



Western Washington University
Western CEDAR

Woodring Scholarship on Diversity, Equity,
Inclusion

Woodring College of Education

2017

Domestic Violence and Girlhood: The Making and Breaking of a Disordered Subjectivity

Tracey Pyscher

Western Washington University, tracey.pyscher@wwu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://cedar.wwu.edu/woodring_dei



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Pyscher, T. (2017). Domestic Violence and Girlhood: The Making and Breaking of a Disordered Subjectivity. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 17(5), 399–405. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708616674992>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Woodring College of Education at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Woodring Scholarship on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.

Domestic Violence and Girlhood: The Making and Breaking of a Disordered Subjectivity

Tracey Pyscher¹

Abstract

This article examines the resistive actions and discourses that shape and reshape the hegemonic and resistant interplay between female youth with histories of domestic violence (HDVs) and educators. Taken out of a larger critical ethnographic study, discussion demonstrates how one urban middle school girl with an HDV is positioned as an object of “emotional and behavioral disorder” and how she responded to violating pedagogies through performances of cultural resistance built out of her social experience of domestic violence. The article draws upon theoretical and methodological insights, including Butler’s notion of performativity, Scott’s theory of resistance, Hill-Collins’s standpoint theory, as well as Scollon and Scollon’s mediated discourse analysis. Similar to the girls in this study, sharing an identity of being a survivor of domestic violence herself, the author discusses how she and female participants (re)worked and (re)wrote agentic social moments in the field. Telling girls’ stories through counter-narratives and participatory research practices helps to reposition the often deficit subjectivities ascribed to girls with HDV.

Keywords

domestic violence, resistance, subjectivity, performativity, girls

Departure

As I walked in a poorly lit math classroom of 17 students and prepared to setup my video camera, I immediately noticed the intense interaction between Jen,¹ an eighth-grade girl with history of domestic violence (HDV) in my study, and two teachers. Jen, who carried herself with a resistive intensity and proudly identified as a survivor of childhood domestic violence, stared forward and resisted with her body as she purposefully positioned it away from the attention of her math teacher, Ms. Citra, and a special education teacher, Ms. Kathy. Both teachers hovered near Jen, one glaring from Jen’s backside and one standing nearby. The teachers seemed to share the same need for Jen to comply in some special way compared with other students. As I continued to observe, the reasons for this intense gaze never became clear. Jen was not acting out. She was not talking back. In fact, she seemed to be doing the exact opposite. Jen stared forward, shrugged her shoulders, and refused to acknowledge the teachers with unspoken, yet penetrating demands. This interplay continued several minutes when Jen abruptly stood and stormed out of the room.

Tension-filled interactions like these are an all too common experience for disengaged and marginalized youth in the everyday classroom. As a participant researcher, I followed Jen into a variety of classroom settings where her

performances ranged from engagement to outright resistance similar to her storming out in her math classroom. Jen’s resistive performances in each setting depended upon complex variables, including the proximity of educators’ bodies to her body, the tone of voice educators directed at her, and the level of rapport educators shared with Jen. Girls with histories or living with experiences of domestic violence like Jen are often objectified as “troubled” in their K-12 schools. When the popular script of “troubled girl” is flipped, especially for HDV girls, an alternative story emerges.

The power of hegemonic violence and its social and psychic effects on the lives of marginalized youth (e.g., raced, gendered) in school contexts is well documented (Lloyd, 2005; Tuck & Yang, 2014). The same cannot be said for marginalized HDV girls. We know little to nothing about how girls like Jen navigate school from their perspectives—how they engage with and resist educational discourses and thus take up subject positions. What we do know from

¹Western Washington University, Bellingham, USA

Corresponding Author:

Tracey Pyscher, Woodring College of Education, Western Washington University, 516 High Street, Bellingham, WA 98225, USA.
Email: tracey.pyscher@wwu.edu

popular, psychologically focused literature is that HDV girls are often objectified as emotionally and behaviorally disordered (Administration for Children and Families & Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, 2004). Often left out of the equation is the fact that these objectifications shape their resistive identities and performances in school. Tuck and Yang (2014) challenge critical theorists interested in youth and/or performances of resistance in general to move beyond the popular discourse of “bad boy or girl” or hyper-masculinized and romantic notions of rebel youth. Rather, they challenge researchers to unearth complicated performances of youth resistance in educational contexts that highlight agency through researcher analysis. Stories like Jen’s illustrate how alternative forms of HDV girl resistance can unearth radical possibilities of reframing our desires for the idyllic version of girlhood. Their perspectives not only help to trace the negative impacts of deficit discourses that often negatively affect their life trajectories but also help to shine a spotlight on HDV girls’ necessary performances of resistance to hegemonic² school experience.

For HDV girls, the “problem girl” narrative is especially treacherous. Lloyd (2005) suggests that girls like Jen, who have been labeled emotionally and behaviorally damaged (EBD), carry a “double stigma” where they neither perform as a “bad boy” nor a “good girl” (p. 2). Fundamentally, HDV girls reside in outer spaces. Lloyd (2005) also rejects the notion of “problem girl” (i.e. girls labeled as EBD) suggesting that society ignores the “social processes of the construction of deviance” (p. 5). HDV girls face yet another layer of stigma—a trauma discourse that often positions them as inherently disordered because of their experiences with domestic violence. A girl like Jen can then become an objectified problem girl in need of a posttraumatic colonial-like fixing where she is viewed as the traumatized Other (Pyscher, 2015). Often, HDV girls’ actions are viewed as a “problem” of their individualized social and emotional maladjustment (e.g., Hughes & Graham-Bermann, 1998). Importantly, in the context of schools, this kind of “girl power” is read as dangerous. Oppressive tactics like labeling them EBD are meant to keep girls like Jen in the outer spaces of school life to ensure normative/hegemonic compliance. In response, HDV girls often perform alternative forms of resistive subjectivities that are vastly misunderstood.

In this article, I attempt to disentangle this conundrum by exploring a case of a teen girl with HDV, taken out of a larger ethnographic study situated in an upper Midwest public, urban, all-girl charter middle school. I investigate how one HDV girl named Jen negotiates power while also advocating for her own agency through resistive performances. In flipping this script, Jen’s narrative comes to represent a “more fluid and culturally intelligent girl subjectivity” (see Bae-Dimitriadis in Introduction). This

perspective adds to existing girls’ studies literature by highlighting how HDV girls’ identities (re)shape social contexts through resistive cultural performances (Bae & Ivashkevich, 2012; Butler, 1999). For the study of HDV girls labeled EBD, I take a poststructural and critical (dis)abilities perspective to counteract popular literature mostly grounded in medicalized, historicized, and psychologized deficit perspectives (Baker, 2002; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006).

Methodological/Epistemological Approach

To understand HDV girls’ resistance and their needs for agency, I draw upon Scott’s (1990) notions of hidden and public transcripts, Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) mediated discourse analysis (MDA), Hill-Collins’s (2000) standpoint theory, as well as Butler’s idea of performativity. I used Scott’s theory of hidden transcripts, in which the resistant, artistic, and embodied actions of nuanced efforts toward disguise and survival are used by the marginalized to resist hegemonic public transcripts. First, Scott’s insight helps me to comprehend HDV girls’ embodiment of low and high forms of resistive performances. The reading of these moments were especially enlightening when resistive and hegemonic intensity arose between HDV girls’ discursive, liberating, nonhegemonic, dissident, and subversive performances in response to public transcripts (enactments of power) performed by educators positioned in authoritative roles. This clash is the kind of what Scott calls as “dramaturgy,” which plays as a performative maintenance by “affirmation, concealment, euphemization and stigmatization . . . and the appearance of unanimity” (p. 45) within the friction of hidden and public transcripts.

In addition, Scollon and Scollon’s (2002) method of MDA helped to unravel how the “everyday” actions shaping the interplay between Jen and educators’ practices affected Jen’s resistive performances. MDA afforded the ability to better understand how

social actors who are acting in real time are able to strategize their own actions within a negotiative process with other social actors to achieve their desired social meanings, including their identities, footings, alignments with others and their positionings of themselves and others. (Scollon, 2002, p. 163)

I specifically looked at how the actions between Jen and the teachers were shaped not only by what they said to each other but also by what was communicated through the proximity of their bodies, gestures, and tones of voice where alternative, resistive narratives for Jen arose. Additional intersecting methods in the following sections will continue to offer a broad but cohesive foundation to differently understand HDV girls’ actions, identities, and discourses in response to normative/hegemonic experience.

Cultural Knowledge Built Out of Violent Experience: HDV Standpoint

Hill-Collins's (2000) standpoint theory provides a methodological insight to shape this research in a way that looks at power relation from me and the girl participant's shared social and political struggle within marginalized lives. Its underlying idea is that the marginalized are socially situated in ways that make it more possible for them to be aware of social injustice and repression and ask questions than it is for the nonmarginalized. Thus, central to this research method is that the marginalized's shared lived experiences are the departure to analyze the effect of power relations on the production of knowledge. With this perspective, I research and write as both HDV survivor and researcher in coalition with girls like Jen who have experienced domestic violence. I have come to make sense of my girlhood experiences of negotiating and resisting domestic and school violence through my own standpoint perspective. When I was a child and adolescent girl, I often resisted violent normative/hegemonic school practices by responding in earnest, while mocking particular educators as a way to resist their disciplinary punishments. Positioned as a queer, working-class girl who experienced childhood and adolescent domestic violence, I thrived in outer spaces in response to my marginalizing experiences. These outer spaces included school suspensions, truancy, and homelessness and also served as places of sanctuary or liminality (Lugones, 2006), where I was able to negotiate oppressive experience on my terms and in coalition with other HDV and marginalized youth. As a researcher, not only did my HDV standpoint help me to better understand HDV girls in terms of representation, but it also played a part in my participatory position in fieldwork interactions with Jen and other HDV girls. I found myself empathetically and politically interacting with the girls during fieldwork. I was often unavoidably positioned between the girls and the teachers when resistive and hegemonic interactions occurred. For example, the politics of my insider and outsider status (i.e., HDV survivor, former educator) were explicit and I was often required to make difficult political moves like advocating for HDV girls' when I witnessed their resistance to oppressive educator practices while also recognizing the complexity of the tension embodied in teacher authority and subsequent interactions.

I suggest that early experiences of intimate and sustained forms of domestic violence exacted by adult caregivers of HDV children shapes their resistive habitus in profound ways (Bourdieu, 1997; Pyscher & Lozenski, 2014). If the social and psychic shaping effects of familial domestic violence define the earliest experiences of a girl, her habitus and subsequent cultural responses most likely will embody low and high forms of lived resistances, especially when negotiating social situations that she perceives as violating.

Rather than viewing resistance of HDV girls as a disorder, I believe such a performance is an example of an HDV liminal-like dexterity where these girls navigate multiple worlds through states of ambiguity. For Lugones (2006), liminality is a space of creative preparation where marginalized people find solace from violating social experience and meet in a "loving connection of liberation" to create coalitions that disrupt dominant discourses for themselves and/or with other oppressed persons. Lugones (2006) suggests that the inhabitants of the limen practice a "double vision," which gives them ". . . a way of rejecting the reality of the oppressor as true, even when we recognize that it rules our lives" and "it is also a call that many of us hear as a revolutionary call, a call to dismantle oppressive reality" (p. 3). I believe my sanctuaries, like school truancy, served me well as an outer liminal space. School truancy for any youth is commonly read as a destructive choice on the part of the youth, but for HDV girls like myself, it was necessary and resistive; leaving was a way to reverse social hierarchies. Fluctuating in and out of liminality is a necessary cultural response for HDV girls. These are girls who know how to read social violation and resist its normative power in nuanced ways. It can also then be reasoned that HDV girls would read social violation as an iterative conscious and unconscious way of being and as a part of their standpoint; resistance becomes an *embodied act*.

When HDV girls who embody such acute cultural skills to read social violation are labeled deviants in school, social ruptures should be expected. Kliewer and Fitzgerald (2001) suggest that children labeled as "emotionally troubled" in schools *read* such a message as "You are a broken version of what we wish you to be, and we will attempt to fix you to whatever degree possible in the basement workshops out of the way of the general household" (p. 451). When these beliefs permeate educator practices, then the desire to "fix" is central to the actions of educators when working with HDV girls. As seen in the opening story, deficit practices like surveillance (e.g. gazing) may seem mundane and necessary for educators, if not harmless, *but* for HDV girls, it can be simultaneously read as hostile. For Jen, as highlighted in the case section below, it is in these "dangerous" intersections (interactions) where her resistive performances become, at times, disruptive, iterative, liberating, and necessary.

Performativity and Embodied Resistance

Last, Butler's (1999) idea of performativity compliments the many analytic approaches described in the previous sections. Her notion of performativity becomes central to the interpretation of Jen's lived experiences and the resistive identities she performs in classroom interactions. For Butler, identity is not a thing that is fixed, but rather is a

thing that is active or in process. This holds important meaning for HDV girls when they perform culturally resistive performances (i.e. identities) not as a static behavior, but rather as performances of discursive identities that emerge out of the social contexts of interaction. Using her notion of performativity helps reimagine how HDV girls' cultural practices of resistance are not behavioral acts of disorderliness. Important for HDV girls, reenvisioning their behavioral responses as resistive performances helps to counteract the popular belief that HDV girls are in need of therapeutic and/or behavioral intervention as they are often objectified as traumatically damaged bodies. For these girls, understanding their responses in school contexts through Butler's theory of performativity opens spaces of agency where both their present and lived experiences are better understood (Bae & Ivashkevich, 2012). It also offers alternative ways of rethinking about and working with deeply marginalized HDV girls.

A Case of Jen's Cultural Resistance: A Girl Reading (Un)just Actions

Jen's educational story began in the home where she navigated the daily violence of her father and was labeled an emotionally and behaviorally troubled girl as early as third grade. Although educators were aware that Jen and her mother lived in protective custody for a number of years, Jen was frequently punished by school administration. On several occasions, Jen's mother fought back attempts by elementary school officials to label Jen EBD (emotionally behaviorally disordered). Although Jen overwhelmingly felt a sense of belonging within her middle school and with many of her teachers, the teachers involved in the interactions explicated below were the exception. Similar to her elementary teachers, Jen often read the pedagogies of these two middle school teachers as violating. The following case revisits Jen's interaction with the two teachers briefly highlighted in the opening vignette of the article.

Scene 1: Low and High Forms of Resistance

It was fourth hour on a warm day in May of 2014 when I walked in 15 minutes after the start of Jen's eighth-grade math class. In groups of three to four, students gathered at worktables. I walked to the back of the room to turn on my video camera and observe the interactions of Jen and several other young women in my study. It was immediately clear that Jen was engaged in a tension-filled interaction with Ms. Citra, the math teacher, and Ms. Kathy, a special education teacher, who stood five feet away behind Jen, watching. Ms. Citra, standing above Jen who was seated, was hovering near Jen and using her body and soft voice in attempts to pressure Jen to do her math work while Ms. Kathy gazed at Jen from afar. It was not clear why Jen garnered the teacher's

pervasive attention. Jen and her tablemates (three teen girls identified as HDV youth) seemed to be behaving like many of the other students in the room. For several minutes, Jen stared forward, her body pillar-like, while her eyes ignored Ms. Citra's presence and calm directives. Jen continued to stare forward and at one point shrugged her shoulders while staring the opposite direction refusing to respond to a demand by Ms. Citra to work directly on her math problem. At Jen's backside, Ms. Kathy, saying nothing, can be seen with her closed palm to her chin, intensely watching the interaction. Jen was performing low forms of resistance as she refused to engage in their demands either verbally or through body language (e.g., refusing to acknowledge their presence, shrugging her shoulders). Equally, both teachers seemed inflexible in their normative responses to Jen's resistance (e.g., continual directives, gazing, hovering) to get Jen to comply in some distinct way differently than other students in the classroom.

This showdown intensified Jen's resistance and the teacher's attempts to get Jen to further comply. As a participatory researcher, it was difficult to ascertain exactly what the teachers needed from Jen in terms of compliance. The teachers seemed to want Jen to perform differently as they attempted various forms of compliance strategies like hovering, gazing, and prodding to encourage a special compliance that Jen refused to perform. Several actions mediated the interplay between Jen's resistance and this normative/hegemonic interaction with her teachers. For instance, although Ms. Kathy never uttered a word explicitly to Jen, her presence and intense gazing seemed to fuel this interplay.

For Jen, her HDV cultural knowledge equipped her with an uncanny ability to "read" what constitutes just and unjust everyday actions of teachers—a barometer measuring what felt like violation for Jen. Jen was sensitive to reading the symbolic and material signs/actions performed by these two educators, especially when their actions felt violating. In this miniscule moment of time, Jen said nothing to the teacher, but her actions (responses) were demanding that the teachers do something very different than what they were doing. Ms. Citra tried to reengage Jen as Ms. Kathy continued to watch the interaction from a few feet back. It was just a few minutes into the interaction when Jen abruptly stood, faced the opposite direction of the teachers, and sternly walked out of the classroom while Ms. Citra tenuously asked, "Jen . . . you . . . you . . . need a pass . . . can you fill one out please?" Jen ignored the apprehensive question and continued to walk out. For Jen, this was a necessary and liberatory response to an interaction of intense surveillance that she experienced as violating—perhaps a performance of liminal dexterity that created a more agentic experience than that of the oppressive interaction with the two teachers. Once Jen left, Ms. Kathy looked toward the open door and moved near Ms. Citra. At the front of the classroom, she leaned into Ms. Citra and

whispered something inaudible; their eyes fixed on the open doorway.

In this interaction, there are two conflicting desires for Jen and her teachers. The first was Jen's need for the teachers to stop gazing and hovering, and the second was the teachers' desire for Jen to comply in some unique, yet ambiguous way. This interaction may have seemed like a minuscule amount of time, but from Jen's perspective, it felt blistering and full of normative/hegemonic pressure where she felt the need to rupture the moment by leaving altogether. For HDV youth, I have come to call these ruptures high forms of resistance or resistive ambivalence (Pyscher, 2015 & 2016). For HDV girls, intense responses like these serve as powerful performances of absolute and necessary resistance. For teachers, these interactions of rupture and the moments that lead up to them, must feel like walking a tightrope as they negotiate and attempt to wield their power to get girls like Jen to comply. These kinds of power-laden situations are complicated because they are ideologically elusive and dynamic in practice and often reshaped by distributed acts of agency and power by both teachers and HDV girls like Jen.

Scene 2: How Shared Liminality Can Lead to Distributed Acts of Agency

This one moment of teaching and learning illustrates not only how power exists but also how Jen uses the distributive quality of power to resist the complaint desires of her teachers. When Jen chose to return to the classroom 10 minutes after she walked out, she reentered with the same potency with which she left. For Jen, her performance of high resistance afforded her a sense of agency as she left and returned on her own terms. She briskly reentered with a stone-like stature and walked directly through the center of the classroom paying no attention to either teacher who stood to her side. She made a beeline toward the back of the room where I was sitting. It was here that Jen and I entered a liminal-like state where she sought a space where our coalition shifted power from the teachers. This became yet another performance of liminal dexterity as she directly engaged me in discussion related to her heated intensity with the teachers. She found coalition with me as both teachers ignored Jen's reentry. We immediately engaged each other in what felt like a state of liminality. Jen sat next to me and we had full view of the classroom including the two teachers. This space within a space, or perhaps shared liminality, felt powerful. Jen stated boldly, "Ms. Kathy is getting on my nerves." While surprised by the fact that Jen's heated resistance was directed at Ms. Kathy and not Ms. Citra, I responded, "you don't want to negotiate it?" Jen responded just as intensely, "Nay, I'm not about to negotiate right now." Jen's visceral resistance could be felt as she

stared forward. Our conversation continued. Swinging between dueling ideas of resistance and negotiation in our liminal exchange, I responded, "Jen . . . Okay, I know, it's about the choice to negotiate . . . don't give her so much of your power, give yourself more power." Jen responded turning her attention toward Ms. Kathy: "She's irritating me!" I remained surprised that her resistance was so pointed at Ms. Kathy who stood six feet away from Jen during this entire interaction. For Jen, her very presence was read as oppressive.

The teachers only briefly glanced toward our direction during the 11-minute exchange. Our conversation continued to shift between the need for Jen to resist and my unconvincing desire for her to negotiate. Jen continued to push back against reengaging in this space with Ms. Kathy as I asked Jen, "Okay, I know you know how to negotiate . . . you're going to Dell" (a private and popular local Catholic High school). Jen quickly responded with a matter of fact resistive tone: "Well, she won't be there!" Swaying back toward negotiation, I responded "Jen, there will be a thousand of those people there . . . that's what I mean by negotiate. There's going to be these kinds of people! Why give people the ability to stop you from finishing your math? What do feel?" Jen, in a mellow tone responded, "I'm good." I asked, "Do you think you can breath, focus on your math?" Jen calmly and resistively explained, "No, she just really wants to irritate me." I responded back "It's not that personal" and Jen quickly responded, "She's a snitch." I responded in a stronger tone, "Don't let her have so much power . . . she is so much smaller than your whole life . . . does that feel okay?" Jen responded in a calm voice, "uh huh . . ." I ask, "How you feeling?" Jen responded sternly, "I'm good" and I asked, "In what way is this worth it? I think we need to pick our battles and it needs to be worth it and this is not, ever." I asked Jen again, "What do you think?" Jen responded less intensively, "It's good."

As a continued effort toward trying to be a mediator between Jen's necessary resistance and engagement with an oppressive experience, I asked Jen, "Do you know horses, then?" She responded, "yes" and I asked her if she knows how people try to harness horses, and she repeated "yes." I continued with a metaphor of horses stating,

this is what is coming out of this . . . you are like six of these horses . . . your leadership, your strength, and you can harness this power . . . you can use it . . . harness that power. They try to put harnesses on horses . . . you can harness your power and return to your table of friends and use it.

It should be noted that the three friends sitting at her math table across the room identified as HDV youth. Jen suddenly stood and stated in a calm voice: "It's all good" and walked back to her math table paying no attention to the teachers. The positioning of her body was telling. She faced

forward toward the center of the room rather than placing her back to the other students and two teachers. She can be seen working on her math and engaging in small talk with her friends at her math table. Jen's stance with me shifted between resistance, affiliation, negotiation, and advocacy—perhaps necessary features of shared liminality or an agentic space to make meaning of the interplay and navigation between resistance and hegemony.

In this short period of time, Jen and I shared liminal space and dialogue, where she reworked negotiating power as I attempted to mediate as both an HDV survivor and participatory researcher. In this interaction, Jen used her power to rupture hegemonic experience by walking out, returning on her terms, and engaging with me as a mediator in liminal space as a way to redistribute power. It was clear in Jen's statement, "Ms. Kathy's getting on my nerves," that she felt it was necessary to rupture the earlier interaction and to clearly demand liberation from her oppressive experience. Jen's resistive performance (re)shaped opportunities for different agentic subjectivities to arise. What made this interaction especially complicated is the fact that the teachers seemed to be unaware that Jen felt violated by their actions. This kind of normative requirement of compliance (e.g. gazing) is not surprising considering that it is a common pedagogy in the everyday classroom as a way to redirect "off-task" behaviors. Analyzing power in this way shows how HDV girls like Jen resist normative/hegemonic pressure in their own culturally agentic and necessary ways.

Agentic Resistance Against Authoritative Gaze

Jen fully pushed back against Ms. Kathy's gaze by walking out of the classroom, thus redistributing the power in their interaction. In our conversation, Jen made it clear that it was Ms. Kathy she felt violated by and to a large extent refused to negotiate with. As an observer, I initially assumed that Ms. Citra was the source of Jen's irritation because of her close proximity to Jen. Surprisingly, it was the special education teacher, Ms. Kathy, who felt oppressive to Jen and whom I never saw interact with Jen directly. She stood watching from afar, at least five feet away, while Ms. Citra attempted to engage Jen. Important to this paradox and to a mediated discourse analyst was how Jen's histories of participation in school may have mediated her resistance to Ms. Kathy's gaze. Throughout the larger study, both Jen and her mother discussed their continued resistive negotiation with many special education school officials over several years in both Jen's elementary and middle schools. For this family, it was a common experience for special education teachers like Ms. Kathy to recommend that Jen be labeled EBD. Perhaps another key factor shaping this resistive interaction for Jen was that she often shared her feelings of agency about this middle school as being "her school" and that when teachers like Ms. Kathy exacted social violation

toward her in an iterative fashion, she would "push out teachers that don't belong." For Jen, these were teachers who she thought did not have a right to teach at "her" school. Ms. Kathy was one of those teachers, and this blistering interplay between Ms. Kathy and Jen continued for 3 months after my observations. Ms. Kathy, a first-year teacher, became that push out teacher. She left the school permanently that summer.

Any sustained authoritative gaze is a powerful public transcript that embodies hegemonic power for the one being watched. For the general observer, this moment of gazing may seem normal, but for Jen, it felt like an institutional and personal offense. Agency was shaped and reshaped by mediated actions and the means in which the mediated actions and Jen and educators' trajectories intersected. Throughout the initial interaction, the teacherly gaze and acts of hovering positioned the teachers in powerful ways, but once Jen abruptly ruptured these interactions, power was redistributed. Blommaert (2004) suggests that power is not so much about who "has agency as much as who is able to control the positioning through which motives are assigned and exchanged, often through controlling the timescales and trajectories along which actions are defined" (p. 160). Jen's resistive ambivalence (her rupture) in this interaction allowed her to achieve her desired resistive performances/identities where she is able to control how motives are assigned and exchanged in the interaction between her and the two teachers.

Most students would comply with this type of positioning of educators because of their normative/hegemonic authority, the power engendered in that authority, and their desire to maintain status quo. For Jen, her peripheral-like navigation of socially violating experience was read as dangerous and subversive. Equally, her actions could have been read as ambivalent because of her liminal dexterity. These abilities are cultivated from the outer edges of experiencing the most visceral form of human violence (like domestic violence), and through Jen's refusal to accept other violating experiences in social settings like school. Her resistive cultural performances presented as both amendable *and* defiant, depending on the actions employed and the educators involved in the interaction. Overall, Jen's counter-narrative unsettles the objectifying "troubled" student disordered subjectivity often applied to HDV girls.

Conclusion: Rethinking Damaging HDV Girlhood Subjectivities

HDV Girls are one of our most alienated and misunderstood marginalized children and youth. They are in essence, girls living and renegotiating their cultural performances in and out of outer spaces. At the youngest age, they have learned how to strategically read, negotiate, and socially resist the most brutal forms of human violation—one at the hands of

their most intimate caregivers. Growing up in environments of domestic violence, HDV girls learn to perform both overt and subversive resistive cultural practices. They use these same cultural knowledges as performances to navigate and, at times, resist violating experiences in other social spaces. Their performances push back against practices of normativity and hegemony creating space where they demand their own sense of agency and control to emerge.

When objectified HDV girls like Jen garner socially violating attention, their cultural resistance will *always* disrupt the structural and psychic hegemony they experience. Such conditions demand different practices from adults positioned in roles of authority. Imagine if Jen's liminal dexterity was repositioned as a sophisticated reading of social violation and violence rather than disorder. This reframing directly challenges the good girl/bad girl dichotomy embodied in girlhood literature. Their fluid and ambivalent resistive performances challenge the neoliberal landscape that fuels the school-to-prison/prostitution pipeline overwhelmingly facing HDV girls (Pyscher & Lozenski, 2016). We should consider how these girls' resistive performances and their uncanny ability to transgress inner and outer spaces should be recognized, if not celebrated. Perhaps discussions about those "problem girls" might change. Their resistive performances not only help to shed light on some of our most deeply marginalized girls but also allow us to better see HDV girls' agency, power, and subjectivity, even with all her resistive ambivalence intact.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. All names are pseudonyms.
2. Scott (1990) suggests that hegemony not only be thought of as an ideological experience for the marginalized but rather that the hegemonic experience is consciously recognized and resisted in both low and high forms of expression.

References

- Administration for Children and Families & Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation. (2004). *Children ages 3 to 5 in the child welfare system*. Retrieved from <https://www.ecu.edu/cs-dhs/tedibear/upload/01-Child-Abuse-Neglect-CWIG-39.pdf>
- Bae, M. S., & Ivashkevich, O. (2012). *Girls, cultural productions, and resistance*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

- Baker, B. (2002). The hunt for disability: The new eugenics and the normalization of school children. *Teachers College Record, 104*, 663-703.
- Blommaert, J. (2004). Writing as a problem: African grassroots writing, economies of literacy, and globalization. *Language in Society, 33*(05), 643-671.
- Bourdieu, P. (1997). *Pascalian meditations*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hill-Collins, P. (2000). *Black feminist thought*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hughes, H. M., & Graham-Bermann, S. A. (1998). Children of battered women: Impact of emotional abuse on adjustment and development. *Journal of Emotional Abuse, 1*, 23-50.
- Kliwer, C., & Fitzgerald, L. M. (2001). Disability, schooling, and the artifacts of colonialism. *Teachers College Record, 103*, 450-470.
- Lloyd, G. (2005). "Problem" girls: *Understanding and supporting troubled and troublesome girls and young women*. London, England: Psychology Press.
- Lugones, M. (2006). On complex communication. *Hypatia, 21*(3), 75-85.
- Pyscher, T. (2015). Against rubbish collecting: Educators & resistively ambivalent youth. *Journal of Educational Controversy, 9*, Article 6.
- Pyscher, T. (2016). *Contradictions and Opportunities: Learning from the Cultural Knowledges of Youth with Histories of Domestic Violence*. University of Minnesota: Unpublished Dissertation. ??
- Pyscher, T., & Lozenski, B.D. (2016). "I got in trouble, but I didn't get caught": The discursive construction of "Throwaway Youth." *Understanding, Dismantling, and Disrupting the Prison-to-School Pipeline*. London: Lexington Books.
- Pyscher, T., & Lozenski, B. D. (2014). Throwaway youth: The sociocultural location of resistance to schooling. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 47*, 531-545.
- Scollon, R. (2002). *Mediated discourse: The nexus of practice*. Routledge.
- Scollon, R., & Scollon, S. W. (2003). *Discourses in place: Language in the material world*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Snyder, S. L., & Mitchell, D. T. (2006). *Cultural locations of disability*. London, England: Chicago University Press.
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2014). *Youth resistance research and theories of change*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Author Biography

Tracey Pyscher is an assistant professor in the Woodring School of Education at Western Washington University. Her research interests include examining the sociocultural experiences of children and youth with histories of domestic violence (HDVs) and their navigation of school, critical literacy, and what praxis means to/for teacher education.