climate in New Westminster, how do the planners deal with development issues in the Boot? *"It's a tightrope."* said one planner, explaining that the ambiguity of City Council's position makes it difficult to pursue development opportunities which might have a social benefit such as low-cost residential units or public facilities. *"As planners, in a climate of very little municipal land to play with, there's not much to bring to the table. There's not a heck of a lot that you can do."*

In a city where the power of community groups has been demonstrated, the absence of an active, socially-oriented resident's association in the Boot only worsens the invisibility of the poverty-related issues at City Hall. In the past, the Brow of the Hill Residents' Association (BOHRA), acted as an advocate for single family homeowners in the Brow of the Hill neighbourhood (Figure 2.2). However, the association has been dissolved. A former member of BOHRA explained that there are issues that need to be addressed in the neighbourhood such as the problems

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[12]In British Columbia, cheques for social assistance benefits are typically dated for the fourth Wednesday of every month. Hence the term, 'Welfare Wednesday'.

associated with illicit activities, and the poor quality of street lighting and sidewalks. Regardless, she contends that the lack of interest in a residents' association on the part of those living in the area indicates that there is no need for an official organisation.
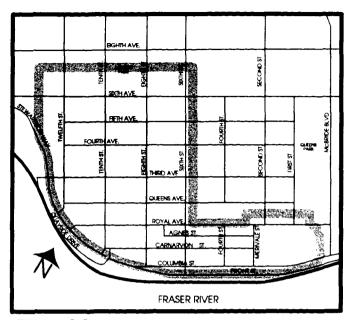
Figure 2.2 Brow of the Hill neighbourhood

However, Councillor Fletcher-Gordon argues that there is an *"extreme need"* for an active residents' association in the Boot. Moreover, one planner who was interviewed believes that the Boot would benefit from an active community group whose members *"at least had a certain level of frustration or were at least organised enough so that they're just pain in the asses."* Furthermore, she believes that a community organisation in the Boot would help the Planning Department in its efforts to design a long-term plan for the community. As an example of the benefits of such community involvement, this planner points to the Queen's Park Heritage Planning Study, a year long process which was launched in September 1995 and allocated a budget of $26,600 by City Council (New Westminster Planning Department 1996b).

> *I'll be honest with you. If we had twenty-five thousand dollars allocated to do a study of a neighbourhood, to me, it would have been Brow of the Hill, period. That area needs some good analysis done. But no, Queen's Park was very vocal. They've always been politically active - they're part of the elite -*

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and they have legitimate issues. But I think if you had to look at it as a planner, in an ethical way, that money should be going to neighbourhoods like Brow of the Hill that really deserve some of the work.

Significantly, included in this Queen's Park study is an analysis of criminal activities in the Queen's Park neighbourhood that was undertaken by the NWPS (see Gibeau 1996). No other neighbourhood in New Westminster has had the benefit of a similar analysis.

New Westminster's West End Residents' Association (WERA) is another example of how being vocal at City Hall can result in action, where a planner worked closely with the West End community to develop a new zoning bylaw for the area. Bill Engleson, President of WERA, stressed the interest expressed by both City Council and the Planning Department in the association's activities. *"There's an awful lot of consultation - they almost recognise us as another level of government. There's a relationship that before things do happen in a community, residents' associations are contacted."*

The three business associations which represent commercial tenants in the Boot[13] have also developed good relations with City Hall. For example, the Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Society received a grant of $15,000 from the City, along with substantial assistance from Planning Department staff, to support its long-term visioning process and the development of the Downtown New Westminster Action Plan (Downtown Action Team 1996). And, the

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[13]The Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Society, the Twelfth Street Merchants' Association and the Uptown Business Association each represent a specific commercial area within the Boot.

Twelfth Street Merchants' Association has been involved in consultations with the City's Planning Department regarding residential development in the Boot.

Interestingly, one police officer interviewed felt that the poor quality of many apartment buildings in the Boot is related to a lack of community mobilisation on the part of the area's residents. *"The undesirables take over,"* he explained. *"We can show you many areas - apartment blocks in particular - that have gone downhill so badly because people moved away rather than take a stand."*

In inner city areas, which pose particular economic and social hardships for women, community mobilisation is crucial (Hamilton 1992). A community group acts as an "aid to survival for those who have little or no access to other institutions in society.... With community gone, small groups of the poor have remained trapped in an inhospitable space where decay is insured by decisions based solely on exchange value" (Hamilton 1992:28-9). Marjorie Staal, Director of New Westminster Family Place, emphasised the need for an active community group in the Boot, asserting that *"it's just a forgotten part of New Westminster - something that everyone looks the other way about."* However, as a service provider who has worked in the Boot for five years, she points to the limitations of political involvement for women living in the area.

> *A lot of our folks live in fear. Fear of authority, fear of anything. If you make a wave you could be kicked out. Mobilising is just too much. If you're a single parent and you're parenting 24 hours a day, you're worried where your next penny is coming from. You've got other issues other than mobilising. It's called living.*

Furthermore, research has found that there is a relationship between the image

of a woman's neighbourhood, her self esteem, and her ability to be politically active (Peake 1995). A woman's self esteem can drop if "locales occupied during the course of the daily path (e.g., the home, workplace, school) are perceived [by the woman] as falling beneath culturally-derived norms" (Rowe and Wolch 1990:190), with this drop in self esteem discouraging her involvement in community mobilisation (Peake 1995).

Nevertheless, there are instances in which women living in indigent inner city areas have been successful in forming active community groups which represent their interests (see Breitbart and Pader 1995; Schein 1995; Pope 1989). And, since the 1970s, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA) has challenged the policies of all levels of government as well as of private and public corporations (Hasson and Ley 1994). DERA's activities, which have traditionally focused upon the provision and maintenance of affordable housing in the district, exemplify "the capacity of poor and marginal communities to contest the terms of change" (Ley 1994:707). Furthermore, "the spatial concentration of poor households in the Downtown Eastside has aided the building of a local base and the establishment of a politics of turf" (Ley 1994:720), raising the question of whether the similar concentration of poor households which is found in the Boot might also facilitate the development of an effective representative body for the area.

Finally, although there is no residents' association in the Boot, there are a number of coalition groups working towards promoting social issues in the City, including the New Westminster Community Action Committee for Women who

Experience Violence, the New Westminster Women's Shelter Society,[14] and the Affordable Housing Forum. Moreover, during interviews, representatives of the City's Planning and Health Departments expressed their interest in engaging in public consultation relating to social issues emanating from the Boot. New Westminster's Director of Health Services underscores the importance of public discussion, emphasising the benefit of consulting with people who have substandard living situations, rather than simply assuming what sorts of services they might benefit from. As she explained, "We're beginning to find processes where we can get input from people to look at ways that we can be more effective, and so they have some power."

Despite this willingness for public consultation, there remains the difficulty of obtaining input from marginalised groups, such as the women living with poverty in the Boot, who have not traditionally participated in public forums. This raises the question of whether consultation between the City and various advocacy groups is simply another elitist intervention, albeit well-intended, in the lives of marginalised women rather than a genuine movement towards their enfranchisement.

SUMMARY

The experiences of women living with poverty in the Boot are eclipsed by the identity of the area as a 'bad space'. Drug dealers, sex-trade workers and problem

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[14]The objective of this group is to establish a safe-house for women who are trying to discontinue their involvement in the sex-trade.

tenants have come to represent all low-income groups who live in the Boot, while the experiences and needs of the majority of its resident women remain invisible. Moreover, the deviant identity of the Boot is drawn upon by civic boosters to justify revitalisation in the area, while the associated process of gentrification threatens to displace the women from the Boot altogether. Meanwhile, the women's invisibility is exacerbated by a lack of commitment on the part of City Council to deal with social issues in the Boot, as well as the absence of an active community organisation in a city where the power of community groups has been amply demonstrated.

What follows is an effort to improve the visibility of women living with poverty in the Boot, presenting the experiences, and the structures within which those experiences occur, of a group of 11 women who participated in this study. Chapter three will deal with issues relating to the formation and maintenance of the women's marginal socioeconomic status, arguing that patriarchal social structures have been key shaping factors in their poverty. Chapter four will examine the women's experiences in terms of their claims to space in the Boot, as well as their exclusion from it.

CHAPTER THREE

PATRIARCHY AND POVERTY

What women have found to bind them together is a single thread that winds through all cultures. They share a sense of inequality of opportunity, the injustice of a traditionally imposed second place, whether in the family, social, economic or political setting (Sivard 1985:7, quoted in Schaffner Goldberg and Kremen 1990:2).

It just seems like women do get the boot.
                                                        Sara, Woman of the Boot

The objective of this chapter is to examine the impact that patriarchal social structures, which award greater status, power and privilege to men, have had in the lives of the 11 women who have resided in the Boot. This chapter brings with it a clear message: these women's paths to poverty and their experiences of poverty are contingent on the second-rank status that being a woman holds within Canadian society.

In the first section, an overview of poverty in Canada, including consideration of the concept of poverty, will be presented. Then, three structures of patriarchy will be examined within the context of how they produce and maintain the poverty of women in general, and the women of the Boot in particular. First, gender-based inequity in the waged labour force, through lower rates of pay and disparate employment opportunities, will be examined. Second, gender-role stereotyping as it relates to expectations of women's altruism within the household, and society's

acceptance of men's dismissal of parental responsibilities will be considered. Finally, the impact that men's physical and sexual abuse has had in the lives of the women interviewed will be demonstrated.

POVERTY IN CANADA

The fantastic variety of cases entitling a person to be called poor in different cultures and languages is such that, all in all, everything and everyone under the sun could be labelled as poor, in one way or another (Rahnema 1992:158).

As the preceding quote indicates, meanings associated with the concept of poverty are so varied that it is virtually impossible to reduce the concept to a single definition. The United Nations' definition of poverty is rooted in the most basic of human needs: the absence of food, clothing or shelter. Social theorists have expanded the concept of poverty to include issues of social inclusion (eg. Jordan 1996) and self-direction (eg. Shurmer-Smith and Hannam 1994). This study draws from Rahnema's (1992) materialities concept of poverty, where one who is impoverished is deprived of material or psychological items which one's culture deems to be important. Thinking of poverty in this way is useful as it underlies the view that poverty is socially constructed, allowing that what is considered valuable in one culture may be unimportant in another. Moreover, the materialities concept recognises that 'poverty' is a variable concept across space. Thus, although few people in Canada experience the level of material poverty which is so prevalent in many so-called 'third world' countries, to live with poverty in Canada is to be marginal both socially and economically in this society.

Because of a lack of reliable information regarding the historical extent of poverty in Canada, it is unclear as to whether the number of people living with poverty is increasing (National Council on Welfare 1996). What is clear, however, is that a large segment of people live with poverty in this country today, and their poverty is becoming more acute (Beauchesne 1995). Moreover, there is a wide gap between Canada's high income and low income groups, and it continues to grow. In 1993, families whose incomes were in the bottom income quintile earned an average of $10,073 while those in the top income ·quintile earned $93,207 (Little 1996), and held 70 percent of the country's personal wealth (Swift 1993:15) - 21 times that of their bottom quintile compatriots. The Canadian situation reflects the general trend in all prosperous Western countries towards income polarisation and increasing numbers of people claiming social assistance benefits (Jordan 1996).

For many, economic restructuring (discussed in chapter one) is seen to be at the root of income polarisation. Technological advances along with an increasing emphasis on service oriented activities has altered aggregate labour requirements as well as regional divisions of labour (Hudson 1988; Massey 1988). As a result, the labour force is redistributed such that "at one pole, there is an increase in managerial, professional, and supervisory occupations; at the other pole is a concentration of non-specialized white-collar and low-level service and sales occupations of the workforce" (Rose et al. 1988:32). Meanwhile, Canada's group of employees which sit in the mid-range in terms of employment earnings is shrinking (McQuaig 1993).

Another result of restructuring is the disappearance of many unionised production oriented jobs from inner city areas (Leitner 1989), and their replacement by consumer and corporate service industries. These, in turn, are run by either highly-paid or poorly-paid employees. The study area, namely New Westminster's inner city, has witnessed this very process.

Accompanying economic restructuring are drastic shifts to the political right in terms of economic policy such that trade liberalisation and deficit reduction have been embraced by both policy makers and the public as means towards economic efficiency (Jordan 1996; Cohen 1994). Trade liberalisation has magnified the impact of economic restructuring on labour markets while deficit reducing measures have resulted in cutbacks to financing for social programs (Cohen 1994), thereby worsening the precarious situation of economically vulnerable groups. Meanwhile, the ideology of deficit reduction has intensified the stigma associated with those who are dependent on overt means of state support, such as social assistance benefits. Moreover, despite the hardships that economic restructuring has posed to Canada's low income groups, poverty analysts in Canada warn that "the worst is yet to come, particularly for poor families, which are the main targets for cuts in social assistance" (Beauchesne 1995:A5).

Women, it has been shown, are particularly vulnerable to these structural changes. A recent study conducted in the United States concludes that economic restructuring policies hit women hardest, resulting in fewer job opportunities and poorer working conditions (Brodie 1994). Reductions in Canadian social services

and incomes have also been shown to disproportionately affect women (Creese and Strong-Boag 1992). For example, cutbacks in social programs have shifted social services from the paid to the unpaid labour of women, while decreasing subsidies for child care and retraining programs (Brodie 1994).

Although I did not ask the women who participated in this study to reveal their specific household incomes, estimates can be made from the information that the women offered. The following (Table 3.1) contrasts Canada's annual low income cut-offs, which also act as the poverty line, with the estimated annual incomes of the women interviewed.[15] Interestingly, these estimates, which include child support payments from former spouses and child benefit credits from the state, closely compare with the national average income of women living with poverty in Canada (National Council of Welfare 1996).

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[15]Low-income cut-offs are calculated by Statistics Canada, and are based on the average amount spent by people living in Canada on food, shelter and clothing. A 20 percentage point spread is used as a marker of low-income. For example, in 1994, the expenditure on food, shelter and clothing for a low income household was calculated at 56.2 percent of gross income while the Canadian average expenditure for these items was 36.2 percent (National Council of Welfare 1996).

Annual Low Income Cut-offs,[16] Canada - 1994 and 1996
Contrasted with the Incomes of the Women Interviewed

FAMILY SIZE	1994 (Actual)	1996 (Estimate)	Women Interviewed (Estimate)
One	$15,479	$16,175	$6,500
Two	$20,981	$21,924	$12,400
Three	$26,670	$27,869	$14,000
Four	$30,708	$32,089	. . .17

Table 3.1   National Council of Welfare 1996

As these estimates indicate, none of the women who participated in this study have incomes that come close to meeting Canada's poverty line. A number of questions arise from these numbers, such as what are the underlying factors which have led to these women's impoverishment? Are the causal factors of their poverty related to their subordinate position as women in Canadian society? And, what barriers do these women face in their attempts to overcome their economic marginality? What follows is an attempt to answer these questions, demonstrating the role of patriarchal social structures in the construction of women's marginality.

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[16]These data apply to families living in Canadian cities with a population over 500,000. Although New Westminster's population is only about 50,000, it sits in the centre of a metropolitan region of over 1.8 million.

[17]Laura, who lives with her partner and two children, did not give any indication of her income.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN'S POVERTY

> *Men have more rights than a woman. Should have a woman to rule the world. Men stick up for men, and the women? Oh-oh (pause), get real frustrated and mad because they lose.*
>
> *Isabel, Woman of the Boot*

To discuss the marginal position of women within society, which lies in opposition to men's sociocultural and economic centrality, is to enter a matrix, where one variable in the equation of subordination strengthens another. There is no beginning or end to this subordination, but rather, a continuous process. Hence, women are targets of abuse because they are viewed as inferior; women are viewed as inferior because they are stereotyped as being physically and emotionally weak; women are viewed as being weak because of their smaller physical stature; women's ability to gestate and lactate limits their economic opportunities; women's economic subordination makes them targets for abuse. So the cycle continues.

Numerous definitions of patriarchy exist, and vary depending upon historical and ideological positions (for an overview, see Charles 1993). Feminist theory considers patriarchy to be the "constellation of social relations and institutions that award men greater status, power, and privilege over women" (Johnson 1996:158). These social relations and institutions make up a system of social structures, including laws and legal institutions, religious institutions, educational and health systems, economic systems and the 'family' (Johnson 1996), which enable men to "dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby 1990:20).

Use of the term 'social structures' is important as it "implies rejection both of biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant

position and every woman in a subordinate one" (Walby 1990:20). Walby's conceptualisation of patriarchy is composed of six structures: patriarchal relations in the household; patriarchal relations in paid work; patriarchal relations in the state; male violence; patriarchal relations in sexuality; and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions. For a concise overview of each of these components, see Walby (1990:20-21).

Analysis of the information related by the women who participated in this study revealed that patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in cultural institutions, and men's violence have had the most bearing on their current status as women living with poverty. Given the interrelated nature of these processes, there is no one correct point at which we can enter a discussion of the impact of patriarchy on the lives of the women of the Boot. Here, I will start with issues relating to the inequities faced by women in the waged labour force. This will be followed with consideration of how gender-role stereotyping affects impoverished women. The last section examines how men's abuse has been a factor in the women's paths to poverty and experiences of poverty.

Inequity in the Site of Production

> Women's enduring economic vulnerability is the result of both their generally marginal position in the labour market and their low pay, which have their roots in the sexual division of labour. Motherhood only exacerbates women's economic vulnerability" (Kitchen 1992:12).

Inequities within the waged economy are in part a result of patriarchal exploitation of women in response to capital's need for cheap labour. This

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exploitation excludes women from more highly valued forms of work, and instead, segregates them into low-paying jobs which are identified as requiring less skill (Walby 1990).[18] Included in the gender-based division within the waged labour force are the devaluing of women's work in order to justify lower wage levels, the concentration of women working part-time, and a lack of benefits such as pension contributions or health care insurance. Thus, patriarchy constructs inequity in the labour force, thereby worsening the economic marginality of women. Indeed, women living with poverty in the Boot would be in a better economic position if they had the same access to opportunities within the realm of production as those available to men.

Initially, women's entry into the Canadian labour force via part time work was seen as a means by which women would achieve equality of employment opportunity. However, in 1983 the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women concluded that part time work is exploitive. In general, part time workers "are subject to greater occupational segregation and lower wages and fringe benefits, and they are also less likely to be unionized than full-time workers" (Schaffner Goldberg 1990:66). Moreover, part time workers are less likely to benefit from pension plans, parental leave, and will receive minimal unemployment insurance benefits. When women do qualify for earnings-related benefits "such as sick pay or retirement pensions, their lower earnings while in paid work mean that they are

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[18]See Walby (1990) for a thorough discussion of the role of patriarchal social structures in the formation of gender-based divisions in the work force.

likely also to receive lower rates of benefit than their male counterparts" (Millar and Glendinning 1989:365).

Today, Canada has the largest wage gap of any modern industrialised country (Cohen 1994). In 1993, women working in Canada full time for the full year earned only 72 percent of the wages earned by men (Table 3.2). The wage gap does decrease with education; however, this merely underscores the economic vulnerability of women who have not had access to post-secondary school training.

Annual Earnings for Women and Men Working In Canada - 1993
Employed Full Year, Full Time

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	Women	Men	Women's Earnings as a percent of Men's
Less than Grade Nine	$20,024	$29,127	68.7
Some Secondary School	$21,12↩	$34,165	61.8
Secondary School Graduate	$24,873	$34,703	71.7
Some Postsecondary School	$24,470	$37,995	64.4
Postsecondary Certificate/Diploma	$28,183	$38,174	73.8
University Degree	$40,669	$54,152	75.1
TOTAL	$28,392	$39,433	72.0

Table 3.2   Gadd 1995

The picture becomes even more disconcerting when total earnings, which include part-time work, are considered. For example, in 1993, women earned only 64 percent of the wages earned by men (Gadd 1995). This income disparity cannot be explained by differences in education, skills, hours of work or occupational distribution. Rather, wage levels depend on the worker's gender, where a woman is

given a different job description, and thus, different wages, for work which is equal to that performed by her male counterpart (Schaffner Goldberg 1990). Thus, while "paid work has given some women greater power within the family and strengthened their sense of self-worth - not to mention putting food on the table - [British Columbia]'s labour market has always been highly segmented according to gender, race, ethnicity, and class, and women have regularly seen their work undervalued" (Creese and Strong-Boag 1992:13).

Despite the tendency to channel women towards a particular type of work, usually low-security and low paying, there are no activities apart from childbearing and breast-feeding which are universally female. Work performed by women in one particular culture is done by men in another (Armstrong and Armstrong 1994; Charles 1993; Walby 1990). This raises the question of why women are consistently steered towards 'traditional work', which also happens to be low wage. Armstrong and Armstrong (1994:154) argue that:

> [c]ulture has replaced biology as the most popular source of explanations for the division of labour by sex. According to this argument, children are socialized to internalize a culture that exaggerates the differences between the sexes. Thus, the prevailing meaning system or idealogy perpetuates an anachronistic concept of appropriate female and male behaviour.

Furthermore, the idea that it is acceptable to pay women less than men reflects a belief that women's wages are merely supplementary to the family's income rather than critical to its survival (Jones and Kodras 1990).

Kitchen (1992) contends that rather than a rise in the number of women raising children without partners, it is the persistence of low wages received by

women which accounts for the prevalence of women's poverty in Canada. A simple observation bolsters this argument: men who raise children on their own do not generally become poor (Kitchen 1992). Instead, the "economic situation of mothers - their disadvantaged positions in the labour market where they are still not receiving pay, fringe benefits or opportunities for advancement comparable to men - is indicative of the situation of women in general" (Kitchen 1992:12). Thus, job segregation and the tendency for wages from part time work to be stagnant have maintained gender-based differences in incomes, where women's "continued lack of personal income has consequences for the support for women and children, particularly evident in the case of lone mothers" (Hutton 1994:21). Moreover, women raising children alone tend to enter motherhood at a younger age and enter the workforce at a later age than their married counterparts. Thus, "'female lone parents must raise children while facing a double disadvantage: a lack of support from a spouse and less job skills by which to gain an income appropriate to the task'" (Pool and Moore 1986:55, cited in Schaffner Goldberg 1990:789).

The policies of Canada's federal and provincial governments relating to social assistance and child care worsen women's subordinate position within the waged economy. For example, a single parent with one child is permitted to retain only $100 dollars of support from her child's father above her monthly social assistance benefits. And, if that single parent is able to find employment, she is permitted to retain only 25 percent of her earnings above her monthly benefits for a period of up to 12 months. After the 12 month period, she is ineligible to retain any employment

earnings whatsoever. Thus, while receiving social assistance from the state, earning extra money to pay for child care expenses or employment training is out of the question. And, unlike European countries, Canadian governments do not provide extensive support for child care, thereby limiting women's access to the waged economy (McQuaig 1993).

Having looked at the complexities of gender-based inequity in the site of production, it is useful to consider the work-related experiences and aspirations of women who participated in this study as they are demonstrative of the difficulties that women face in attempting to enter and remain in the waged labour force. For example, while taking a certified training course, Anita discovered that she is a talented hair stylist. However, without financial support for herself and her daughter, she is unable to secure child care services in order to complete her training and obtain certification. Furthermore, as Anita explained, she would need to earn a full-time wage of more than $12 an hour, along with benefits, in order to support herself, her daughter and child care expenses. However, between economic restructuring and the workings of patriarchy within the waged labour force, she will be hard pressed to find a position which will meet her needs, even if she is able to complete her training.

Speaking about employment opportunities in general, Anita emphasised how the social assistance system makes it difficult for women in her position to improve their economic situation, citing a lack of support for child care expenses and the

British Columbia Ministry of Social Services'[19] limitations on outside earnings. "*They're basically controlling me and I don't like to be controlled,*" she said. A study of lone mothers living on social assistance benefits in West Berlin details similar expressions of frustration with state policies (see Madje and Neususs 1994).

As a result of a shortage of work, Judy was laid off from her job as a hair stylist at the same time as her son was conceived. She looked for work in the following months, and was offered a job during her eighth month of pregnancy. "*And then, when they found out I was that far along, they wouldn't hire me.*" Unemployed for over a year, Judy struggles to support her son and herself on the limited income of social assistance, feeling trapped in her predicament: "*I'm on my own, and he's too young for me to go back to work right now. And even if I went back to work I couldn't afford to pay for daycare. It's a catch-22.*"

At the time of our first meeting, Samantha was working towards completing her grade 12 equivalency, with aspirations to train as a nurse. However, she was unable to go to school full-time because of limited access to child care. Meanwhile, without training, her employment opportunities are limited. Finally, Tracey had part time employment at a local department store, but was dismissed because she had to take time off to care for her son when he was ill. Thus, not only was she being paid a low wage for her labour, but she also lost her job because of the store's inflexibility in terms of accommodating her parenting needs. This inflexibility reflects the

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[19]In September of 1996 the Ministry of Social Services was split into the Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry of Children and Families.

patriarchal structure of the labour market, which assumes "that workers do not have time-consuming domestic responsibilities. The workers that fit this model are men" (Charles 1993:61).

In summary, gender-based inequities within the waged labour force, which include devaluing of women's work in order to justify low wage levels, the concentration of women working part-time, and a lack of employer and state sensitivity to child care needs, are manifestations of patriarchal social structures which contribute to the impoverishment of women.

Cultural Expectation of Women's Altruism

I get really stressed out. I get really wound up, and I can get really frustrated with my kids, but for the most part I think I cope really well, considering some really rough circumstances. I've been able to pull through, and as much as I'd like to drink myself to sleep and smoke pot until I'm blue - that's the thing, that's what I feel like doing sometimes, I think, oh I don't want to be here - I have to get up every morning pretty darn early with those little kids.

Samantha, Woman of the Boot

Fundamental to patriarchal social structures is the construction of particular feminine and masculine identities which are embedded within Western culture and reflected in gender-role stereotypes. According to Walby (1990:103-4), there is no one site at which the production of "gendered subjectivities" takes place. Rather, it takes place in multiple sites, and new forms of gendered identities are constantly being generated. For example, as demonstrated in chapter two, gendered identities are produced through the occupation of space in the inner city by impoverished

women. Here, aspects of the ascription of gender roles within the household will be considered, demonstrating that women's altruism is not only expected, but also seen as unproblematic.

Studies have shown that in lower income households the responsibility for managing scarce financial resources is typically held by a female adult, who will forfeit her own needs, such as food, clothing and social activities, in order to protect children and men from the full impact of financial hardship (Millar and Glendinning 1989). This 'protection' of others was evident in the activities of most of the women who participated in this study. Some reported forfeiting social activities while others had gone without food in order to provide material items such as food and clothing for other family members. And, one woman engaged in prostitution in order to provide money for her male partner. Within the social structures of patriarchy, "women's self-sacrifice has rarely been seen as problematic, but instead has been seen (implicitly or explicitly) as part of a 'natural' feminine altruism and concern for the well-being of others; self denial is still seen as women's special share of poverty" (Millar and Glendinning 1989:371).

A study of American women living with poverty illustrates this social acceptance of women's role as altruistic caregivers within the family, where none of the 62 women participants dwelled on gender-based oppression. "Most simply accepted the demands and costs, and tried to enjoy the rewards associated with their traditional roles as nurturers of human beings" (Barusch 1994:97). The study concludes that women who take on care giving roles enjoy the approval of family,

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friends, health care providers and policy makers. "They do not receive - nor do they demand - financial security for their efforts. Yet the financial vulnerability of women in their later years is directly related to their lifelong commitment to the unpaid work of caring" (Barusch 1994:97).

Another manifestation of gender role stereotyping is the explicit cultural expectation for women to be responsible for the raising of their children. Meanwhile, at least implicitly, men are dismissed of their parental obligations following a relationship breakdown. Proof of this dismissal can be found in the number of men who neglect their child support payments. For example, in 1989 only 26 percent of all support orders in Canada were being enforced (Fraser 1992) while in 1993, only 10 to 20 percent of men bound by a court order to pay child support actually did so in the full amount (Aird 1994). This tendency for men to dismiss their financial obligations to children is a significant contributing factor in the prevalence of poverty among female-headed households (Jones and Kodras 1990). Indeed, in 1988 more than half of families living in poverty in Canada were headed by women (McDowell 1988), although this cohort makes up only about 13 percent of all families.

Given the exceptionally high numbers of delinquent fathers, Isabel's experience can be considered as typical. *"I had four kids - the father was a drinker, so we split up. I raised those four, okay? Clothed them, fed them, everything. I put them through the schools, everything, and he had a good job. He was a forklifter and was making pretty good money and he never gave those kids any money, or me for clothes, or anything."* Anita's experience is similar, where her former boyfriend

has yet to pay any support in the raising of their one year old daughter, despite an agreement that he would contribute $125 a month. Meanwhile, Anita struggles to raise her child, while feeling the stigma of those who do not appreciate her situation: *"Some people have good paying jobs and they can make it by, raising a family and stuff, like lawyers, doctors, whatever, right? But, for us single mums that are on social assistance, we can't make it. We only get so much."*

Despite their negative experiences with the fathers of their children, Samantha and Casandra make the effort to have positive contact with them. This is possibly an internalisation of Western cultural ideals regarding the importance of women and children having a male figure in their lives. While Samantha receives monetary and in-kind support from both men, Casandra receives no support from her child's father, who is involved in criminal activities and drug use. However, she encourages her daughter to be involved with him. *"I never grew up with a father and, no matter what little part it is, if he's in her life, he's still in her life. He's her father figure, which is important, and he's never done anything really wrong so that's how I justify that he's in her life."*

In summary, the assumption of women's altruism and accompanying neglect of paternal responsibility contribute to the extent of women's impoverishment in Canada, further illustrating how patriarchal social structures shape the experiences of women living with poverty. The final dimension of women's oppression to be examined here is the impact of physical and sexual abuse by men.

The Impact of Men's Violence

> *[M]ale violence against women has all the characteristics one would expect of a social structure... it cannot be understood outside an analysis of patriarchal social structures (Walby 1990:128).*

This discussion considers violence to include all forms of sexual, psychological and physical abuse, including coercion of an individual into performing sexual acts. While men's violence is a form of power over women in its own right, it is implicitly endorsed by "social structures that define and reinforce a superior position for men, and an ideology that serves to reinforce acceptance of this state of affairs by both men and women" (Johnson 1996:21). Use of the term 'men's violence' is preferable to the term 'male violence' as it "unambiguously refers to the violence of men, actual and potential, and is not located in, nor defined by, biology" (Cream 1993:240).

The magnitude of sexual and physical violence against women by men in Canada is stunning. Statistics Canada estimates that in 1993, 42 percent of women living in Canada had been assaulted since the age of 16 by men other than their partners, while 27 percent of women who have lived with a male partner had been physically assaulted by him (Gadd 1995). Moreover, approximately 20 percent of all emergency surgery performed on women in Canada is in response to injuries inflicted by men (Low and Welland 1993). Jacobson and Hyde (1992:217-18) expound on these statistics:

> Violence against women is endemic in Canadian society. It can be argued that we live in a violent society, perhaps even violent times.... Regardless of how more generalized societal violence can be explained, violence against women constitutes a particular set of violent events and abusive acts against women

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because of their gender. Rape, incest, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and spouse battering claim as their victims primarily women. The overwhelming majority of perpetrators or abusers in each of these violent acts against girls and women are men.... [However,] the discourse focusing on violence remains resolutely ungendered, creating the impression that women and men share a uniformly dangerous world.

Although this discussion considers the impact of abuse on a specific marginalised group, it is important to recognise that violence is prevalent across the socioeconomic spectrum. Indeed, "[r]ich women still get raped, battered and abused, and professional women deal with sexism, but money can buy better therapy, lawyers and protection. Poor women are at the bottom of the heap when it comes to 'gender bias'. Economic power is political power in our society. Poor women are disposable and invisible" (Fleming 1992:94). This economic bias means that there are greater obstacles for women who are impoverished to leave abusive situations, including a lack of adequate child support payments from their former partners and barriers to employment including poor wages and a lack of child care (Fraser 1992). Even seemingly minor barriers, such as not having bus fare, or access to a telephone in order to speak with a legal aid lawyer or victim assistance counsellor, limit low income women's options in dealing with abusive situations.

Six of the 11 women interviewed for this study identified sexual and physical abuse by men in their lives, with these experiences of abuse having a shaping effect with regard to their experience of poverty. Significantly, all references to violence were raised by the women themselves. In the cases of two women who did not identify abusive relationships, certain comments from them made me suspect that they were or had been involved in violent relationships. Finally, the appearance of

bruises and scratches on the face of a third woman during our interview as well as at subsequent meetings leave me suspecting violence. Thus, only two women interviewed did not mention or show signs of abuse.

Cristine's story is explicit in terms of the linkage between poverty and abuse through sexual exploitation. Six months before she participated in the study, this 29 year old woman, who used to own her own renovation business, was working both for a construction company and as a part-time, unionized janitor with a government agency: "I was trying to hold two jobs at once but then everything fell apart. My old man is a heroin junkie, right, so all I was doing was working to support his habit. Eventually I just didn't care about work any more, and quit." Cristine went on to explain how her partner coerced her into prostitution in order to support his addiction.

> You see, I never used to use the street - I guess I started about six months ago. My old man was getting into crime, you know, break and enters and all that. I was worried that he was going to get caught. So, he started putting me on the street for his habit, and then, as soon as I knew that all of the money that I was making was going to him, I turned to coke - to deal with having to give him money for his heroin. I was giving him, maybe, a hundred bucks a day for his heroin habit.

At the time of the interview, Cristine's partner was undergoing mandatory treatment at a residential detoxification centre. Cristine had no permanent living situation, was using cocaine, and said that she was still using the street when she needed to.

Marie's story is illustrative of the impact that an appallingly violent event can have on a woman's life. She described herself as the "black sheep of the family," spending her adolescent years without friends and much-needed emotional support

from her parents. During these troubled years she spent considerable amounts of time alone, and eventually dropped out of high school. Despite her limited education and difficulties with low self esteem, she was able to secure employment as an administrative support worker in a hospital. During her tenure at the hospital, she was invited to an acquaintance's home under the pretence that there was to be a party. However, upon arriving at the house, she found five young men waiting for her.

> *When I got there, I was the only woman. Then I realised what was coming off. I went to leave and this one guy pulled a knife and said, 'If you leave, I'll slit your throat.' So they had their pleasure from me. After that happened I never went to a hospital or a doctor and nobody in my family to this day know what happened.*

Marie believes that being raped by those five men was the final blow to her self esteem. This in turn made it difficult for her to build positive relationships with others, and limited her ability to secure employment.

> *I think my life would have been different had it not happened. I probably would have had more confidence in myself - I wouldn't be here. I would have a better job. I would have a job. I know I can do these things, it's just getting the confidence to buckle down and do it.*

Samantha's experience of abuse started at the age of 13, when she was raped by an adolescent two years older.

> *After I was raped, everybody found out. Plus, my brother went on this really angry mission and was determined to beat the shit out of this guy repeatedly. Beat the guy up as much as possible, then go home, beat me up (laugh). That's what he used to do. So anyway, everybody in the whole school knew, so I didn't like being there, and I started doing the drugs and stuff. I was bulimic and anorexic and pretty angry in every way against everybody. I'd*

done acid and mushrooms and smoked pot, but I did Gravol[20] regularly. I liked the high I guess because it was the thing that took me the farthest away from reality as possible. You can't think about anything for longer than a second.

Samantha's experience of abuse continued into her adult life, in which she has encountered violence in both of her previous intimate relationships with men.

In Samantha's case, the connection between abuse and poverty is implicit: Samantha dropped out of school and turned to drug use in reaction to the stigma and abuse that she received following the sexual assault at the age of 13. Nine years later, it is the lack of education, and subsequent lack of employable skills, that maintains Samantha's marginal economic status.

The relationship between Judy and the father of her son, which ended during her pregnancy, was also marked with violence. *"He was a heroin addict and into satanic worshipping and he told me that if the baby was a boy, he was going to take him to be a priest in the cult. So, I got rid of him."* This man's abuse continues with death threats and unwanted intrusions into her apartment. On one occasion he was removed from her home by the police after physically assaulting her. Understandably, Judy wishes to stop all contact with him, and hopes to move to *"a new place with a new phone number, and just start fresh."* However, as a woman whose only income is social assistance, Judy's options are limited by both the costs of moving as well as higher rental rates in other parts of the metropolitan area.

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[20]Gravol is the brand name for dimenhydrinate, a non-prescription drug used for the treatment of nausea. Hallucinations occur after ingestion of 350 to 2500 micrograms, which is seven to 50 regular strength tablets (Canadian Pharmaceutical Association 1989).

Judy's situation is not unique for women who experience violence in New Westminster. A representative from the New Westminster Community Action Committee for Women Who Experience Violence (NWCACWEV) sees the options for impoverished women experiencing domestic violence in the City as being limited in three ways. First, by the scarcity of affordable housing; second, by the poor quality of the housing that is available; and third, by the lack of a transition house for women leaving abusive relationships. To the City's credit, the New Westminster Police Service has mobilised a Domestic Violence Response Team. Launched in the summer of 1996, the team is made up of a female social worker and a male police officer.

As stated earlier, violence against women is rooted in patriarchal social structures within which the needs, desires and values of men are seen as having greater importance than those of women. As the NWCACWEV representative contends,

> I think that some of the ways in which men are conditioned to come to see how they handle themselves in relationships needs attention, particularly around issues like responsibility, entitlement and centrality. Being the centre of the relationship and their needs being central in a relationship. The work is needed in terms of providing services, but, it's like plugging your finger in the dam unless there is some primary prevention.

Again, the words of Jacobson and Hyde (1992:227) are fitting:

> To end violence against women is not a matter of increasing knowledge of its nature or incidence. It is no longer a matter for research documentation: there is more than enough evidence of its extent and incidence. What is needed is better education in general and in the legal system so that women can be heard and taken seriously.

In concluding this discussion of the impact of men's abuse, it is important to see the women of the Boot not only as victims, but also as survivors. Indeed, at one time, most of these women were victimised. However, to focus only upon their victimisation "gives a misleading impression of women as passive recipients of male violence" (Walby 1990:146). Conversely, identifying these women as survivors underscores their strength in overcoming the adversity that they have encountered. The words of Casandra, who was involved in a three-year relationship marked by violence, epitomise the women's resilience. *"It was tough. I still haven't really healed from that, but I'm not the victim any more and I know what choices I have in my life today as far as being in a relationship."*

SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the impact that patriarchy has had in the lives of the women who participated in this research. In summary, the women's inequitable access to labour markets limits their employment opportunities, while maintaining their marginal economic status. Meanwhile, socially constructed gender roles worsen the women's deprivation for the sake of partners and dependents, and increases their susceptibility to poverty. And, perhaps most importantly given the extent of violence against women in Canada, experiences of abuse at the hands of men contribute to the women's slide into poverty, while the women's poverty leaves them less able to deal with abusive situations. Put simply, the women's paths to poverty and their experiences of poverty are very much bound

up with the second-rank status that being a woman holds within Canadian society.

Much of this discussion has been informed by feminist writings on the economy, the feminisation of poverty, and conditions of patriarchy. However, there has been a notable silence within these bodies of literature on issues of space. This seems odd considering the recognition within the academy of the role that space plays in the shaping of social structures, as well as the role that social structures have in shaping space. Moreover, all social relationships have a spatial aspect to them. In the following chapter, I will attempt to redress this silence, taking special care to draw out the importance of the geographies of the everyday lives of the women of the Boot.

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN LIVING WITH POVERTY IN THE BOOT

It's dirty, it's rainy, it's polluted, it's got lots of fairly cranky looking people, people aren't very approachable. A lot of bummy scummy stuff and there's not very many fun places to go.

Samantha, Woman of the Boot

I think that those people [living in the Boot] need to live in a community like New Westminster. The services are here and if I was single and didn't have any money, I'd be coming to a community like this. It's where I'd want my children to be, where the parks are free, where the pools are cheap in the summer, where there's a good library and it costs nothing to go.

Betty Toporowski, Mayor

Fundamental questions arise when considering the experiences of the women of the Boot. Why do the women live in the area? Have they been able to establish a sense of place in the Boot? Which characteristics of the Boot benefit the women and which ones worsen their marginality? This chapter addresses these questions by examining the place-based experiences of the women interviewed, taking special consideration of the women's claim to space in the Boot as well as their exclusion from it.

First, the women's claim to space in the Boot through their residency and use of public service agencies will be outlined, along with how these claims to space are compromised. Then, the factors which contribute to the women's social exclusion will be examined, demonstrating the roles played by place, economic status and gender in the formation of that exclusion.

CLAIMING SPACE IN THE BOOT

> *I have the feeling that this is my stomping ground. I can go down the street and run into anybody that I know.*
>
> Cristine, Woman of the Boot

Interviews with the women who participated in this study revealed their attempts to claim space within their residential neighbourhood through the occupation of their homes, the use of public service agencies and visits to parks. While these claims to space are important in terms of developing the women's sense of place, each is problematic, as will be explained below.

Claiming Space Through Residency

> *I would like to live in a really nice area - like, out of the Boot!*
>
> Anita, Woman of the Boot

> *I like it better than anywhere else I've lived.*
>
> Tracey, Woman of the Boot

The women's first, and most obvious, claim to space in the Boot is through their tenure in apartments. Consideration of issues relating to the women's residency is important because the women's occupation of their apartments represents their only legal claim to space. However, their claims are tenuous: the poor quality of the women's apartment buildings compromises their living standards, while rental rates are rising and the process of gentrification jeopardises their tenure in the future.

Sibley's (1995) interesting discussion concerning the significance of the home raises two points which are pertinent to an individual's ability to claim space through

tenancy. First, within Western culture, the home is seen as a refuge "in a world otherwise replete with tension and conflict, and the only environment in which individuals can function as autonomous agents" (1995:93). Second, "the contrast between the positive experience of home and the negative experience of the wider environment gives the meaning of home greater intensity and depth" (1995:93). Moreover, the home is a reflection of the perceived identity of the dweller, and can be seen as part of her grounding within space (Sibley 1995).

The following exchange illustrates the linkage between living space and identity, in which Sara makes a connection between the success of her recovery from addiction to cocaine to her improved living environment.

Alison	*Are you doing well, do you think?*
Sara	*I think I'm doing excellent. I mean, look at my apartment. I think I'm doing great. I got all these plants for my birthday, outside and inside. I think it's great.*
Alison	*You're very proud, too, I think.*
Sara	*Yes, of my place. Yes, because I never had a place, like this, that I was proud of. I didn't care. You know what a drug place looks like (chuckle).*
Alison	*No, I don't. But I can imagine. Maybe what my place looks like right now.*
Sara	*Well, everything would be all over. I wouldn't have dishes done. My stove wouldn't be clean. Nothing. Everything would be a mess, and I wouldn't care if it smelt good or anything.*

Furthermore, several of the women interviewed had made specific efforts to express themselves through their living spaces. Judy's apartment was filled with plants, the most impressive of which was a 20 foot creeper that she had strung along the walls of her living room. And, obviously possessing a talent for interior design, Samantha had spent considerable time painting detailed stencils on her furniture.

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All but one of the women identified the availability of low cost rental housing as being the main reason why they initially moved into the Boot. This is a significant finding considering that several of the key informants interviewed argued that the concentration of public services in the Boot draw people to the community, thereby increasing the City's regional share of low-income households and expenditure for emergency services.

As women living with poverty, it is not surprising that New Westminster's low rental rates would be attractive to them. Among the lowest in the region, average rental costs in New Westminster range from $470 for a bachelor suite to $856 for a three bedroom apartment (New Westminster Planning Department 1996a). Nonetheless, these rental rates are still excessive for the women's limited incomes. Given that the average monthly incomes of the women interviewed range from approximately $550 for those who are single with no dependents to approximately $1000 for those with children, it is clear that after rent has been paid little money is available to spend on other necessities.

The women's difficulties with affordability are not unique; over half of New Westminster's female headed households that rent accommodation experience affordability problems (New Westminster Planning Department 1996a). Affordable housing is defined as housing that costs less than 30 percent of the gross income of those households earning at or below the City's 1991 median income of $26,132. By comparison, only a third of the City's male headed households that rent accommodation had affordability problems in 1991 (New Westminster Planning

Department 1996a).

Part of the difficulty in securing adequate, affordable accommodation anywhere throughout the Greater Vancouver region is related to housing stock, in which self-contained household units dominate the rental and purchase markets. Wilson (1991) argues that the preponderance of isolated household units is the result of systematic efforts on the part of (male) urban planners and policy makers to exert control on urban populations, specifically women. The expanse of single family homes in the suburbs, and the dearth of alternative, cheaper living arrangements in urban areas, epitomise the success of these efforts. Furthermore, unlike other advanced welfare states, Canada does not treat housing as a basic entitlement (Schaffner Goldberg 1990), and does not provide housing subsidies to all of those unable to afford decent housing (McQuaig 1993). Moreover, it is unlikely that this will change given the trend towards the rationalisation of government expenditures for social programs in Canada.

Almost all the women interviewed were dissatisfied with their current apartment. Rental costs, safety and building upkeep were given as reasons for their dissatisfaction. This is significant as the women's obligation to pay rent for their apartments reduces their ability to pay for such things as food and electricity. Thus, the women's claim to space through their residency is at the expense of other basic needs such as food and telephone service. Meanwhile, poor building quality and feelings of vulnerability to violence and crime reduce the women's level of comfort and sense of well being in 'their space'.

Anita, a lone parent living in the north end of the Boot, pays $545 a month for a one bedroom apartment, a sum which is well below the average regional rental cost, but exorbitant for her limited income. Between a break-in in 1995 and poor security in the building, Anita feels unsafe in her apartment. The upkeep of the building is also of concern. "You can't even call it your home," explained Anita. "There's always spit in the elevator and people peeing in the elevator, and it's always smelling like garbage in my building."

Samantha, also a lone parent, lives in a small two bedroom apartment with her two children. Her housing concerns relate to safety and hygiene. Her apartment door is cracked down the centre and could easily be forced open, and the building is inhabited by mice. In an effort to deal with the rodents, Samantha's landlord placed rat poison in and around the building, despite her protest. "I just want the mice gone. I don't want poison. My son is a little baby, he'll eat everything," she explained. Sure enough, a few weeks after Samantha and I first spoke, her young son ate some of the rat poison and became fairly ill.

Substandard living conditions are not uncommon in New Westminster's Boot. Marjorie Staal, Director of New Westminster Family Place, is all too familiar with the condition of some of the area's apartment buildings. "It's terrible. The women don't even like to go out into their own hallways because there's drug deals, there's dog faeces, never mind taking your child out to play. You just don't do that - it's dangerous." Keith Coueffin, the City's Chief Health Inspector is also very much aware of the housing difficulties faced by women living in the Boot. "I see it all the

time where we have a single mother. She's doing her very best, and she'll get into a situation where she's being burglarised by people around her and there's damage caused to her building."

Western society has traditionally viewed the private home as a protective environment and refuge from threats of the outside world. In environments where safety is a concern, such as the Boot, "individual housing units are especially valued for their security" (Harris and Pratt 1993:283). However, substandard living conditions, such as inadequate security, cracked doors and urine in the elevator compromise the women's health and safety, as well as their psychological well-being. Studies have shown that occupation of substandard housing in conjunction with social and economic deprivation can have a detrimental effect on an occupant's perceived health and mental distress (Kearns et al. 1991). Moreover, the identities of residential groups are at least in part related to the dwellings which individual members of those groups occupy, regardless of whether the resident is an owner occupier or renter (Harris and Pratt 1993). Thus, although not an argument for environmental determinism, it is reasonable to suggest that living in an insecure, smelly building poses a threat to the women's positive self-identity and self-esteem. In addition, as was discussed in chapter two, the unsightly appearance of these buildings shapes the way in which those who live in them are perceived by socially dominant groups such as the elite.

The difficulty of securing adequate housing is especially acute for Sara, Isabel and Cristine, all considered unattached women by the British Columbia Ministry of

Social Services (BCMSS), and as such, in receipt of a housing allowance of only $325 a month. At the time of our meeting, Cristine was living in a room at the College Place Hotel. At $325 a month for a private room and shared toilet and shower, College Place is one of New Westminster's last accommodation options before sleeping on the street. Flimsy locks on the rooms' doors compromise the residents' security while dark, stuffy hallways and noise from the 'strip club' and bars below do little to improve the atmosphere. Cristine was staying at the hotel as she had been unable to find a roommate with whom to share rental costs.

Isabel's claim to her residential space has been tenuous at best. Six months before our first meeting, Isabel struggled to pay her bills, and found herself relying on local drop-in meal services and food banks in order to survive. *"This is no lie. I was only living on twenty five dollars a month [after paying rent]. That is really hard, and then when I went for help from Social Services, they wouldn't give me any extra. He said, 'You'll have to deal with that.'"* When asked how she managed with so little money, Isabel replied, *"Well, I wasn't sick or anything but you get run down cause you can't provide all the food that you need for your body. I was kind of peeved off (laugh), but I managed, by hook or by crook. It wasn't easy, I'll tell you that."*

At the time of our interview, Isabel was sharing her one bedroom apartment with a man she did not know previously, an arrangement which was imposed by the BCMSS. Despite the financial benefits of having a roommate, Isabel was not happy about being told to live with a male stranger. *"I didn't go too hot about it, okay, but*

I don't like to fight with government cause they can, damn, you know, make it really hard for you." Ultimately, the living arrangement did not go well, and Isabel had to return to paying an exorbitant portion of her income for rent, at the expense of other necessities such as food and a telephone. Now living on her own in another apartment in the Boot, Isabel is left with only $20 a month to spend after paying her rent. When I asked how she manages, she replied with a shrug and a smile, *"No problem!"*

Isabel's situation demonstrates two related points. First, under the instruction of a government body, Isabel had to share her small living space, which she described as amounting to about 400 square feet, with a male stranger. Thus, her autonomy, privacy and security which were contained within that space were displaced by the state. Second, political and economic structures, such the labour market, low social assistance benefits and the scarcity of housing subsidies, force women living with poverty to make trade-offs between private living space and other necessities such as food, clothing, telephone services and electricity.

The women's claim to space through their residency in the Boot is compromised in yet another way: rising rents and gentrification. Increasing rents are in part a result of improvements to apartment buildings. Thus, the affordable buildings are generally those which are managed poorly, are of low quality and have problems with tenants who are involved in illicit activities. Judy recognises the irony in her situation: *"It's a catch-22. We need the low cost housing, but right now for me to get the low cost housing, it's going to be all drugs and hookers because they*

need it." Meanwhile, given the experience of gentrification in other inner city areas (see Ley 1994; van Weesep 1994; Cameron 1992), it is to be expected that the process of gentrification which is underway in the Boot will increase land values, which will, in turn, attract further residential development in the area. Although referring to the City of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, the following punctuates the dilemma faced by the women of the Boot:

> The poor in Vancouver's inner city confront the double jeopardy of increased pressure on the existing housing stock and diminishing options. The entire metropolitan area has experienced an inflating residential market, so no short-range relocation of the poor is feasible. The absence of alternatives brings a sense of desperation to the protection of existing affordable units (Ley 1994:706).

Thus, the women's claim to urban space through their residency in the Boot is uncertain indeed.

Claiming Space Through the Use of Public Agencies

Another way in which the women interviewed are able to claim space in the Boot is through their use of public service agencies. Drop-in meal centres, all of which are run by religious organisations, food-banks and New Westminster Family Place were the most commonly identified agencies utilized by the women. This finding reflects the study's method, where most of the women were contacted by me through New Westminster Family Place or by meeting me during a meal at one of the drop-ins (see Appendix B). There are several factors which enhance the women's accessibility to public agencies operating in the Boot: services are almost exclusively free of charge, some are within walking distance to the women's homes, and the

spaces where the services are offered are understood as being open to everyone. In short, these agencies offer the women a 'place' within the City.

While all of the women make use of these services, the extent of their use varies. For example, Judy's use of public agencies had been limited to several visits to New Westminster Family Place, which provides support services to parents of young children. Samantha's use of agencies in the Boot is more extensive. She has pursued educational upgrading at the Adult Skills Centre, uses a nearby food bank, and, on one occasion, employed the services offered by an advocacy group.

Most of the women interviewed regularly use the services of food-banks and drop-in meal centres located in the Boot because they are unable to survive on the amount of food that they are able to buy. However, for some of the women, these services also provide opportunities for social interaction. As Lynn, who regularly eats at drop-in meal centres, explained, *"It's a good meal - better than cooking at home. It's a change just to get out. And, at the Queen's Avenue lunch, people are really friendly."* Isabel also spoke of the importance of social interaction at drop-in meal centres and Century House, a community centre for senior citizens. *"Everybody misses me! I have to show my face once in a while! All of them are my friends."*

Five of the women interviewed not only use the services offered by public agencies, but also contribute their own volunteer labour. Some of the women gain material benefit from their involvement, which helps them deal with their economic situation. For example, towards the end of the social assistance pay period, Sara will eat her evening meals at Westminster Recovery House, a facility which provides

assistance for women addicted to mood-altering substances, where she works as a volunteer. And, Marie is given fresh vegetables each week in return for her volunteer work with a church-based agency. Although a small contribution for the hours of work that Marie does, the importance of the vegetables cannot be underestimated. *"I buy a lot of those Mr. Noodles and I don't always use the little spice packages so we just put that in water with the vegetables and it sort of makes up a little soup."* That 'little soup' was to be Marie's only meal that day.

Volunteering at public agencies is also beneficial to the women in terms of raising their self esteem and developing their sense of belonging within a particular community. For example, Sara, who describes herself as a recovering drug addict, derives both social support and a sense of satisfaction from her work as a 'house mother' to the women living at Westminster Recovery House. *"I love it,"* says Sara, *"because it's where I came from, so I can give back, and also because it helps my self esteem. If our self esteem is right then we seem to get into the mainstream of life better."* Sara was also a member of the New Westminster HIV/AIDS Prevention Group which designed and published a pocket telephone book which was distributed to women working in the sex trade and intravenous drug users throughout the Greater Vancouver region, including New Westminster. The telephone books, which were very well received in the City, include phone numbers for detoxification centres, needle exchanges and support groups in the region. *"That was really important to me,"* explains Sara, who says that many of her friends are HIV positive. *"It made me feel good that I could do something because knowing some of the*

addicts that are still out there in the warzone down here, I want to do something to help them."

Laura, Isabel, Casandra and Marie also spoke of the importance of their involvement with public service agencies, emphasising that their help is needed by the agencies at which they volunteer. Although the women did not articulate issues relating to inclusion and entitlement, I contend that their volunteer activities provide the women an opportunity to lay a strong claim to a particular space in the Boot. The study of social geography holds that such a claim contributes to an individual's sense of place, which is important in developing one's sense of belonging and positive identity (Rose 1995). Moreover, the women's involvement demonstrates the complexity of social relationships operating in the Boot. Contrary to the image of dependency that society projects on them, these women are themselves service providers to others in need of assistance. As a result, they spend considerable amounts of time actually supporting rather than consuming public service activities. This complexity shatters the stereotypical image of the Boot and those who live in it, re-presenting the area instead as place of fluid identities and activities which defy fixed categorisation.

However, not all of the women interviewed feel comfortable using the services offered by public agencies operating in the Boot. Judy's hesitation in using food banks and drop-in meal centres is related to the image that she holds of these places. Her comments also underscore the complexity of identities and activities discussed above:

I get too embarrassed to [use them], plus, they're right in the divey area and I've seen the people that are in the line-ups here and they're mostly the prostitute and the drug dealer type of dirt. Greasy hair, and I wouldn't want to be in that crowd because I don't feel like I'm that type of person. I don't fit in that category so I feel kind of embarrassed to go to those places.

Considering Judy's dire material situation, her discomfort over visiting these places cannot be seen as exaggerated. As she explained, *"I'm scrounging to pay all the bills every month. And then I've got to feed my son. I'm on welfare now, and it'll pay my rent and bills basically, and that's about it. When it comes down to food, I try and fend for myself. You get used to not affording to eat three square meals a day."* In the 24 hours before we first spoke, all Judy had eaten was a plain salad.

Given the low number of women who visit drop-in meal centres in the Boot, Judy's avoidance of these places can be seen as representative of women living with poverty in the area. Conversations with service providers and my own observations indicate that at least 80 percent of those who use the services of drop-in meal centres are men. However, given income levels, the prevalence of poverty is greater among women living in the Boot (PCensus 1993). Service providers working in the Boot offer three explanations for this absence of women. First, many women are uncomfortable associating with men that they do not know. Second, women with children are reluctant to take their children into an environment where there are people who appear unkempt, people with mental disabilities, and people using mood-altering substances. And third, some women believe that they might be investigated by the BCMSS if they are seen with their children at drop-in meal

centres.[21]

Women's limited access to services in the Boot reaches further than feelings of discomfort over using food banks and drop-in meal centres. Several of the women interviewed feel that there is little in the area which serves their needs. Speaking about housing, employment, and public services, Sara asserted, *"Just being a woman in New Westminster has its own set of problems because what opportunities are there here, really?"*

Sara's comment is especially appropriate when considering the situation of impoverished women with children, whose opportunities are further limited by the scarcity of publicly funded child care in the Boot. The City has developed a sensitive and conscientious child care strategy (New Westminster Planning Department 1996c). However, it does not take into account the high rate of single parent families living in the Boot, or the concentration of low-income households in the area. For example, in 1991, over 525 households in the Boot were made up of single parent families, compared to less than 100 in Queen's Park (PCensus 1993). However, the Queen's Park neighbourhood is listed by the Child Care Strategy as being among the City's top priorities in terms of meeting child care needs. Furthermore, the study does not adequately address issues related to the need for subsidised child care in New Westminster.

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[21]However, I am not convinced that this is a well-placed fear. In March 1994, BCMSS employees who work at an office in the Boot expressed warm support for a drop-in breakfast program that I was involved with, and posted a notice advertising the breakfast in the office.

Given the women's limited opportunities and limited incomes, access to public areas, such as parks, is an important avenue through which the women interviewed can lay claim to space in the Boot. Indeed, the close proximity of parks was identified by all of the women interviewed as a positive aspect to living in the Boot. Friendship Park, which borders the Boot on the west side and has a small pond containing turtles, fish and ducks, was identified as having special significance for Sara, Cristine and Lynn, all of whom felt both secluded and secure in it. *"It feels safe,"* explained Sara. *"Just because of the water and the ducks. We have a certain spot that's ours, where we buried our hamster."* The New Westminster Quay, which sits below the heel of the Boot community, and includes an extensive, attractive board-walk, was also identified by seven of the women as a place that they frequent for walks and picnics.

However, as attractive and accessible as these parks are, they do not compensate for the exclusion that the women face as a result of their inability to fully participate in society. The rest of this chapter will consider this exclusion, along with the place-based factors which heighten it.

EXCLUSION IN THE BOOT

What follows is consideration of the women's exclusion from spaces of consumption and social interaction, and how this exclusion worsens their marginal status. Although I present the starting-point of the women's exclusion as being their economic status, factors relating to their gender and their neighbourhoods are equally important.

Excluded From Consumption, Excluded From Space

Mutually enmeshed. Intertangled. Complexly interfused. Thus may consumption and identity be jointly regarded (Pred 1996:11).

Material isn't everything in life and money isn't everything, but it helps. If we didn't have money we would be very cooked.

Isabel, Woman of the Boot

Expanding the materialities conception of poverty presented earlier, poverty can be seen as the inability to exercise choice about the disposal of one's income (Shurmer-Smith and Hannam 1994). Indeed, the women interviewed have little choice over how they spend their money, leaving them excluded from the culture of consumption so prevalent in Western society. While such exclusion is reflected most obviously in the women's relationships with others, it is also manifested spatially in terms of the women's limited access to spaces of consumption such as retail outlets, entertainment venues and recreational facilities.

All but one of the women do most of their shopping within the Boot, despite the fact that both of the area's large food stores tend to be more expensive than other

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grocery chains. The women use these stores because of the proximity to their homes, citing the difficulty of using public transit to transport groceries from the store to their apartments. As Anita explained, "*I don't have a car and I can't take both my daughter and the groceries [on public transit]*." Only two of the women reported visiting cafes and restaurants. Sara said that she would sometimes collect her loose change and go to 'Starbucks', a nearby cafe, to have a cup of coffee with her addiction recovery support group. Cristine, who did not have access to cooking facilities, said that she would sometimes eat at one of fast-food outlets in the downtown area. Otherwise, none of the women reported frequenting cinemas, restaurants or bars inside or outside the Boot, a reflection of their limited income.

While the food stores which are located in the Boot tend to be more expensive, there is a concentration of bargain retail outlets in the area which sell household items and clothes. Most of the women interviewed identified frequenting these retail outlets, emphasising the importance of simply being able to go out and buy something, however small. Sara's views demonstrate the importance of consumption in Canadian society. She contends that her visits to discount stores and cafes help her to cope with her poor material situation and enhance her self esteem: "*I go to the loonie store*[22] *if I just have two or three dollars extra and I feel like going shopping. I buy a bowl or something. It makes me feel good.*"

Several of the women interviewed linked their inability to consume to changes

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[22]The Canadian one dollar coin is commonly called a 'loonie'. Throughout Canada, there are discount stores in which virtually all of the items are priced at one dollar or less. Hence the name, 'loonie store'.

in their social interactions. For example, when she was working, Marie and her husband would go out with a friend once a week for a meal at a restaurant. Now, however, she has no disposable income with which to pay for the cost of entertainment and is uncomfortable with allowing her friend to cover her expenses. Marie identified this change in her consumption habits, and thus, in her social relationships, as being the most difficult aspect of poverty. Judy also has very little contact with her former coworkers and friends. *"To get out, you need gas or you need money for coffee,' and when you don't have it you can't do it."* When speaking about not having enough money, Judy emphasised the social and psychological aspects of her situation over the material: *"I just feel like all these people have money and they can do stuff and I feel left out of it. That's what bothers me more."*

The discomfort and isolation that the women interviewed attach to their inability to participate in the culture of consumption is neither surprising nor uncommon. Jordan (1996) argues that the economic marginality of impoverished groups is at the root of their social exclusion, while Thrift and Glennie (1993:47) assert that "it is clear that the identities of people have been built on consumption practices for at least the last three hundred years." Indeed, within Western capitalistic societies, a "major means of communicating social identity is through the private 'conspicuous' consumption of objects" (Duncan 1992:40). Similarly, social identity is shaped and communicated by non-consumption.

Sibley (1995:xii) contends that the "boundaries between the consuming and non-consuming public are strengthening, with non-consumption being constructed

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as a form of deviance." The women interviewed are aware of these boundaries, and expressed having felt discomfort when their own consumption practices had been juxtaposed with those who had greater incomes. For example, Laura contrasted the level of comfort that she felt with her involvement in two different groups for mothers which operate in the Boot. *"It's quite a nice group at the church, but most of the people there are from middle and high income families. I heard some people talking about their holiday homes the other week, you know, stuff like that. So, it's not really as comfortable for me as Family Place has been."*

Without the money for equipment or entrance fees, the women interviewed also find themselves excluded from spaces of recreation such as the local theatres, the Canada Games Pool and the Queen's Park Arena. As for team sports or personal enrichment activities, much of what is available has a charge to it or requires equipment. The women who have children are even more limited as free child care is rarely available at recreational facilities.

Furthermore, without money for a car, gas or public transportation, the women's mobility is restricted. One City planner interviewed emphasised the importance of ensuring that transportation to services and facilities is available to women who live with poverty: *"I think that accessibility is an important issue that people just underestimate. One of the reasons they underestimate it is that a lot of people who are designing our transit systems and designing our road systems are, in fact, white male engineers who don't use transit."*

Moreover, despite the close proximity of stores, public service agencies and

parks, some of the women reported that the Boot's difficult topography - the elevation ranges from five to over 100 metres above sea level - affects their ability to walk to these places. And, the perception of danger in public areas, along with the greater risk that women have of being a victim of crime, restrict the women's movements within the Boot. Several of the women interviewed expressed concern over being outside after dark, referring to the threats posed by the area's sex-trade and drug-related activities, while Judy is hesitant to leave her apartment even during the daylight. Issues relating to the women's fear of crime will be further addressed at the end of this chapter.

The exclusion of the women from spaces of consumption, such as a coffee shop, woodworking classes or a public swimming pool, is an important issue for two reasons. First, this exclusion curtails the women's opportunities to be involved in the broader community, threatening to worsen their sense of being peripheral to what is considered 'normal society'. Second, such exclusion limits the women's opportunities to meet other people. This is significant considering that social support is important in enhancing an individual's ability to cope with stressors (Thoits 1995; Smith et al. 1993).

The lack of social ties for most of the women who participated in the study is surprising. None of the women reported having family ties in New Westminster, and only half of the women could identify a friend who lived in the City upon whom they could rely if in need. Moreover, four of the women spoke explicitly about their own isolation and loneliness, and expressed a desire to meet more people in the

area. The women's isolation can be seen as representative of other low-income women living in the Boot. As a public health nurse who works in the area explained:

> There are very few places for people to just gather together, like at a community centre or something. You have all kinds of group things, but these are located farther away and some of the women don't have transportation. There are really no parks for them to meet at and when they go out for walks, they're up and down hills. The geographics are very difficult for these women. The isolation is really unbelievable.

The Importance of Public Space in the Boot

The women's exclusion from spaces of consumption leaves few opportunities for them to meet other people or engage in activities outside of their homes. This underscores the need for the provision of safe, public spaces for women living in the Boot, including community centres which facilitate recreational and social activities. However, in Western societies, there is a general trend towards a reduction in the amount of public space in urban areas, with it being replaced by consumption-oriented spaces. This encroachment of consumption-oriented space on public spaces reinforces the cultural perception of non-consumption as a form of deviance (Sibley 1995), while strengthening divisions between those who are able to partake in the culture of consumption and those who are not (Sibley 1995; Davis 1992).

A related factor in the disappearance of public space is the belief that private ownership of space reduces crime as people are more likely to police property which belongs to them (Wilson 1991). However, this argument "relies on a profoundly reactionary belief that human beings, like certain animal species, have an inbuilt 'territorial instinct' and will only defend their own territory. The reverse side of this

belief is that there can be no public or social responsibilities or obligations" (Wilson 1991:153). Wilson's critique draws on several important points. First, that Western cultural values uphold the importance of individual ownership while resisting public or communal spaces. Of course, individual ownership of space is limited to those who can pay for it, thereby reinforcing the exclusion of economically marginal groups. And second, emphasis on private ownership decreases involvement in social movements which benefit those who do not have access to private space. This phenomenon is accounted for in previous studies (Harris and Pratt 1993), and is reflected in the now-disbanded Brow of the Hill Residents' Association, which represented the interests of home-owners in the area.

Of course, public spaces do exist in urban centres, such as soccer fields and parks. However, "[s]paces and places which are apparently for everyone and nominally gender-neutral are more likely in practice to be male spaces" (Winchester 1992:142). Indeed, a Canadian study found that recreational programs and facilities are generally male-oriented, "which tends to decrease female participation. Also, due to social stereotyping of roles, females who do want to participate in 'male' activities are often prevented or discouraged from doing so" (Youth at Risk 1995:5). This bias was recently played out in New Westminster. In May 1996, City Council allocated land, staff support and $96,000 to the planning and construction of a skateboard park (McManus 1996b). Of course, skateboarding is an activity dominated by adolescent men.

Valentine (1989) argues that women's inhibited use and occupation of public

space is a spatial expression of patriarchy. Her argument is twofold. First, women's avoidance of public spaces increases their confinement in the home, thus, reinforcing the public-private dichotomy of women's roles. Second, the inability of women to enjoy independence outside of their homes increases their dependence on boyfriends and male partners. The result of these actions presents a double irony, where "there is more sexual violence (which occurs mainly in the private sphere) [while] the men who carry it out remain unpenalized and common notions of sexual violence in the public sphere go unchallenged" (Pain 1991:423).

Finally, another important aspect of public space in urban areas is that it enhances the visibility of marginal groups. This in turn provides, "at least in theory, a place 'where one... risks encounter with those who are different, those who identify with different groups and have different forms of life' (Young 1990: 240 quoted in Ruddick 1996:133). However, there is little opportunity for such interaction in the Boot. Those who live outside of the area tend to stay outside of the area, while the women who live with poverty in the Boot have little option but to remain.

The Impact of Crime

Illicit and criminal activities in the Boot, which include drug trade, sex trade, violence and theft, have an impact on the women's everyday lives in terms of reducing their sense of security and restricting their movements, thereby worsening their feelings of isolation and exclusion from society.

Illicit activities taking place around Samantha's home have left her feeling

uneasy in her apartment: *"There's hookers all around here. Every second or third night they come and the pimp sits in the parking lot of that restaurant,"* she explained, gesturing across the street. *"I don't have much to do, and I like looking out my window. It makes me really uncomfortable that they're sitting there and they see me and then I'm afraid that they think I'm going to call the police or something."* Between strangers walking in the hallways and a break-in last year, Anita also feels unsafe in her apartment. Her feelings of insecurity are worsened by sex-trade activities on her street. *"There's hookers - we've caught them in the back of our alley - you see condoms all over the place. They just come around and do their thing, and I don't like it."*

Whereas a few years ago, Laura would have felt comfortable walking alone in the evening, she now feels less secure in her community. *"I think the neighbourhood is getting a bit more unsafe. There are a lot of people that are on drugs here - a lot of social problems,"* she explained. Moreover, several women mentioned friends who had left the area in response to similar problems as those identified above, thereby heightening the women's isolation. As Judy explains, *"Everybody's slowly moving out. It's too dirty - the hookers and the drugs."* The women reported that these friends had moved either to suburban areas such as Surrey or Coquitlam (see Appendix A), or out of the Greater Vancouver region completely.

In an effort to improve the quality and safety of all apartment buildings in New Westminster, the NWPS launched the Crime Free Multi-housing Program in

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1995. The program provides training for landlords and managers aimed at improving building safety, including a thorough security check of the building by trained police officers. By the end of 1996, eight buildings had been certified under the program, all of which are in the Boot. In some cases the results have been dramatic, with reductions in police service calls to these buildings of up to 70 percent, and marked improvements in the quality of life for building tenants, most of which are low-income women. The success of the Crime Free Multi-housing Program underscores the importance of its continued funding as a means towards improving the well-being of women living with poverty in the Boot.

In the months before participating in this study, Isabel was the victim of violence including choking and death threats, at the hands of a man who, at one time, had been a friend. As a result of these attacks, Isabel does not feel safe either in her home or when walking outside. *"When I go for walks I'm pretty scared. I have to go with my roommate because you never know."* Adding to Isabel's fear of violence is her lack of trust in the NWPS following what she perceives as a police officer's dismissal of the seriousness of these threats. *"He said, it's your friend, so we can't do anything about it. You have to figure it out for yourself."* Judy spoke of a similar experience, referring to a situation where a police officer refused to assist her in what Judy considered to be a time of crisis. Shortly after her son was born, Judy's former boyfriend, who had been abusive during their relationship, told her that he was coming to take the child and would kill her if she tried to stop him. Her faith in the police has been compromised by the incident, thereby worsening her fear of

crime in her neighbourhood. Isabel and Judy's perception of danger in their neighbourhood is not surprising as the fear of crime is greatest in those who have little faith in the commitment of the police (S. Smith 1987).

Another relevant factor relating to the fear of crime relates to the visibility of strangers in an area. Studies have found that the fear of crime is greatest in areas where the majority of the local traffic "appears anonymous and tied into unpredictable routines" (S. Smith 1987:10). Indeed, as a 'core city', hundreds of thousands of anonymous people pass through New Westminster each day on their way to other parts of the Greater Vancouver area. Moreover, those involved in illicit activities in the Boot, such as men purchasing sex or intravenous drug users looking for seclusion, are threatening to the women not only because of their anonymity, but also because of their own need to remain undetected as they engage in illicit acts.

The women's concern over illicit and criminal activities in the Boot is not unusual or displaced. Studies indicate that women's fear of crime reflects the actual risks more realistically than men's fear of crime, while the effects of crime have a greater impact on women's lives (Pain 1991). "Men commonly protect their property in response to the threat of crime, but as women are most concerned about sexual crimes, they are more likely to make adaptations to lifestyle and behaviour" (Pain 1991:416). These adaptations, moreover, often take the form of limiting their rounds of activities in time and space.

Conversely, Cristine does not feel threatened by the prevalence of drug-trade, sex-trade or crime in the Boot, possibly because of her insider status in illicit

activities. *"With the johns or the pimps, I've ran into a few of them already and they try to intimidate you. I'm not a person who gets intimidated by anybody. You let them walk all over you, they're going to walk all over you - all the time."* Moreover, despite Cristine's illegal ventures, she has a positive impression of the City's police. *"They're pretty nice. I don't cause shit or raise anything, so they just basically leave me alone."*

The sincerity of Cristine's comments regarding her absence of fear were revealed to me shortly after we first spoke. While accompanying a police officer on patrol at one in the morning, I saw her walking alone down Sixth Street. Although I was concerned for Cristine's safety (she was approaching what I perceive as one of the more precarious parts of the City), I found it encouraging to see a woman walk so confidently down the street, claiming her right to public urban space. Elizabeth Wilson, who has written extensively on the way in which cities have excluded women, would most likely share my sentiments. Arguing that urban design reflects patriarchal social structures which seek to control the activities and movements of women, Wilson (1991:10) contends that we must "insist on women's right to the carnival, intensity and even the risks of the city." In short, we must insist on women's right to urban space, including a late-night stroll in the inner city.

SUMMARY

While the women interviewed have been able to lay claim to space in the Boot through their residency in the area and involvement with public service agencies, these claims are far from secure. Poor building quality has an impact on the women's general sense of well-being in 'their space', while rising rents and gentrification threaten to displace them from the Boot completely. Meanwhile, unable to participate in any activities which require money, limited by their fear of illicit and criminal activities, and isolated from other people, the women's exclusion is profound.

As demonstrated here, the women of the Boot's marginality cannot be understood as the result of a single factor, such as poverty or patriarchy, but rather, is constituted by social and spatial structures which play out in their everyday lives. As women, they are more susceptible to poverty, have less access to public spaces, and perceive themselves to be more vulnerable to violence than men. As residents of the Boot, they occupy substandard living spaces, share their neighbourhoods with those involved in the sex trade and drug-related activities, and, at times, feel threatened by those engaged in illicit acts. As people living with poverty, their economic status limits their inclusion in any activity which requires money, thereby excluding the women from spaces of consumption and social interaction, and heightening their feelings of isolation. Indeed, "the everyday routines traced by women are never unimportant, because the seemingly banal and trivial events of the everyday are bound into the power structures which limit and confine women" (Rose

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1993b:17).

It is not surprising that most of the women interviewed indicated that they would like to leave the Boot permanently. However, the women's economic position limits their capacity to move out of the area, either on a permanent or a daily basis. As Isabel so succinctly puts it, "You don't have the money to go nowhere. Here's where you stay." Indeed, Anita wants to return to her home-town community on Vancouver Island, but is unable to raise the estimated thousand dollars that it would cost to move. Between increasing rents and fears for her safety, Judy is also desperate to get out of the area, but is unable to pay any more than she already does for rent.

What does the future hold for the women of the Boot? "They'll continue to struggle," says Councillor Fletcher-Gordon. "Not only have they got a provincial government that's tightening the screws, but they've got a municipal government that is not recognising that they have a responsibility for the quality of life for everyone in their community."

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUDING WITH THE WOMEN OF THE BOOT

The conclusions of this study demonstrate the intersection of gender, socioeconomic status and place in shaping the experiences of women living with poverty in the Boot. Indeed, the experience of poverty is not universal, but rather, varies over space and time. Thus, although the academy has largely ignored the issue of space in its consideration of women living with poverty, the geographies of these women's lives are of great importance in the constitution of their experiences.

This chapter will review the three main conclusions of this research, and consider how they contribute to the study of social geography. I will conclude with an assessment of the future tenure of the women of the Boot, and the application of these conclusions at a broader level.

CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The Interplay of Gender, Poverty and Place

Although not focused upon issues of space, the first conclusion of this study is important as it exposes underlying processes which have left the women of the Boot susceptible to poverty. As the life experiences of the women interviewed revealed, patriarchal social structures have shaped their paths to poverty and experiences of poverty. Thus, although the most obvious connection between the women of the Boot and their choice of residence is their economic status, because of the low rental rates in the area, it is important to keep in mind the workings of a

patriarchal society which pushed them towards poverty in the first place.

As outlined in chapter three, gender-based inequity in the waged labour force, through lower rates of pay and disparate employment opportunities, has maintained the women's economic marginality. Gender-role stereotyping as it relates to expectations of women's altruism within the household, and society's acceptance of men's dismissal of parental responsibilities, worsens the women's already adverse situations. And, physical and sexual abuse by men was shown to have played a significant role in the construction of these women's socioeconomic status. Put simply, the women's paths to poverty and their experiences of poverty are contingent on the marginal status that being female holds within contemporary Canadian society.

Second, although the women interviewed were found to have laid claims to space in the Boot through their residency and involvement with public service agencies, exclusion from various spaces was found to be more prevalent. Tenancy does give the women a legal claim to space in the Boot, and the women's involvement in public service agencies acts as a means of developing their sense of place in the City. Moreover, the women's work with public service agencies shatters the stereotypical image of 'dependency' that Western society ascribes to impoverished groups. Indeed, the Boot is a place of fluid identities and activities which defy fixed categorisation.

However, substandard living conditions, the threat of rising rents, along with feelings of discomfort over using public services compromise these claims to space.

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Moreover, the women's claim to space through their apartments was often found to be at the expense of other necessities such as food or personal health and well-being.

The women's experiences of social exclusion were found to be partly based on their inability to fully participate in the culture of consumption. Excluded from stores, theatres, cafes and recreational facilities which cost money to use, and with little access to public places, most of the women interviewed expressed feelings of isolation. Four of the women spoke explicitly about loneliness. For most of the women interviewed, their social exclusion is worsened by the prevalence of illicit activities (i.e., drug trade, sex trade) in the Boot, which have heightened their fear of crime, thereby limiting their movements in the area.

The third conclusion relates to the identity of the Boot and the marginal groups which live within it. The visibility of illicit activities and abject poverty on the streets of the Boot, along with media coverage of stories emanating from the area, have helped to construct the identity of the Boot as a 'bad space'. Representations of the Boot as a place of deviance furthers the cause of urban revitalisation, where images of prostitution, drug trade and crime are drawn upon to bolster calls to 'clean up' the area. Meanwhile, focus on the revitalisation of the Boot eclipses the issue of poverty, while gentrification threatens to displace impoverished women from the area altogether. And, in a city where the power of community groups has been demonstrated, the invisibility of low income women to key civic actors is worsened by the lack of an active residents' association in the Boot.

One weakness in this final conclusion concerns the linkage between the

identity of the Boot and the way in which its impoverished resident women are represented by key civic actors. As noted in chapter two, this weakness reflects key informants' caution in speaking directly to issues relating to women living with poverty in the Boot. Nonetheless, most of the women interviewed expressed feelings of frustration or discomfort over the ways in which they are identified by socially dominant groups. As Samantha explained,

> I feel like a lot of assumptions are made about me, especially when people find out I have two children from two different dads. I always get the feeling that when people know you're on welfare and you're a single mom, they either feel sorry for you or they look down on you, and I don't like either. I'm just the same as any of those moms that I meet at the park. I just don't have a husband or I don't have a lot of money, but a lot of times I think my kids are fed a lot better than [kids who have] moms with money.

Contributions to Social Geography

This study is yet another demonstration that 'geography matters!' The women of the Boot occupy a place at the margins of society, a social, spatial and psychological position which is reinforced by the characteristics of the area, such as poor quality buildings, a lack of public spaces and the prevalence of crime and illicit activities. The process of gentrification in the Boot is, in part, fuelled by the centrality of the area within the Greater Vancouver region. And, gentrification threatens to displace the women out of the Boot, forcing them to seek out a new claim to residential space.

The identity of the Boot as a 'bad place' renders invisible the experiences of impoverished women who live there, while their economic status leaves them

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excluded from spaces of consumption and limits their social interactions. Such invisibility is profoundly problematic because to be invisible is to be unknown, and to be unknown is to be disenfranchised. As Sibley (1995:xiv) writes, "It is the fact that exclusions take place routinely, without most people noticing, which is a particularly important aspect of the problem." A parallel to Sibley's point is Golding's (1993) analysis of the 'gay rights' movement in Western societies. She argues that it is important for marginal groups to emphasise their peripheral status in order to be noticed by the dominant culture. A less favourable option is to hover, as the women of the Boot do, between a society's centre and periphery, where a group remains invisible, and thus, unheard.

From a methodological standpoint, this study demonstrates the relevance of three aspects of feminist methodology: qualitative research, acceptance of researcher subjectivity, and the importance of conducting research which aims to benefit the women being studied. First, this study highlights the value of using qualitative research methods to explore issues which affect marginalised groups rather than relying on statistical analyses to investigate social processes. This is not to say that statistical analyses do not have their place. Indeed, many points throughout this paper draw on numerical data. However, numbers reveal only part of the picture, while key informant and ethnographic approaches provide an opportunity to uncover deeper processes and relationships.

For example, it is highly unlikely that the connection between the women's current economic status and their histories of physical and sexual abuse by men

would have been disclosed had a quantitative research approach been employed, especially considering that I did not raise issues of abuse with the women who were interviewed. A survey certainly would not have revealed the ways in which the identification of the Boot as a deviant place is drawn upon to further the cause of civic revitalisation, or how such identification has come to represent all low-income groups living in the Boot. And, the ways in which the women have been able to lay claims to space in the Boot, and how these claims are compromised, would not have been revealed through a statistical analysis.

Second, acceptance of researcher subjectivity was very important in conducting this study. I strongly believe that had I presented myself to the women interviewed as an objective researcher, a thick barrier would have been placed between us. Most of the women interviewed were initially sceptical of my intentions in conducting this research, which is understandable given the way that they have been treated by society. I feel that by presenting myself as sympathetic to their situations and interested in hearing their points of view, the women were more comfortable with revealing the deeper and more sensitive details of their lives. Moreover, to have approached this study with detached objectivity would have limited my involvement in a number of community groups as well as my knowledge of the Boot.

The issue of researcher subjectivity is also relevant to the third aspect of feminist methodology, namely, the importance of conducting research which benefits the groups being studied. Indeed, as a researcher, I have a responsibility to voice the

concerns raised by the women who participated in this study to the City's key civic
actors. To do otherwise would be to exploit these women and trivialise their
experiences. I repeat the words of Kobayashi (1994:73), quoted in chapter one: "The
political is not only personal, it is a commitment to deconstruct the barrier between
the academy and lives of the people it professes to represent."

Finally, this study's methodology has been beneficial in terms of acting, albeit
in a small way, as an avenue of enfranchisement for the women of the Boot. As Anita
explains, *"I like the idea that there's someone I can actually talk to and they
understand what our situation is. It might open people's eyes."* Some key informants
also identified a level of benefit in participating in this study in terms of thinking
about issues or problems in a way that they might not have done otherwise.

Future Research

At a broad level, this project demonstrates the need for further consideration
of the interplay between gender, economic status and place in the analysis of social
exclusion and poverty. Current literature tends to focus on one or two of these
factors, but seldom considers all three. Other factors which should be added to
analyses of the experiences of impoverished inner city women are ethnicity,
dependencies, sexuality and disability.

At the microscale, this research addresses only a part of the sociospatial
dynamics taking place in the Boot which are relevant to the study of social
geography. Other issues which warrant investigation within the context of gender,

economic status and place include the prevalence of sex trade activities in the Boot, the concentration of drug-dependent groups in the Boot, and policing practices in New Westminster, to name just a few.

Finally, another area of research raised by this study which requires further theoretical development by social geographers is linkages between psychology and social exclusion. Although there is a level of interest in this field (see Bondi 1992; Hoggett 1992; Sibley 1992) a clearer analysis of psychological theory as it applies to social and spatial exclusions is required to carry this sub-discipline.

Is There a Place for the Women of the Boot?

The process of revitalisation in the Boot is undoubtedly putting pressure on low income women who live there, forcing them to either move within the City or out of the area completely. Since participating in this study, Laura and Judy have moved out of the Boot after finding more suitable accommodation which they could afford, while Isabel has moved within the Boot in response to a rental increase. In subsequent meetings with Anita, Marie, Cristine and Sara, each woman expressed concern over her current rental costs with all but one, Cristine, considering moving out of their current accommodation.

Meanwhile, economic restructuring has reduced the amount of money directed at social programs from which the women benefit, such as skills training, while their limited access to the labour market curtails job opportunities. Worsening their already grave situations is the marginal status that being a woman holds in

Canadian society. Put simply, the women of the Boot are enmeshed in a cycle of poverty which is constructed and sustained by social and economic structures.

Given the findings of this study, such as the impact of poor housing on the women's quality of life, their fear of crime, and feelings of isolation and loneliness, moving out of the Boot might benefit these women. However, cheaper accommodation is generally found only in more isolated suburban areas, which is hardly amenable to women with dependents, without transportation, and living on a low income. A more productive argument is to stress that issues of housing affordability, access to public facilities, and support for a planning study similar to the one conducted for the Queen's Park neighbourhood become prominent aspects of the City's municipal policy.

As Winchester (1990:84) writes, municipal housing policies which consider the needs of low-income groups are of "fundamental importance in overcoming marginality." Thus far, New Westminster has not adequately secured the social benefits which can come with new residential developments, such as provision of public space or contributions towards affordable housing in exchange for an increase in zoning density. Given the extent of condominium development in the Boot - which amounts to over 30 buildings containing over 1500 units - many opportunities for the negotiation of social amenities have been lost. As Councillor Cook stated, *"Developers only do what municipalities let them get away with."*

Of course, provision of affordable housing must be throughout New Westminster rather than concentrated in the Boot. One City Planner interviewed

emphasised the importance of avoiding the ghettoisation of marginal groups, and instead, creating a more balanced community *"where different people with different situations can live in the same neighbourhood."* Indeed, ghettoisation is problematic. As demonstrated here, activities associated with specific parts of the Boot, such as main streets and the downtown public transit station, have come to represent all low-income groups who live in the area. The emphasis on the illicit activities and the deviant nature of the Boot has effectively pushed discussion concerning issues of poverty in the area out of the public arena.

Meanwhile, it is reasonable to suggest that the lack of a residents' association in the Boot worsens the invisibility of resident groups in the area. As noted in chapter two, City support for planning-related activities has been extensive for the West End and Queen's Park neighbourhoods, as well as for the Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Society. Making available similar financial and personnel support for neighbourhoods in the Boot would be a step towards equity in New Westminster while enhancing the visibility of all resident groups in the area.

A Last, But Not Final, Word

Although this study has considered the experiences of only a small group of women, its findings are, to some degree, transferable to a larger scale. The effects of economic restructuring, including changing labour markets, inner city decline and revitalisation, and rationalisation of government expenditures are being felt across Canada. The impact of Western cultural values and patriarchal social structures are

also transferable to other groups of inner city women who live with poverty, as are the effects of crime, illicit activity, and the loss of public space. The similarities between the incomes of the women interviewed and the incomes of other women living below Canada's poverty-line demonstrate the relevance of this study at a broader level, as do the parallels between the women's lived experiences and issues addressed in academic literature. Nonetheless, the experience of poverty is not universal. It varies over space and time, underscoring the need for other place-specific studies of women living with poverty.

Finally, the thoughts and experiences of the 11 women of the Boot make up only one chapter in the volumes of stories of women living with poverty in Canada. However, it is an important chapter, informing us of the intersection of gender, poverty and place in the construction of these women's marginality. It is a chapter which sensitises us to the reality of their adverse situations, as well as their ability to survive. And, it is a chapter which invites us to reconsider our own ideological positions in the face of social and economic structures which produce and maintain these women's situations. I close with the thoughts of Samantha.

> I'm not expecting to live richly by any means, but I shouldn't have to live here. I shouldn't have to live so barely. Do you know what I mean? Like, I shouldn't have to go to the free store. I shouldn't have to go to the food bank every month, but I always end up having to go. I shouldn't have to not be able to take my kids to Science World, or not be able to afford to give my kids swimming lessons or skating lessons or whatever kind of lessons. I can't afford any lessons! I can't afford preschool for my daughter, and that's not fair. Like, my children and myself, we should have a little more, you know. It just frustrates me, that's all, because I think everything's backwards. A lot of priorities are really wrong.

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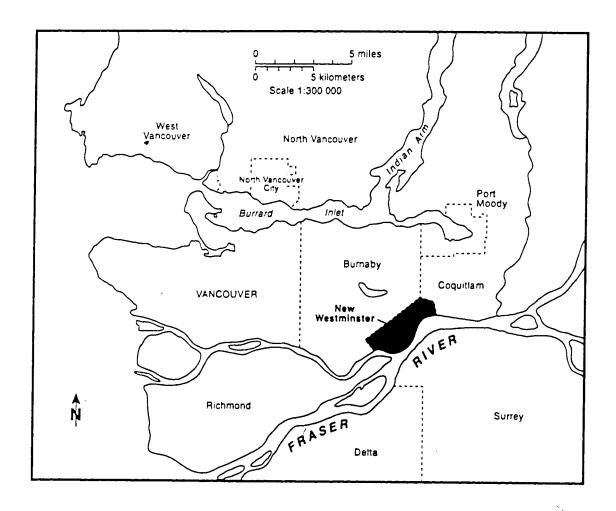
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GREATER VANCOUVER REGION, courtesy of Paul DeGrace, Department of Geography, Simon Fraser University

APPENDIX B

LIST OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

THE WOMEN OF THE BOOT

Anita was living in a one bedroom apartment with her baby daughter. We met through New Westminster Family Place.

Casandra was living with her daughter in a subsidised townhouse located north east of the Boot. Although not a resident at the time of our interview, she had lived in the Boot for over ten years. We met through one of the other women who took part in this project.

Cristine was living alone in a hotel room. She has no children. We met at a drop-in meal centre.

Judy was living with her baby son in a one bedroom apartment. We met through New Westminster Family Place.

Isabel was living in a one bedroom apartment with a male roommate. She is divorced and has four adult children. We met at a drop-in meal centre.

Laura was living in a two bedroom apartment with her husband and two children. We met through New Westminster Family Place.

Linda was living in a two bedroom apartment with her boyfriend. She has no children. We met at a drop-in meal centre.

Marie was living in a one bedroom apartment with her husband. She has no children. We met in 1994 at a drop-in meal centre.

Samantha was living in a two bedroom apartment with her two children. We met on a public transit bus in the Boot.

Sara was living with a female roommate in a two bedroom apartment. Of her daughters, one lives with Sara's ex-husband, one is married, and the third died in 1994. We met through another woman who I know from my community involvement.

Tracey was living in a one bedroom apartment with her baby son. We met through New Westminster Family Place.

KEY INFORMANTS

Although two planners and two police officers interviewed agreed to having their names published, I have not done so in order to maintain the anonymity of their colleagues who did not want their names to be used.

Casey Cook, New Westminster City Councillor (male).

Keith Coueffin, Chief Public Health Inspector, New Westminster Department of Health (male).

Director of Health Services, Simon Fraser Health Unit (female).

Bill Engleson, President, West End Residents' Association (male).

Lynda Fletcher-Gordon, New Westminster City Councillor (female).

Planners, New Westminster Planning Department (two females, one male).

Police Officers, Corporal Rank, New Westminster Police Service (three males).

Public Health Nurse, Simon Fraser Health Unit (female).

Spokesperson, Brow of the Hill Residents' Association (female).

Spokesperson, Queen's Park Residents' Association (male).

Spokesperson, New Westminster Community Action Committee for Women Who Experience Violence (female).

Marjorie Staal, Director, New Westminster Family Place (female).

Netty Tam, Executive Director of the Downtown New Westminster Business Improvement Society (female).

Rose Ternes, Spokesperson, Twelfth Street Merchants' Association (female).

Betty Toporowski, Mayor of New Westminster (female).

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

The following schedules are guides to the interviews rather than complete lists of issues which were discussed. Moreover, not all participants directly answered all of the questions asked of them.

Interviews with Marjorie Staal from New Westminster Family Place, the Spokesperson from the New Westminster Community Action Committee for Women who Experience Violence, and the Spokesperson from the disbanded Brow of the Hill Residents' Association were less structured and were not guided by an interview schedule.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Women Living With Poverty in the Boot

Would you describe yourself as being poor?

► If so, what do you think are the reasons for you being poor?

Why do you live in this apartment/house?

► Would you like to continue living in this apartment/house?

Do you like this neighbourhood?

► Do you feel safe in this neighbourhood?

► Do you know your neighbours?

► Do you have friends/family who live in this neighbourhood?

► Do you feel as though you are a part of the community?

What services do you use in New Westminster (library, parks, drop-in centres, community centres)?

Where do you do your shopping (inside or outside of New Westminster)?

► How do you get there?

If you had a concern regarding your home or community, would you voice that concern?

► How?

► Do you think that you would be listened to?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

City Councillors and the Mayor

What should be the main priorities of City Council?

▶   What are the limitations to realising these priorities

Is there a need to reduce the City's expenditure on services in New Westminster (i.e., policing, social services)?

How important is new residential development for the city?

▶   What type of residential development might this be?

Are you familiar with the area which is sometimes referred to as the 'Boot' (Uptown, Downtown, Brow of the Hill neighbourhoods)?

▶   How have you become familiar with the 'Boot' community?

How might the City's planning priorities have an impact on those who live in the 'Boot' community (specifically women)?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Residents' Associations

Merchants' Associations

What is your association's main priorities for New Westminster?

Do you believe that the concerns of your association are being addressed by City Council?

Given available resources, what should be the main priorities of City Council?

How important is new residential development for the city?

▸ What type of residential development might this be?

What can be done to reduce the City's expenditures on services in New Westminster (i.e., policing, public services)?

Are you familiar with the area which is sometimes referred to as the 'Boot'?

▸ What do you consider to be the boundaries of the 'Boot'?

▸ How have you become familiar with the 'Boot'?

▸ Does your association consider the 'Boot' to be a 'problem' neighbourhood?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

City Planners

What do you think are the City's planning priorities?

▶   Are there limitations to realising these priorities?

Are you familiar with the area which is sometimes referred to as the 'Boot'?

▶   What do you consider to be the boundaries of the 'Boot'?

▶   How have you become familiar with the 'Boot'?

How might the City's planning priorities have an impact on those who live in the 'Boot' community?

In what way has the Planning Department encouraged the participation of those living in the 'Boot' community (Brow of the Hill, Downtown and Uptown neighbourhood areas) in the official community planning process?

▶   How successful has this effort been?

What is your vision for New Westminster in terms of planning?

▶   What are the limitations to realising this vision?

▶   How do those who live in the 'Boot' community fit into this vision?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Chief Health Inspector

Director of Health Services

Public Health Nurse

Do you have any concerns regarding the socioeconomic status of New Westminster's citizens (specifically women living in the 'Boot')?

Do you have any concerns regarding the general health of New Westminster's citizens (specifically women living in the 'Boot')?

Do you have any concerns regarding housing quality in New Westminster (specifically in the 'Boot')?

Given available resources, what are your main priorities for New Westminster?

What could be done to improve the general health of New Westminster citizens (specifically women)?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Police Officers

In your opinion, what are the City's policing priorities?

- ► Are there limitations to realising these priorities?

Do you think that New Westminster has a 'crime problem'?

- ► If so, what is the root of the problem?

Are you familiar with the area which is sometimes referred to as the 'Boot'?

- ► What do you consider to be the 'Boot'?
- ► How have you become familiar with the 'Boot'?
- ► What is the 'Boot' like in terms of crime?

How might the City's policing priorities have an impact on women who live in the 'Boot' community?

What is your vision for New Westminster in terms of policing?

- ► What are the limitations to realising this vision?
- ► How do those who live in the 'Boot' community fit into this vision?