TEEN REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE BRAT PACK TO HIP-HOP: SUBJECTIVITY AND IDENTITY IN A NEOLIBERAL AGE

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ABSTRACT

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The teen film provides endless possibilities for identification for young audiences. They ask spectators to identify themselves from the stereotypes presented within the film. Teen films, then, have a way of not only speaking to teen viewers, but constructing them as well. This thesis examines the ideology embedded in John Hughes's *Pretty in Pink* (1986) and *Some Kind of Wonderful* (1987), in addition to Thomas Carter's *Save the Last Dance* (2001). Examining the films' ideologies as a symptom of neoliberalism and its effects, this thesis locates spaces of resistance, if any, that may provide insight to the ways in which power flows and shifts from the state to the teen subject. While Hughes's films exemplify representations of the idealized subject and subjectivity, Carter's racialized gender dynamics in *Save the Last Dance* speak to a crucial difference between personal and structural identity. Employing an intersectional framework, this thesis highlights who and what is made visible when identities intersect with the law and the body.

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Introduction

Asking a classroom full of Millennials, only just removed from teenhood, if they have seen *The Breakfast Club* (1985), most of them raise their hands. Is this surprising? Probably not, considering I still see quizzes dedicated to pinpointing which of John Hughes's characters I am as I scroll through my Facebook feed. As a genre, the teen film is far reaching. Sub-genres such as the horror film, the dance film, the beach film, and the romantic comedy only help to provide endless possibilities of identification for young audiences, yet it is John Hughes's contribution to the genre with which my students are most familiar. Though his films don't necessarily exist outside of the purview of Teensploitation, Hughes's films *feel* different. They do not seek to understand teens so much as they attempt to relate to teens. In doing so, teen films ask spectators to identify themselves within the film. Teen films, then, have a way of not only speaking to teen spectators, but constructing them as well.

Over time, the ways in which teen films construct their spectators shift, minding the historical, political, cultural, and social specificity in which these films are produced. This project seeks to examine the ideology embedded in teen films as a symptom of neoliberalism and its effects, while locating spaces of resistance, if any, that may provide insight to the ways in which power flows and shifts from the state to the teen subject. Resistance, however, cannot only be sought out in the movies. Careful consideration must be given to the methodology and approach one takes when reading a film, and this project takes up an intersectional framework that attempts to highlight who and what is made invisible when identities intersect with the law and the body. While each chapter may be seemingly disconnected, they are drawn together by a discussion of the fissures between the subject and identity and between power and experience. When read together, these chapters also provide symptomatic and implicit illustrations of a

historical shift from the 1980s to the early 2000s, a shift from a discussion of post-feminism—the idea that women have "won" and no longer need a feminist movement—to a re-invigorated Third Wave.

Chapter one looks at two of Hughes's films, the ever-popular *Pretty in Pink* (1986) and the less popular *Some Kind of Wonderful* (1987), reading each as symptomatic of a neoliberal rationality, or the economizing of the political, the social, and the cultural spheres. This chapter's discussion of *Pretty in Pink*'s leading female character, Andie, is also illustrative of a mythical post-feminist notion that women's ability to obtain capital equates to agency. In *Pretty in Pink*, Andie's agency comes from romantic, cultural, and social capital, thus her ability to cross class lines by the films end. However, what happens when women cannot obtain, or keep the capital to which others have access? Chapter one's discussion of *Some Kind of Wonderful* complicates post-feminist notions in its reading of Amanda, a girl from the wrong side of the tracks working hard to fit in with the rich and popular. By film's end, Amanda, having given up all of her social and romantic capital, arguably the only kind she ever had throughout the film, does not cross class lines, and stands alone. Though she may choose to let her romantic possibilities go along with her rich friends, she is only able to make this choice, to exercise agency, when she lacks capital.

Shifting to the early 2000s and a re-invigorated Third Wave movement, chapter two exhibits the need for an approach to identity politics that renders women of color visible in discussions of both gender and race. This chapter addresses Thomas Carter's 2001 film, *Save the Last Dance,* using an intersectional framework. In 1989 Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, and in 1992 Rebecca Walker declared in Ms. Magazine:

> The backlash against U.S. women is real. As the misconception of equality between the sexes becomes more ubiquitous, so does the attempt to restrict the boundaries of women's personal and political power. [Clarence] Thomas' confirmation, the ultimate rally of support for the male paradigm of harassment, sends a clear message to women: "Shut up! Even if you speak, we will not listen." (1)

Walker ended her article with two simple sentences: "I am not a postfeminism feminist. I am the Third Wave" (2). Walker's article, largely narrating personal experiences of negation as a woman of color, coined the term Third Wave, hailing a movement that implicitly, then explicitly recognized the multiplicity of identity positions women held—an intersectional approach. Yet, in the years that followed, the Third Wave was coopted by many voices, with little credit extended to the women of color that initiated the movement. *The Punk Singer*, a documentary produced by Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill and Le Tigre, traces the origins of the Riot Grrrl movement (a feminist underground punk movement), presenting interview upon interview of white, women rock stars, praising Hanna as the end all and be all of the Third Wave. *Save the Last Dance* was distributed on the heels of the 1990s, and directly—and indirectly—engages identity politics from multiple perspectives.

While chapter two explicitly performs an in-depth exploration of the differences between the subject, subjectivity, and identity, chapter one implicitly takes on the notion of the subject. The construction of a new idealized subject, an effect of capitalism's extension into every domain (e.g. the social, the political, the economic, and the cultural), can be witnessed in the category of the white, middle-class teen and is characterized by productivity, competition, and self-government. In positioning chapter one's discussion of the subject next to chapter two's

discussion of structural identity, I hope to show that, for one, structural identity is a major factor in how individuals take up subject positions, and too, that not all subject positions are constructed under the same circumstances, thus the outcome of different subjects differs greatly. Chapter two's reading of the supporting black female character, Chenille's, intersecting structural identities opens up a new way of thinking through the film that exposes spaces in which standards of respectability are enforced and contradicted. Though I don't read Chenille or any of the characters in *Save the Last Dance* in terms of subjectivity (although Sarah's character could be ideal for this), the chapter highlights the limits of subjectivity when tracing the shifting terrain of power.

Some of the larger questions that drive this project through both chapters take up the relationship between neoliberalism—specifically a neoliberal rationality—the subject, and identity, as this introduction has outlined. Teen films are a porous space for exploration as the teen category is always in the throws of constructing subjects, subjectivities, and identities and a neoliberal ideology has crossed into all discourses, including film. Can teen films, then, expose spaces of resistance to the ever-expanding stretch of the invisible hand of neoliberalism? How might one conceive of resistance to hegemonic systems of power that neoliberalism seeks to mask? My hope is that, by the end of this thesis, these questions will further a discussion of identity-politics in crisis during the age of neoliberalism.

"You Look Good Wearing My Future": Resisting Neoliberalism in John Hughes's *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful*

> I understood that John was trying to do something about crossing class lines and felt that with the ending as it was, it was sort of saying "You know what? Class lines aren't worth crossing." And he didn't want to send that message, because he *deeply* cares about rich people and about the problems that rich people face.
>
> --John Cryer speaking on John Hughes's *Pretty in Pink*

The popularity of John Hughes's teen films reached its peak in the mid to late 1980s. With the procession from *Sixteen Candles* (1984) and *The Breakfast Club* (1985) to *Pretty in Pink* (1986), *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986), and even *Some Kind of Wonderful* (1987), audiences voraciously consumed the familiar high school stereotypes and angsty dialogue that compose Hughes's brand of coming-of-age film. At the same time acting president and president-actor Ronald Regan was implementing policies of deregulation, privatization, and a free-market system often attributed to a new era of neoliberalism in the United States.[1] It's not surprising, then, that most if not all of John Hughes's 80s teen films, infused with the political and cultural ethos of the time, symptomatically dealt with issues of class, individuality, and social status, seeing as Reagan's policies drastically impacted class divisions. The depiction of these issues in teen films is even less surprising when we consider, as Timothy Shary astutely does, that:

> The shift of movie theaters [in] to shopping malls and multiplexes in the 1980s

[1] Michel Foucault traces the long history of neoliberalism as it stems from liberalism, both in Germany and the United States. While the 1980s definitely saw a new iteration of neoliberalism by way of a neoliberal rationality in the US, Foucault demarcates the shift from liberalism to neoliberalism in Germany, for instance, beginning in 1948. See Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Likewise, Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval use history to demarcate their own definition of neoliberalism. They zoom in on the production of liberal and neoliberal theories, of which had very real consequences on the social, political, economic, and private spheres, as well as the productive capacities of a neoliberal rationality. See Dardot and Laval, *The New Way of the World*. David Harvey begins his history of neoliberalism in 1979 and 1980, defining the term as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property right, free markets, and free trade" (2). See Harvey, *A Brief History of* Neoliberalism. Seeing as neoliberalism has a very long history, I do not intend on charting that here, but rather I will dedicate my analysis to some of the specific products of neoliberalism, such as a new subjectivity and an economic rationality.

> brought with it a deluge of films made for and marketed to teen moviegoers, the majority of whom were statistically middle class, and likely harboring fantasies of class ascension *not* through hard work (for few teen films of the time promoted education or labor) but through romantic fulfillment. (564)

The emergence of megaplexes—theaters with upwards of fifteen screens often fitted with an arcade and sometimes multiple restaurants—and larger shopping malls in suburban areas attracted teen moviegoers with disposable income. While the capillary action of neoliberalism's reach surely extends beyond adulthood into the categories of teen and child,[2] this chapter argues that the teenager, as a category, witnesses a loosening of neoliberalism's invisible hand. Though many facets of neoliberalism exist, this article is less interested in the purely economic articulations of neoliberalism, or the legitimate forms that economic power take. Rather, approaching the 1980s teen film, specifically John Hughes's rendition, from the facet of neoliberalism first identified by Michel Foucault—the neoliberal rationality—provides an avenue of analysis from which a fruitful conception of the neoliberal subject can be ascertained. The neoliberal rationality can generally be described as the aggregate effects of the (de)regulated and legitimate economic centers on the capillary "extremities" of society, some of these extremities being subjection and subjectivity. My interest, however, lies in the spaces of Hughes's 1980s teen films that aren't immediately filled by the various excesses inherent to this neoliberal rationality.

While a comparative analysis across all of Hughes's teen films from the 1980s would

[2] Michel Foucault discusses the spread of power to the extremities of everyday life as capillary. He writes on his analysis of power: "the analysis . . . should not concern itself with the regulated and legitimate forms of power in their central locations. . . . On the Contrary, it should be concerned with power at its extremities ... with those points where it becomes capillary" (*Power/Knowledge* 96). Similarly, neoliberalism's spread extends beyond the legitimate (Reganomics, Federal policies, etc.) to the every day. See Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*.

provide in-depth insight into the ways in which the teenager encounters neoliberalism, the volume of material goes beyond the scope of this chapter. Rather, this chapter employs a comparative analysis between two films penned by Hughes, yet directed by Howard Deutch,[3] specifically *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful*. These films provide a striking comparison because, first, they are so similar, with the exception of the revised ending and gender swapping of *Some Kind of Wonderful*, and second, because they subtly stand apart from the other films of Hughes's *oeuvre*. A comparative analysis will tease out these defining differences, from which an interrogation of the subjective and social contours of neoliberalism can be explored. In the sections that follow, I first outline the characteristics of neoliberalism, specifically those that pertain to the neoliberal rationality, followed by a very brief history of the teenager as consumer category before moving to a comparative analysis between *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful*.

A New Subjectivity: The Capillaries of Neoliberal Forces

More than just a set of economic policies, Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval have argued that neoliberalism constructs a new subjectivity compared to the self-disciplined subject of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This subjectivity is marked by "the generalization of competition as a behavioral norm and of the enterprise . . . " (Dardot and Laval 4). Similarly, in "Postscript on the Societies of Control," Gilles Deleuze, locating a new model of society that began to take shape in the twentieth century even further into the throws of transformation post WWII, theorizes a new subject emerging from a society of control. Deleuze terms this subject

[3] As Susannah Gora notes, Hughes struggled and had to fight with the studios backing his projects to direct the scripts he had written. It was easier to get films made when he wrote and produced, taking directing out of the mix (131). For a longer discussion of the production of Hughes's *oeuvre*, see Gora, *You Couldn't Ignore Me If You Tried*.

the "dividual," by which bodies are no longer ordered as a collective that identifies their core aim or belief, what he associates with the "watchword," but rather bodies are ordered as coded and fractured strands that "mark access to information, or reject it" (5). Though Deleuze does not take up neoliberalism, the shift he identifies from the individual to the dividual is useful to the discussion of teen film stereotypes in the 1980s for two reasons. For one, the argument can be made that shortly after WWII the teenager comes into being as a new subject position, following Deleuze's timeline of the shift from disciplined subjects to that of the controlled subject, and too, Deleuze characterizes the dividual as a new kind of individual—an individual that is fractured and multiple. The stereotypes represented in 1980s teen films (e.g. the nerd, the outcast, the rebel, the princess, etc.) acts as a technology, or a consumer model of this new individuality. Spectators can access the drop-down menu of personal identity in John Hughes's films, choosing which character, which stereotype suits them best. The stereotype itself is encoded with the characteristics of specific subject positions, becoming a form of soft power in their employment across Hughes's intertextual *oeuvre*.

Following Foucault, Deleuze agreed that society from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century had functioned under disciplining forces. Society, for Deleuze, begins to shift in the twentieth century to a society of control. This shift can be understood, in terms of power, as a move from hard power to soft power. Hard power can be thought as aggressive and overt political and economic influence or discipline. It is often associated with both coercion and the wielding of power by the military or police. Soft power, then, constitutes an economic and cultural influencing, by which ideology is disseminated in media, popular culture, and everyday interactions on the local level. In other words, the forces of power, which from the eighteenth century through the early twentieth century were wielded directly by the military, police, or state,

begin to shift to modular capillaries, through which power is disseminated in the twentieth century onward. Soft power becomes an instrument of neoliberalism and, as Dardot and Laval (along with Foucualt and Wendy Brown) cogently argue, the latter takes shape not as an "ideology or economic policy, [but] firstly and fundamentally a rationality" that "tends to structure and organize not only the action of rulers, but also the conduct of the ruled" (Dardot and Laval 4). The capillary connection through which power flows extends beyond subjects, the state, and state apparatuses, into virtually all discourses, including film—what Foucualt identifies as the shift from "regulated and legitimate forms of power" to the everyday, the extremities (*Power/Knowledge* 96). Certain facets of neoliberalism that support the movement of hard power to soft power warrant further examination.

For Wendy Brown, neoliberalism is "a distinctive mode of reason, of the production of subjects, a 'conduct of conduct,' and a scheme of valuation ... [A] more generalized practice of 'economizing' spheres and activities heretofore governed by other tables of value" (*Undoing Demos* 21). In other words, neoliberalism (and a neoliberal rationality) takes both the political sphere and the social sphere and economizes them. The economization of other spheres has high stakes, as the political and social take on characteristics of the free market system. The political and social spheres quickly fade with the implementation of a governmental policy of non-intervention intervention, in which the government will not intervene with the outcomes of a free market system built on competition (the phrase "the market will work itself out" comes to mind), but rather will and must intervene in the creation of competition. As Foucault aptly puts it, "the state must 'govern *for* the market, not *because* of the market'" (qtd. in Brown *Undoing Demos* 63). When increasing competition becomes the goal of government, the outcome must have winners and losers. Therefore, the social and political spheres, whose functions had been

associated with values such as civil rights, equality, and welfare, to name a few, begin to fade into an economic discourse of competition that must, again, have losers if there are to be winners.

Competition, for Dardot and Laval, becomes a key characteristic in defining neoliberalism as well. They identify neoliberalism as "the set of discourses, practices and apparatuses that determine a new mode of government of human being in accordance with the universal principle of competition" (4). Competition can no longer be thought only in the compartmentalized sphere of economics, but extends into all spheres, and importantly, competition becomes behavioral. The neoliberal rationality, built on the extension of competition, then, constructs a new subjectivity—what Dardot and Laval call the entrepreneurial/enterprise subject, and Brown identifies as individuals modeled on the "contemporary firm" (*Undoing Demos* 22). The new subject of neoliberalism, importantly, is productive. Subjects themselves become capital, in which they must self-invest in order to be that much more productive. The subject as enterprise, capital, or entrepreneur takes part in the never-ending cycle of production and self-regulation, much like every other sphere that has been touched by free market rationality. As such, governing has shifted from the state—in which the state would discipline subjects—to the subject. Subjects must self-govern, which, of course, is just another manifestation of the "economic" policy of privatization.

As we begin to see, a neoliberal rationality begins with the State's obsession with regulating competition, yet branches out into all other spheres, constructing a new subject that can no longer look to the State for social or political intervention, but now must self-regulate. Brown draws a connection between neoliberalism and the self-regulating subject:

> In making the individual fully responsible for her- or himself, neoliberalism

> equates moral responsibility with rational action; ... configuring morality entirely as a matter of rational deliberation about costs, benefits, and consequences ... the rationally calculating individual bears full responsibility for the consequences of his or her action no matter how severe the constraints on this action... ("Liberal Democracy" 42)

Self-regulation, or self-control requires a rational subject capable of weighing risks and benefits. Put another way, the new subject must be responsible and make rational choices. In the epoch of neoliberalism, outcomes are always already attributed to the calculating choices, or investments, we have made. While neoliberalism is forever expanding, attempting to touch all corners and crevices of discourse, an analysis of *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* proves useful because the teen film functions differently from other genres of popular culture. These teen films are explanatory of the ways in which a neoliberal rationality employs the idea of personal identity to mask subjectivity. *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* provide prototypes of a new idealized subject that conflates leisure and work.

The Teen and the 80s Teen Film

The teenager as social category began to take shape with G. Stanley Hall's 1904 text, *Adolescence* (Massoni 31). Hardly popular at the time, his text demarcated a specific life stage explicating the teenager's experience. As Kelley Massoni notes, "It was not until ... the 1940s ... that the moniker 'teenager' moved into wide circulation in the popular culture discourse" (31). Even so, the moniker's popularity can be attributed, not to the familiar experience of being a teenager, but rather to the convenience of a signifier that points to a well-defined consumer

category.[4] The teenager as category, however, does not function the same as other categories of consumer. And further, this category is not immune to issues of class and race—the teenaged consumer is often idealized. For instance, unlike the young professional consumer category—in which the idealized young professional not only has an income, but must also utilize it in purchases of necessity and responsibility, such as bills—the idealized teenager has a disposable income, with little to no responsibility. Of course, there are teenagers that have many responsibilities and little to no access to disposable income. Thus the idealized teenager consumer is often middle to upper class.

While teenagers are often and mostly consumers because of their disposable income, rarely are they considered producers. Jobs that the idealized teenager holds often have qualities that could be seen as monotonous and redundant. Retail work, for example, has teens folding clothes, only for the clothing to be unfolded and refolded. Teen films often portray teens hanging out with their friends at work. Motivating my interest in the teenager as category is precisely how teenagers are marketed to, as well as how a neoliberal rationality constructs the teenager as subject. What, then, does the teenager produce if not labor in the traditional sense, and how does a neoliberal rationality contribute to that production?

Though teen films have been around since at least the 1950s, earlier iterations of the genre have largely focused on the "rebellious nature" of teenagers, an often flat and vapid portrayal.[5] Shary aptly notes that, "Since the early 1980s a number of distinct subgenres and character types within the genre of 'youth/teen/young adult' films have emerged and have offered richly provocative images that question the changing concepts of youth in America"

[4] For a more in depth discussion of the "teenager" consumer category, specifically the marketing of clothing, product lines, and magazines to teenagers, see Cook, *The Commodification of Childhood*. See also: Massoni, "Teena goes to Market."

[5] Timothy Shary expands on the history of the teen film, specifically the lack of teens involved in the production process in earlier films. See Shary, *Generation Multiplex*.

(*Generation Multiplex* 2). The demarcation of a changing conception of the teenager in the 1980s runs parallel to the new neoliberal epoch ushered in by Reagan. While scholars often associate teen films of the 1980s with issues of class and social status more generally, the specific discussions of neoliberalism's effects on teens mostly revolve around teen girls and a postfeminist or neo-feminist discourse.[6] Class status in the teen film, of course, does not solely revolve around monetary capital. There are many kinds of capital the teen can obtain, including cultural capital—an example of which may be Molly Ringwald's character's penchant for DIY clothing—as well as social capital and romantic capital. The different iterations and flows of capital are also deployed in different ways in teen films, a point of return in the analyses of *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful*. Further, neoliberalism, as mentioned previously, constructs subjects as capital, in which a subject must self-invest. Although the effects of neoliberalism have a large impact on class division as such, what other effects of a neoliberal rationality can be seen in 1980's teen films? And what kind of resistance to the invisible capillaries of neoliberalism can these films illuminate?

Repetition with Difference in Pretty in Pink *and* Some Kind of Wonderful

On February 14, 1979, during one of the many lectures in Foucault's series at The Collège de France titled "The Birth of Biopolitics," Foucault said, "The problem is to let knowledge of the past work on the experience of the present" (130). Regarding repetition, what

[6] Angela McRobbie's iteration of Postfeminism identifies the attempted "undoing [of] feminism," for various reasons. McRobbie locates the following (il)logic made by those arguing that women have "made it," and that women now live in a "postfeminist" world: we no longer need feminism because women, like men, exist in a free market in which the choices they make are the determining factors for their successful or failed outcomes instead of deeply rooted, systematic institutionalized sexism. See McRobbie, "Postfeminism and Popular Culture." Hilary Radner locates the contours of Postfeminism in a neo-feminist discourse embedded in the "girly film," directly tied to the indifferent attitude of neoliberal culture, in which women that are portrayed as girlish in film (a sort of reclaiming of femininity, unlike the values of feminism) can only find empowerment through consumption. See Radner, *Neo-Feminist Cinema*.

interests Foucault is not that repetition happens, but rather that repetitions change. While John Hughes's teen films often can seem repetitive because of the repeated coded stereotypes across all of his narratives, our job is to, in the vein of Deleuze, decode the password-protected strands of information presented by the encoded characters we've come to know so well. *Pretty in Pink* and *Some Kind of Wonderful* provide fruitful analyses, precisely because they enact a change within a repetition.

Pretty in Pink, written and produced by Hughes, yet directed by Howard Deutch, went into production in the summer of 1985. The film was the first of John Hughes's popular teen films to be directed, not by Hughes, but by Deutch, who had previously cut various trailers for some of Hughes's other films (Gora 131). Starring Molly Ringwald as Andie Walsh, a lower middle-class, quirky outcast and Andrew McCarthy as the rich and preppy Blane McDonnagh, *Pretty in Pink* takes up many of the same themes enmeshed in the film's generic predecessors. Andie, somewhat ashamed of her class status, meets Blane, a rich prep that runs with the crowd Andie can't stand. Andie and Blane get flack from their respective friend groups when they start dating; Andie from Duckie (Jon Cryer), the "geek" who's in love with her, and Blane from Steph (James Spader), a prep with a bruised ego from the past when Andie turned him down. Combined with the subplots of Andie's single father (Harry Dean Stanton), plagued with depression, unable to get out of bed and get a job, as well Andie's thirty-something boss realizing that growing up means dating richer men and dressing more conservatively, the film is littered with themes of class, social status, and responsibility.

Following the box office success of *Pretty in Pink* and Hughes's return to directing with *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, Hughes and Deutch teamed up again in 1986 to make *Some Kind of*

Wonderful.[7] Gora notes of the uncanny resemblance the film has to *Pretty in Pink*: "Although Hughes would not direct *Wonderful*, his imprint on the film would be unmistakable, especially because of the almost embarrassingly similar plot points shared between his scripts for this film and *Pretty in Pink*" (203). A blaringly obvious repetition of stereotypes, both films also have practically the same plot. However, following Foucault, more important are the changes that were made between the repetitions from *Pretty in Pink* to *Some Kind of Wonderful*. The latter film follows Keith (Eric Stolz), a lower-middle-class teen, on his quest for romantic recognition by the popular, yet also lower-middle -class Amanda Jones (Lea Thompson). Standing in the way of Keith and Amanda's romance, however, are their respective friend groups; Keith's being his best friend and resident tomboy, Watts (Mary Stuart Masterson), and Amanda's being a slew of rich popular friends and her dominating boyfriend, Hardy (Craig Sheffer), also rich and popular. What, then, changes between these two similar narratives?

First, while Andie and Keith basically take on the same role, the gender from *Pretty in Pink*'s protagonist to *Some Kind of Wonderful*'s swaps. Likewise, the genders of the best friends vying for the protagonist's affection, Duckie and Watts, also change. With the gender swap, we also get a shift in the stereotypes each film presents, for Watts is not a "geek," like Duckie, but rather a cool and somewhat-weathered outcast. Perhaps it can be attributed to the shift in gender, or maybe to the re-coding of the stereotypes from one character to the next, but either way, the endings of the films are polar opposites. On the one hand, *Pretty in Pink* has Duckie throwing in the towel, and the film culminates in Andie and Blane reuniting at the prom. Interestingly, while Andie is able to cross class lines romantically, Blane never denounces his rich upbringing, one of

[7] *Pretty in Pink* grossed over $40,350,000 domestically and, screened in 827 theaters, saw an opening box office of $6,056,870. Even more successful, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* saw a gross of nearly $70,000,000 domestically. *Some Kind of Wonderful*, on the other hand, only saw a box office gross of $18,553,948 (IMDB), the least successful of Hughes's 1980s teen films.

the main sources of conflict between the two throughout the film.

On the other hand, in *Some Kind of Wonderful*, though Keith seemingly would like to attempt to make it work with Amanda, Amanda draws Keith's attention to the fact that Watts would be a better match for him. Instead of the outcasted (although not geeky) best friend letting go of her romantic feelings for Keith so that he could ascend to Amanda's social strata, Watts and Keith's love presumably transcends any desire (at least on Keith's part) to cross class lines. In particular, teen films tend to emphasize romantic couplings, and the significance of this trope can be tied back into capitalism and production. It could be said that characters like Andie, Blane, Keith, and Watts have access to romantic capital, while Duckie (and to some extent Amanda) do not, meaning that those who do obtain this kind of capital are capable of being taken up biopolitically. Thus romantic capital is deployed in both films as that which one should aspire to obtaining, because the biopolitical has been absorbed by a neoliberal rationality. On the surface of the narrative, then, some changes—and congruities—are enacted in the repetition from *Pretty in Pink* to *Some Kind of Wonderful*, specifically changes that affect the social and, even symbolic, class standing of the characters in each film, and these changes also extend to the employment of a neoliberal discourse in each film.

Neoliberal Discourse in Pretty in Pink

Critics and scholars, alike, often focus on class and gender issues depicted in *Pretty in Pink*. David Ansen has described the film as "a Marxist 'Romeo and Juliet' in which the warring clans are the haves and have-nots of a Midwestern high school" (qtd. in Shary "Buying Me Love" 571). In the article, "Buying Me Love: 1980s Class-Clash Teen Romances," Shary analyzes the spatial divide between the rich and poor in the film, arguing that, "the wealthier

character [Blane] does not have to abandon his class privilege as much as he simply has to denounce it, and the poor character [Andie], ... dismisses the abuse she has suffered because she still thinks their love transcends class lines" (573). Shary ultimately concludes that gendered stereotypes end up overshadowing any critique of the excesses of wealth in the 1980s that the film may have tried to perform. Similarly, Ann De Vaney analyzes gendered stereotypes in *Pretty in Pink* and critiques the film for its construction of "a patriarchal valence that echoes the paternalistic values underpinning the supposedly subversive teen sexual discourse" (209).

While De Vaney emphasizes the limited arena of subjectivity in which Hughes's female characters have access, all of Hughes's characters in *Pretty in Pink* perform the gender and class roles that they must take up by the film's end, subjectivities that fall in line with the productive entrepreneurial subject constructed by a neoliberal rationality. Further, though De Vaney acknowledges that young female spectators are offered up "a sugar pill of frilly bedrooms with makeup and hair ribbons sans computers," (202) she conflates what could be called personal identity with that of subjectivity, when she "explores the invitations to subjectivity [Hughes] offers his female viewers" (203). This distinction is important to make because while subjectivity speaks to having access to power and agency, personal identity—an individual's tastes, values, and beliefs—instead becomes the ultimate technology of control and regulation. In *Pretty in Pink*, the construction of subjects stands in relation to a sound design that controls and regulates.

The various alarms and bells embedded in *Pretty in Pink*'s sound design work to divide and regulate the lower and upper classes in the film. While the film purports to represent Andie as poor, in relation to Duckie Andie has more access to social, romantic, and cultural capital, allowing for her union with Blane. Thus the sounding of alarms regulates Duckie and Andie's

relationship, as Duckie's lack of various kinds of capital positions him in a different stratum than Andie. Furthermore, unlike most representations of teen girls,[8] Andie is extremely productive. The film's discourse conflates her productivity, self-control, and privileged access to specific forms of capital to the decisions and rational choices she has made. Andie—along with any character that has taken Andie's advice throughout the film—is continually constructed as the ideal subject of a neoliberal rationality. *Pretty in Pink* is unable to provide a representation of what resistance to the neoliberal rationality would look like.

Throughout *Pretty in Pink* Andie is continually coded as poor. She makes her own clothes, over and over again she defines herself against the wealthy kids at school, and she cannot afford a prom dress. However, Andie has access to other forms of capital throughout the film, specifically because capital extends beyond the purely economic, into the private and social spheres. In addition to economic capital, the private sphere, for instance, also contains aspects of cultural capital. An example of Andie's cultural capital in the film is put on display as she cuts and sews scraps of an old dress into a DIY prom dress. While she cannot afford to buy a new prom dress, thus resorting to another form of capital by constructing a dress, Andie does own a car, and she's conventionally attractive, as signified by the many men in the film vying for her affection—both forms of social capital. Additionally, she's a motivated student (again, cultural capital), and she maintains a job that presumably provides her with some sort of income. Duckie, on the contrary, does not have access to these various forms of capital.

Coded as a geek, women constantly ridicule Duckie; he rides a bike, needs Andie's assistance with his schoolwork, and presumably has no job. The stereotype of the geek implicitly

[8] Ann De Vaney illuminates the ways in which Andie differs from most of Hughes's female representations. She finds that Andie is the only representation of a teen girl that has any interest in studying. All others, De Vaney argues, are interested only in girlish style and male-female relations, leaving female friendships completely unexplored. See De Vaney, "Reinscribing Daddy's Girl."

speaks to the lack of certain kinds of capital. In teen films the geek often gets coded in terms of style, hobbies, and popularity. Hughes's geeks dress eccentrically or badly, and while one could argue that their lack of style could reflect lack of economic capital, it more aptly speaks to a lack of cultural capital, especially if we consider that some of Hughes's geeks have access to expensive computers and gadgets. If Duckie's dress is a reflection of his lacking cultural capital, then his inability in gaining entrance to Andie's favorite nightclub reflects his lack of social capital. Duckie's obsessive and sometimes disturbing displays of emotion, further distinguish him from Andie; he is not presented as capable of being rational. For example, in conversations with Andie he says: "I would die for you," "I live to like you," and, in reference to going to class, "I don't know if I'm emotionally ready." Unlike the obvious material distinctions between Blane and Andie's class statuses, the class division between Andie and Duckie is symbolized not only by Duckie's lack of various forms of capital, but also by each character's ability to make rational, calculated choices. Duckie's obsession with Andie is coded as being driven by emotion and desire, thus the choices he makes are based in emotion and his desire for Andie. This is not to say, however, that Duckie resists the neoliberal rationality. As previously stated, his desire for romantic capital is a common trope apparent in nearly all teen films. Dardot and Laval make the argument that one must make bad choices before they are able to compete and make good choices. They write of the entrepreneurial man:

> The market is a process of continuous learning and constant adaptation. The important thing about this process is the reduction of ignorance it makes possible, the learning by discovery, which contrasts with the total knowledge of the planner and general equilibrium alike. Entrepreneurs do not make the best choices all the time because they are ignorant of the decisions of others. But they can learn the

> nature of others' plans through commercial confrontation, via the interplay of competition. (112-113)

Though Duckie may not appear entrepreneurial, Dardot and Laval's explanation of the entrepreneurial man as someone that must adapt and learn applies to Duckie in that he does not make good choices all of the time, accounted for by his ignorance of Andie's "good" choices.

While Duckie continuously makes wrong choices, Andie's disciplining of him and, more importantly, the film's sound design, together regulate Duckie, drawing his attention to the decisions that Andie makes. Once he learns the "nature" of her plans, he can enact a rational choice in letting Andie go, allowing for her disruption-free union with Blane. In a conversation that Duckie and Andie have while studying, for example, Andie reprimand's Duckie for the minimal effort he puts into his work, accusing him of trying to stay in high school forever. Further, *Pretty in Pink*'s sound design incorporates subtle alarms, such as the school's period bell, glaring alarms, an example of which is the security alarm at the record store where Andie works, and bells—also located in the record store—alerting Andie to customers entering the front of the building. These alarms and bells have in common Duckie's intrusion on Andie's space. For example, in a school scene we get a two-shot of Andie and Duckie walking in the hallway. Just as Duckie expresses how "volcanic" he thinks Andie's outfit is, making Andie visibly annoyed, followed by his inability to be rational because he doesn't know if he's "emotionally ready" for class, the period alarm signals. Andie, being a rational subject, exits the frame, letting Duckie know that she has to go, but not telling him where—the next scene indicates to the spectator that Andie went to class. This example accounts for Duckie's ignorance of the good choices that Andie makes, as the alarm acts as signifier of a control event—attending class—and in this first instance this alarm separates Duckie from Andie because he is not yet

aware of Andie's rational decision to attend class. Per Dardot and Laval, not being aware of the nature of another's plans means that competition has not yet taken place. Because he is not yet aware of Andie's good choices, he continues to make bad choices for himself.

In a second instance during a scene at the record shop, Andie talks to Blane when suddenly a blaring security alarm begins to sound. The alarm goes off right as Blane begins to, presumably, ask Andie out. While Duckie has no idea that this is happening, the alarm acts symbolically as Dardot and Laval's "commercial confrontation," taking place in the commercial space of the record shop—a space that doubles as Andie's leisurely hangout spot. The alarm draws Duckie's attention to the competition, Blane, and he learns that he must attempt to be a rational agent. In Duckie's desperation to tell Andie about his feelings for her he approaches her in the hallway at school and a third instance of an alarm takes place. In this example, Andie not only tells Duckie that she is going to class, she also informs him that he must try to take no for answer. This can be read as her attempting to show Duckie that he needs to become self-disciplining. When she leaves another student runs into Duckie, making his books fall. He has somewhat of an emotional outburst, yelling at the student, before the student approaches him aggressively. Importantly, Duckie goes from yelling emotionally to attempting to rationalize his way out of a beating with talk of the stock market—a move that implies he has some kind of capital that should keep him from being beat up. In this instance Duckie seems to realize two things: first, that without some form of capital his social life will prove to be very difficult, and too, that capital must go hand in hand with a calculating rationality.

By the end of *Pretty in Pink*, even Duckie has become a rational subject and is rewarded when an attractive woman gets his attention in the end of the film. Andie may be able to cross class lines, however the film presents her ascension as a product of her adaptability to the rules

of the market. She acts as entrepreneur, making rational, calculating decisions—when to go to class, to study, to encourage her father to get a job, etc.—decisions that are coded in the film as examples of her maturity In taking the right risks and weighing the outcomes, Andie is able to cross class lines, regardless of how poor she may or may not be, something teens must realize is representative of coming of age and being mature. Likewise, all characters that have been regulated by Andie, advised by her, also learn to adapt and turn the wrong choices of their past into responsible choices in the present. For example, her father, too, is able to turn his life around, crippling depression put aside, solely because Andie advises him to give up on her estranged mother, shave, and get a job. It's only after this conversation, after her father realizes that Andie measures his character on his ability to make the right choices, that he can move on. Though *Pretty in Pink* fails to erect a space from which a loosening of the strictures of the neoliberal rationality can be found, *Some Kind of Wonderful*, on the other hand, provides a different avenue from which we can explore a possible resistance to the main tenets of neoliberalism.

Resisting Neoliberalism in Some Kind of Wonderful

Possibly attributed to the film's lack of success in comparison to Hughes's earlier 1980s teen films, or the blaringly similar plot in relation to *Pretty in Pink*, *Some Kind of Wonderful* (*SKW*) is not often taken up by scholars. *Some Kind of Wonderful*, being the last teen film written and produced by John Hughes, has been read as offering a "class corrective to [the ending of] *Pretty in Pink*" (*Buying Me Love* 575). Shary reads the ending, in which Keith ends up with the tomboy secure in her lower-class standing, as espousing values of loyalty and compatibility over wealth. While I don't disagree, my interest in *Some Kind of Wonderful* revolves around the

attempted and possibly successful resistance to a neoliberal rationality. In what ways does the film's discourse present and resist a neoliberal rationality and how can we decode the changes from *Pretty in Pink* to *Some Kind of Wonderful*?

The circulation of jewelry in the film can be read as a metaphorical premonition of the savings and loan crisis that was just beginning during the film's production, in which the perils of readily accessible loans, typically from lenders that didn't have their borrowers best interests in mind, became apparent at which point lenders were only then held responsible. Hardy's ring, as well as a pair of diamond earrings that Keith purchases, liquidating his college fund, circulate as loans both promised and defaulted on. Furthermore, Amanda's subjectivity seems to loosen the strictures of neoliberal rationality because, not only does she constantly make the wrong choices, much like Duckie in *Pretty in Pink*, but by film's end she also occupies a liminal position in which her inactivity works as resistance to the productive powers of neoliberalism.

Amanda, from the same lower class neighborhood as Keith, is able to maintain a higher social class status which is on loan, as signified by the pair of diamond earrings her friend lends her and the class ring of Hardy, her upper class, slimy boyfriend. Hardy lends the ring to Amanda, reminding her she must trust that he is faithful—which, of course, he is not. Both the earrings and the ring act as a premonition of the savings and loan crisis of the 1980's. In this reading Amanda's friends and Hardy represent lenders, positioning Amanda as a borrower, supposedly capable of weighing the risks and benefits of accepting a loan, the stakes of which being her social position and reputation. Although Amanda, the rational deliberator in the lens of neoliberalism, defaults on her loans when she warms to Keith's advances thus losing her social status, it is Hardy and Amanda's former friends that bear the consequences when the punk-coded Duncan and his punk-coded friends "take care" of Hardy and wreak havoc on his bourgeois

party. In other words, if the film were to celebrate as opposed to critique the neoliberal rationality, Amanda, making the calculating choice of taking the loans, would be the one held responsible at the end.

More ambiguous, however, is the symbolic meaning behind another pair of earrings, this time bought by Keith. Wanting to impress Amanda, Keith cashes in his college fund and buys her a pair of real diamond earrings, albeit from a second hand store. The act of cashing in his college fund would, at first glance, seem to be in opposition to making such calculating decisions required by neoliberalism, especially because Keith's father, the only proponent for an explicitly conservative mentality throughout the film, is hell bent on Keith going to a business college. However, because Keith is still investing in a market—the romance market—by purchasing the earrings for Amanda, it is clear that Keith is unable to find resistance in his subjugation to the neoliberal rationality. For Amanda, the earrings she receives from Keith are considered a gift, rather than a loan. However, when she receives them she knows she cannot keep them. The earrings, at this point, represent an idealized notion of porous class lines; Amanda is unable to comprehend how the earrings will work to follow through on that promise.

The earrings could also be read in the context of relations of reciprocity, in which "non-monetary relations of reciprocity" signal the failure of the market (Bradley 2).[9] In a gift economy, Keith's gift to Amanda comes with the expectation of reciprocity, and the expected reciprocation lends the earrings their value. If relations of reciprocity take over during times of market failure, then what happens when relations of reciprocity also fail, as in the case with Amanda and Keith? At the film's end both Keith and Amanda realize that their short spark is fading, and she returns the earrings, only for him to re-gift them to Watts upon realizing his true

[9] Further exploration of the relationship between the neoliberal rationality and the gift economy, though beyond the scope of this chapter, could prove fruitful in fleshing out a notion of failure in a neoliberal epoch.

feelings for her. The film celebrates Watts's security in her class standing, as well as Keith's, and rewards her with not only the earrings, but also Keith's love. Keith's risky investment pays off as well, even if it fails to allow him to cross class lines.

Amanda, on the other hand, is left on a threshold, in between two spaces—Hardy's giant mansion and the street where Keith and Watts embrace. The doorway she stands in acts as a metaphorically liminal space. The mansion could be read as symbolic of the private sphere, while the street, what would have been considered the public sphere, is taken over by Keith and Watt's union—a romantic capitalist exchange. Amanda no longer has the relevancy loaned to her by the social elite on one side of the doorway, and she no longer has Keith on the other side, but she chooses *not* to have either, stating that she's better off on her own. Amanda rejects economic upward mobility and love (romantic upward mobility), the alternative being inactivity. By not choosing and taking herself out of the market, as well as relations of reciprocity, Amanda finds resistance to the neoliberal rationality, as neoliberalism produces subjects that are not only capable of choosing, but must make choices[10] and must choose to be productive. Interestingly, though the film celebrates Amanda's not-choice, and we can read her ending as some sort of resistance, the outcome of her not-doing is actually rather problematic. Though she may be happy, she is still withdrawn from everyone. This begs the question: if resistance looks a lot like the effect of neoliberalism's capillary diffusion of power, is it really resistance?

Conclusion

An effect of the pervasive character of a neoliberal rationality has been a reduction of the

[10] Jane Elliot discusses the difficult choices that lower-class women, specifically, are forced to make under the regime of neoliberalism. While she uses *Sophie's Choice* to explicate her analysis, she focuses on choices that wouldn't seem as drastic, such as choosing to pay the electric bill or to buy a winter coat, which color agency as something other than power. See Elliot, "Suffering Agency."

subject to purely competitive relationships. Thus, we have seen a movement away from collectivism, towards "competition between 'self-enterprising actors'" (Dardot and Laval 321). If all relationships are now defined as competitive by market forces, then another component of neoliberal rationality is the eremitic effect of entrepreneurial self-subjugation and subjection. If not doing, not choosing, being inactive can be thought of as resistance to neoliberal rationality, then the category of teen is a great place to explore inactivity.

While *Pretty in Pink* provides many representations of the teenager imagined as an already fully formed and self-controlled subject, and these characteristics may be encouraged and rewarded, teens often have not perfected subjecthood, nor are they expected to have done so. Rather, many representations of teenagers typically portray lazy and irresponsible youth in the throws of becoming subjects. The teen, then, becomes a loose category somewhere in between their induction into subjecthood and being a fully formed subject. Much like Amanda stands in the symbolic space of the doorway, this liminal position, specifically as represented in the discourse of teen films, could be fodder for the construction of a neoliberal rationality bolstered through learning from one's mistakes, as teens often do. However, the liminality of the teen category could also allow for the space from which resistance can emerge. The stakes, however, of a resistance that emerges from the throws of inaction, seem to be incredibly high when considering the estranging effects of teenhood. The adult viewers of these films, seduced by nostalgia, locate their desire for an imagined idyllic rendering of high school, in which their teenage selves overcome their estrangement in the unattainable endings of Hughes's films. While *Some Kind of Wonderful* still gives the viewer a happy ending, Amanda's precarious position unsettles the idyllic tendencies of the other teen films in Hughes's *oeuvre*. As Dardot and Laval write of attempting to overcome a neoliberal rationality: "It is up to us to enable a new sense of

possibility to blaze a trail" (321). A thorough exploration of the liminality inherent in teenhood and teen films is a possible avenue from which a theorizing of resistance to the ever-expanding stretch of neoliberalism could be thought.

Politics of Respectability and Changing Perspectives: The Urban Public High School and Family in *Save the Last Dance* (2001)

Jade Boyd's critique of the 2001 teen film, *Save the Last Dance* (Thomas Carter 2001), foregrounds dancing as "a cultural site that reveals the ever-shifting power relations existing within our social, political, historical, and cultural lives" (67). *Save the Last Dance* follows a white teen ballerina, Sarah (Julia Stiles), as she moves to urban Chicago to live with her father after her mother's death. Sarah quickly becomes friends with Chenille (Kerry Washington), a black teen, starts a relationship with Chenille's brother, Derek (Sean Patrick Thomas), and is introduced to the booming Chicago hip-hop scene. Unsurprisingly, the film did extremely well at the box office upon its release,[11] and it could be argued that the marketing of the film—which relied heavily on Julia Stiles's star power—accounts for the film's success.

On the surface *Save the Last Dance* was promoted as, and is a story of a fish out of water in an interracial relationship. Stiles's star power and whiteness, perhaps, also partly account for the films appeal to a largely white teen audience; the posters for the film prominently feature not one, but two images of Stiles: one in the foreground, and another with Thomas, faded in the background. The trailer for the film contains intertitles that position Sarah as "a stranger, an outsider" that is "trying hard to fit in," all before the spectator even knows that the film takes up a hip-hop discourse in contrast to Sarah's ballet disposition. In doing so, *Save the Last Dance* would seem to impose a reading of the film that posits a white worldview/black worldview binary in relation to Stiles's prominence in the film. However, reading *Save the Last Dance* from the dominant perspective of Stiles's character—Sarah—is reductive, *because* her point-of-view constructs this white worldview/black worldview binary. Instead, this chapter argues that reading the film from the perspective of Chenille would loosen the strictures of this binary and allow

[11] The weekend it opened, *Save the Last Dance* was number one at the box office and brought in $131,706,809 during its theatrical run. See "Save the Last Dance."

racialized gender dynamics to surface in spaces such as the family unit and the club. Using an intersectional framework that locates a multiplicity of identities inextricably linked, these dynamics are made visible. This is not to say that *Save the Last Dance* escapes the strictures of neoliberalism, but rather that the film, while symptomatic of the ways in which neoliberalism uses identity as a technology of control, also lends itself to a reading that momentarily exposes identity as a masking of something else, allowing a clearer view of how structural identities operate together in a neoliberal epoch. This chapter hopes to answer the question: how does neoliberalism take up those structural identities that are always already written on the body?

Intersectionality: Conceptualizing a Methodology

In 1989, Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, expressing a need for a framework that considers more than just a "single categorical axis" of black women's experiences (140) juridically. She states that, in race discrimination or sex discrimination suits, the focus is often on those occupying a privileged sex position or a privileged race position, respectively. In order to make visible the discrimination of those burdened by multiple categories—specifically, black women—her conception of intersectionality requires the acknowledgement of the multiple intersecting categorical axes of what she terms experiences (139).

Intersectionality has been accused of taking as its symbol the "poor black woman," a representation that may embody racial, gender, and class difference, yet, according to its critics, fails to convey the ways in which these intersections account for personal identity. Brittney Cooper's article, "Intersectionality," sets out to define Kimberle Crenshaw's conception of intersectionality in light of recent critiques of the usefulness of an intersectional model. Cooper

highlights this concept not as an essentializing or all encompassing theory of identity, but rather an analytical framework that attends to "structural identity," an identity that does not equate to "personal identities . . . that refer to personal tastes, personal traits, gender performativity or intimate and filial relationships" (4). In elucidating the structural power dynamics of a multi-axis model that locates the juridical demarcations of identity, women of color become visible and legible. This visibility and legibility are not meant to speak to subjectivity or personal identity, but rather act as a starting point from which the rendering of women of color allows for the discernibility of non-normative modes of ordering that resist hegemonic standards of respectability. While not all feminist theories approach the intersectional model explicitly, the modes of analysis that various theorists utilize work in shaping a conception of intersectionality that speaks to a new mode of ordering bodies. When read together, the approaches to a feminist methodology by theorists such as Sylvia Wynter, Alexander Weheliye, and Maria Lugones provides a fruitful re-conception of the term "intersectional," which in return illuminates a relationship between these theories and modes of ordering.

Beginning with Sylvia Wynter, one can begin to see the way in which her expansion of feminist theory is clearly tied to the ordering of knowledge more generally, but also ordering reliant on the employment of standards of respectability. Wynter employs Judith Butler's concept of "the performative enactment of gender" (33) in order to highlight how the notion of gender works to reinforce a specific "genre" of being human. Wynter sees Butler's use of the term gender as praxis (instead of noun) in a groundbreaking way, because it allows for the argument that we perform *all* of our roles (e.g. race and class), in addition to gender, allowing for the notion of being human as praxis (33). Via this line of argument, Wynter unseats the myth of the purely biological being, wherein biology determines one's sex—thus gender performance—

while also questioning the rigid demarcations and separability of identity-politics. At the same time, in exposing the myth of bios Wynter also works to unseat a Western/Darwinian mode of ordering that hierarchizes bodies.

Alexander Weheliye further explicates Wynter's theory in his monograph *Habeas Viscus*, by approaching feminism and the ordering of bodies through the employment of a different kind of methodology. He engages Wynter's identity-politics breakdown to simultaneously illustrate how Wynter's "feminism . . . highlight[s] the complex relationality between different forms of oppression" (23), and to execute the praxis of an analytic that "insist[s] on black studies as a mode of knowledge production [that] provides the conditions of possibility for viewing race as a set of articulated political relations or assemblages, and not a biological or cultural descriptor" (19). While Wynter and Weheliye exercise very different methods—Wynter takes on the project of recounting the heretics of past epistemological ruptures in order to usher in a new approach to modes of ordering, and Weheliye uses relationality to grasp a new way of life born out of the "hieroglyphics of the flesh"—both entertain a multiplicity of structural relations, clearing a path toward new ways of dethroning a Western mode of ordering reliant on standards of respectability.

Turning to Maria Lugones's article, "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System," a more explicit conceptualization of intersectionality becomes apparent. Lugones employs Anibal Quijano's model of a global capitalist system of power that depends on the two axes of coloniality: power and modernity.[12] While Lugones champions the axes system, she

[12] Anibal Quijano coins the term "Coloniality of Power," in which he identifies race as a "mental construction that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination and pervades the more important dimensions of global power, including its specific rationality: Eurocentrism" (533). Quijano's model has Capital/the World Market on one axis and Race on another. Because Quijano sees race as being tied to, yet more pervasive than, colonialism, he refers to the coloniality of power, or the way in which race ushers colonialism into modernity. See Quijano, "Coloniality of Power."

complicates Quijano's analysis of gender in relation to coloniality of power because the model allows for a certain complicity in the Eurocentric, capitalist naturalization of gender.

In highlighting the mutual constitution of coloniality of power and gender, Lugones shows us that Quijano's axes do "more and less than intersectionality" (192). Of intersectionality she writes, "[it] reveals what is not seen when categories such as gender and race are conceptualized as separate from each other. The move to intersect the categories has been motivated by the difficulties in making visible those who are dominated and victimized in terms of both categories" (192). Lugones's notion is imperative to what intersectionality accomplishes, illustrating how the fusion at the intersection of gender and race, instead of conceiving the structural categories separately, brings forth the persons often rendered invisible by singular categories. Intersectionality, then, turns away from the binary of "Man" vs. "Woman" and toward what Lugones calls the "light" vs. "dark" sides, for both Eurocentric "Man" and "Woman" exist in the category of "gendered," if only by the fact that they characterized and viewed the enslaved as un-human, even animalistic, and thus "un-gendered."[13] Lugones, much like Wynter and Weheliye, employs a method that aims to challenge the current Western and dominant standards of respectability. All three scholars point toward the fusions of race/gender/class, an intersectional model in implicit and explicit ways.

In *Save the Last Dance*, a white worldview/black worldview binary restricts a discussion of racialized gender dynamics, rendering the intersections of multiple structural identities invisible. For this reason, the intersectional framework proves useful in opening up new ways of reading the film. Intersectionality considers the multiplicity of structural identities that work in relation to each other, revealing the perspective of women of color. Structural identities

[13] The use of quotation marks around both Man and Woman signifies Man and Woman as white, middle-class, and Eurocentric; see Mendez's "Notes Towards a Decolonial Feminist Methodology."

inextricably intersect the body itself—in a sense, they are written on the body—yet often times are deployed as both something we are and something we identify with or have ownership over.[14] In other words, intersectionality is an analytic that works to show how the intersections of different legal identities transcend the consideration of the law.

Defining Technologies of Identity

Though identity is often described as the essential core of a person or how one chooses to define their being, these descriptors do little by way of unpacking what identity does and how it is employed both in the context of neoliberalism and in an intersectional framework. Cooper uses more than one idea of identity in her discussion of Crenshaw's concept. Her two iterations of identity—personal and structural—prove useful to an understanding of intersectionality while also making an important distinction between the different ways and for what purposes identity gets employed. Cooper fervently argues that intersectionality only takes up structural identities, that Crenshaw's concept was never meant to "wholly account for the range or depth of black female experiences" (4), and she aptly addresses the many scholars that, in conflating identity and subjectivity, treat intersectionality as a totalizing conception of identity. In doing so, she gestures towards an answer to the question of why so many conflate both personal and structural identity, but also identity and subjectivity.

Cooper writes, "The law conceptualizes people through the structural identities of gender, race, sexual orientation, or national origin. These kinds of identities are different from personal identities of the sort that refer to personal taste, personality traits, gender performativity, or intimate and filial relationships" (4). If personal identity is described as personal taste, likes, and

[14] David Bering-Porter aptly discusses the ways in which blackness can be both essential to who one is and something that can be owned. See Bering-Porter, "Boutique Ethnicity."

traits, then structural identity can be defined as shifting juridical structures of power that are written on the body. While it would seem that categories such as race, gender, and class are stable entities, as systems of power contained in the law, they are constantly shifting with history and culture. However, the defining feature of structural identity is the relationship between these systems of power and the body. Structural identities are always written on the body in ways that aren't true of personal identities.

While personal taste may speak to one's personal identification with a band they like or their fashion sense, it is neither contained in the law nor written on the body, whereas race is written on the body juridically every time someone fills out the census, applies for a driver's license, or cites *Brown v. Board of Education*. Likewise, gender is written on the body at birth, coinciding with the law on one's birth certificate, social security profile, and now, with which bathroom one is legally required to use. Class can also be, and should be, accounted for in defining structural identity. How might one conceive of class as being written on the body? For one, the Marxist notion—that there is always a division of labor—may come to mind when considering the relationship between class and capitalism. Statements such as "the working class" or the "blue-collar worker" call to mind the physical labor the body performs, and too, class is written on the black body by the capitalist roots of the transatlantic slave trade. Juridically class is evoked in welfare programs, social security checks, and inheritance laws.

One point of contention with Cooper's argument may be on the grounds of gender performativity. On the one hand, even if we perform all of our identities as Wynter states, in order to consider an identity as structural it must be a juridical system of power and written on the body, meaning that an identity position must be legally recognized and in some way mark the body. While some states legally recognize and extend rights to those that identify as pre-

operative transgender, others do not, and this complicates a notion of structural identity that is dependent on laws that only recognizes the transgender community within the gender binary. In some states a pre-operative transgender male may be considered legally male or may be considered legally female, yet will never be legally considered as transgender—this category is not an option on birth certificates or driver's licenses, for example. On the other hand, performing one's gender becomes an act of writing that identity onto the body, while legally changing one's name and gender on a birth certificate or driver's license would still contain that identity within a juridical system of power. However, even in its negation, the category of transgender is implied juridically in the tension between the body and the law. I would argue that transgender would still be considered structural, and thus, defining structural identity as those juridical shifting systems of power that are written on the body.

Whereas Cooper addresses the question of how the two iterations of identity are conflated, I would re-phrase the question as follows: why are personal and structural identity conflated? And why, then, does the umbrella of identity get conflated with subjectivity? A symptomatic reading may connect these conflations with neoliberalism's bootstraps agenda. The bootstraps ideology is the notion that individuals must "pull themselves up by their bootstraps," or that they will only be successful if they are self-starters that don't accept financial or social help from public services. If structural identity is a manifestation of juridical systems of power, then bootstrapping is, in fact, impossible, as power flows from an external system, either uplifting or subjugating the body on which it writes. Since neoliberalism demands rational, calculating individuals making informed choices and exercising something that looks like agency, the neoliberal rationality employs personal identity as a technology of control, masking structural identity's failure to re-produce this rationality on its own, as structural identity is a

product of the law's exercise of power over the body.

Personal identity is an ideal tool for maintaining the myth of bootstrapping because in its very construction an individual exercises a limited form of agency. The individual acts as an agent, wielding power over their own body every time they choose to identify with a band, pick an outfit to wear, or decide what movie to watch on a Friday night. A neoliberal rationality emphasizes this iteration of identity because it maintains the myth that all people have power and that they don't need privilege or help in order to succeed. While this speaks to the conflation of personal and structural identity, it also gets to the heart of the conflation between identity and subjectivity. Seeing as personal identity masks the structural, subjectivity—one's experiences, beliefs, and desires that culminate in the action an individual takes—shapes the choices an individual makes regarding their taste, style, and traits. While subjectivity speaks to ones experiences, personal identity refers to the exercise of agency as a result of those experiences. It's important to further emphasize that though structural identity and the power wielded over the body by the law is masked, the intersectional framework illuminates the shifts and flows of power inherent to the structural.

Standards of Respectability

While intersectionality uses the intersections of multiple structural identities to trace the movement of juridical systems of power, an example of the ways in which these systems of power necessitate the visibility of those occupying multiple positions proves useful to an intersectional approach to *Save the Last Dance*. Standards of respectability are gendered and often racialized ideals tied to the normative behaviors and morals of the white middle-class. As Garrett Albert Duncan and Henrika McCoy write:

> Religious and political elites established respectability in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the standard for appropriate behavior through the regulation of gender and sexual norms and the public expression of personal politics. The norms that attach to middle class morality define the manners, morals, and sexual attitudes of what is acceptable in public and private life that are often taken for granted in Western societies (e.g., the U.S.). (36)

While understanding standards of respectability as norms is helpful, historically, the employment of these standards extends far beyond the watchful eye of one's neighbors. Further, standards of respectability impact different structural identities differently. Fordism may be one of the more familiar examples of how standards of respectability have generally been enforced in the past.

In the early 1920s, as a way to improve productivity at his plant, Henry Ford set up a sociological department that would enquire into the home lives of the plant workers (Smith 48). Ford's laborers, mostly immigrants, were expected to meet specific moral and physical standards both at work and at home. Terry Smith notes that Ford's standards were largely gendered: "All were profiled according to their biography, the economic and financial situation of themselves and their family, along with portraits of their morality, habits, and lifestyle. Women were excluded from individual profiles, it being assumed that they were not heads of households" (49). This assumption exemplifies norms that then get enforced as standards of respectability; these norms are homogenous and white, Eurocentric conceptions that include standards covering a wide area of life—how a household should be run, what amount of sexual activity is healthy, and how one should manage their appearance.

While Fordism is an early example of only one domain in which standards or respectability are operating, other domains are paramount to the enforcement of these standards

as well. For instance, in addition to the enforcement of morals and norms by employers such as Ford, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, while working as the Assistant Secretary of Labor in 1965, published *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, now knows as "The Moynihan Report." The report argued that the inequalities between blacks and whites could not be eradicated unless black families conformed to a nuclear family system. In doing so, Moynihan shifts the blame for inequality from systemic structures of oppression on to the black community. Additionally, Moynihan's report takes on a gendered valence, in that he argues that the matriarchal family system common in black families is to blame for black men's failure to take on positions of authority (both at home and at work) (30-32).

While "The Moynihan Report" is a state document, standards of respectability are enforced in many other domains. Neighbors, employers, the state, but also television shows (such as *The Cosby Show*), films, and education are only some of the many ways in which standards of respectability are policed and enforced. Though I will return to The Moynihan Report in my close reading of the film, it is important to note that society often uses standards of respectability to target minority groups, and in the case of those occupying multiple minority positions, standards of respectability are doubly hegemonic.

An Analysis of Save the Last Dance

Save the Last Dance begins with Sarah's train ride to Chicago, presenting the viewer with flashbacks of her ballet audition for Julliard interspersed with flashbacks of the car accident that killed her mother. Once in Chicago, Sarah, clearly a "fish out of water," must orient herself to both a lower-class lifestyle with her musician father, and a mostly black urban public high school. At first Sarah struggles to find her footing, but begins to adjust when Chenille, who

happens to be a teen mom, welcomes her into her friend group, inviting her to a popular hip-hop club, STEPPS. Derek, Chenille's brother, teaches Sarah hip-hop, sparking their relationship and encouraging her to face the death of her mother by returning to her dreams of studying ballet at Julliard. While Derek's representation is coded as intelligent, driven, and "respectable," his best friend, Malakai, is coded as a thuggish criminal that can't and won't stay out of trouble, culminating in a drive-by shooting, presumably between rival gangs. Though many of their friends, such as Nikki, a flatly written jezebel type, question Sarah and Derek's interracial relationship, causing tensions to rise between the two, ultimately, Chenille convinces Derek that they should be together if they love each other. In the end, Sarah performs both ballet and hip-hop at her audition, winning her a place at Julliard, while Derek cheers her on from the wings.

Jade Boyd's analysis of the film argues that *Save the Last Dance* initially challenges conventional norms, yet ultimately reaffirms those norms through a dance aesthetic that simultaneously constructs "a cultural image of dance" (67). Though Boyd believes the film, in depicting an interracial relationship and the "uniting of two different dance forms" (76), works as a symbol of the possibility of unity between two "oppositional worlds of white and black culture" (76), she identifies multiple binaries that persist in the film. Specifically, she purports that the film falls victim to the black/white and high art/popular art binaries. While Boyd reads scenes from the film that only focus on dance, thus seeing ballet positioned against hip-hop, I would argue that this reading conflates high art with whiteness and hip hop with blackness, a trope common in many and most teen dance films.

While John Trenz argues that dance as a "subculture" in teen films takes place outside of the purview of institutionalized surveillance, thus the spaces of dance act as spaces of resistance and are "vulnerable to things that can be destructive both from within the subculture or from

without by the dominant culture" (127), I would caution that the tendency to hierarchize culture as "sub" or "dominant" obscures the ways in which both hip hop and ballet are incorporated into many institutions in which surveillance occurs in the film. For instance, Sarah performs both ballet and hip-hop at her Julliard audition, under the watchful eye of administrators of the school. Likewise, Sarah's first introduction to hip-hop takes place in the hallways of her new public high school, a symbolic space of surveillance. Dance actually becomes another institutional space in which standards of respectability are transcended and enforced. Additionally, because this trope of "subculture"/dominant culture being conflated with hip-hop/ballet and whiteness/blackness is common across teen dance films, this chapter look's at the accents of the film that incorporate dance, but also go beyond dance into other institutions, such as the family and urban public high school. Incorporating a reading of all major institutions that conform with or break from standards of respectability within the film allows one to read Chenille as much more prominent to the film's discourse than just analyzing the binaries of dance form. Using an intersectional framework allows for the legibility, not just of Chenille, but of a racialized gender dynamic that shifts across the many spaces that Chenille travels.

Turning to a reading of a scene in the film when Sarah and Chenille got to STEPPS, a hip-hop club, it is important to foreground that throughout the film bodies have been both coded and racialized. In other words, both the black female and male bodies in *Save the Last Dance* have been written in such a manner that racialized and gendered signifiers are coded as being inseparable from the body itself. In this scene, a black man gropes Chenille. Chenille confronts the man as Sarah stands by, witnessing the altercation. In defense, the camera follows Chenille as she reaches for and aggressively grabs the man's crotch. The following dialogue takes place as Chenille continues to hold onto the man:

Man: (Pleading) You got it. You got it.
Chenille: Got What? The right to walk past your greasy tickle dick self without your paws on my ass? That's how I got it?
Man: (pleading) Yeah, yeah.
Chenille: (Letting go of the man's crotch) That's how I thought I had it.

Important to this scene is the framing of Chenille, Sarah, and the man, in which Sarah stands between Chenille and the man, framed by their interaction. First, Chenille's action and assertion of voice can be read as resisting dominant standards of respectability, in which femininity is often rendered through passivity towards men. Even so, Chenille's resistance is caught in a double bind between resisting dominant standards of respectability and enabling the hegemony of those standards, for in this instance Chenille is positioned as the "Angry Black Woman" against Sarah's white passivity. Further, the hegemonic standards of respectability that dictate Chenille's positioning are doubly hegemonic because these standards dictate Chenille's positioning in terms of both race and gender. Second, the framing of Sarah between Chenille and the man breaks with the binary of white/black by relationally rendering structural identity legible. Chenille becomes visible between the hyper black masculinity of the man, which she deflates, as well as Sarah's whiteness and passive femininity.

The representation of Chenille's family unit in the film, likewise, breaks down a black/white binary relationally, through racialized gender dynamics. Xhercis Mendez points out how the imposition of standards of respectability, specifically in "The Moynihan Report," have different consequences for black men and black women. Her analysis of the report finds that African-American men, in order to even be "structurally or systematically recognized as 'Men,'" are "encouraged to establish an interpersonal superordinate position of power in relation to their racialized female counterparts in exchange for their 'own well-being'" (54). However, in doing so, black men must occupy a racialized hyper-masculine position in a "(re)colonizing vein" (54).

As Mendez aptly puts it, the report "strategically shifts the blame onto Black family structure and 'castrating' Black females" (54).

The juxtaposition of two scenes in *Save the Last Dance*, specifically Chenille's prevalence in both conflicts, creates a tension between the enforcement of hegemonic standards of respectability such as "The Moynihan Report" and the outcome of that enforcement. In the first scene, Chenille and Kenny, the father of her child (Christopher), aggressively fight about his lack of involvement with and inadequacy of providing for Christopher. At this point, Chenille does not feel comfortable with Kenny taking Christopher for the night, and she makes him leave. In this scene Chenille admonishes Kenny for not being able to take up the superordinate position of power when she expresses her disappointment in his involvement with Christopher. Considering Fordism again, it is clear that standards of respectability are often tied to labor. The enforcement of those standards benefited Ford's plant because his workers were presumably more productive. Chenille employs these standards in her admonishment of Kenny because he is unable to be what society would consider a productive individual that provides for his family. However, she also resists the superordinate position of power Kenny attempts to inhabit with his aggressive expressions when she makes him leave.

In the scene that follows, Sarah and Chenille sit in the waiting room of a pediatrician's office, and the following exchange occurs:

> Chenille: You and Derek act like it don't bother people, like it don't hurt people to see.
> Sarah: What is the big damn deal? It's me and him, not us and other people.
> Chenille: Black people Sara, Black women. Derek is about somethin, he's smart, he's motivated, he's for real . . . He's gonna make something of himself and here you come white so you gotta be right and you take one of the few decent men we have left after jail, drugs, and drive-by. That is what Nikki meant about you up in our world.

Chenille explodes a white/black binary, specifically when she draws Sarah's attention to the

position of black women. Only a racialized gender dynamic remains visible, in which black women are positioned below both black hyper masculinity and a white society. From Sarah's perspective, the outside world criticizes her interracial relationship only because she is white and Derek is black. What Chenille makes clear, however, is, when compounding race and gender, both function as a structural interrelation. When approaching Chenille relationally to both Sarah in the second scene and Kenny in the previous scene, the racializing discourse of *Save the Last Dance* impacts Chenille differently than it does either Kenny or Sarah. Because Chenille is implicitly comparing Kenny to Derek in her accusations towards Sarah, and because these two scenes are juxtaposed, connected only by Chenille, her statements become symbolic for a re-shifting of the blame placed on the black family structure by standards of respectability like "The Moynihan Report," back onto a white society that initially imposed those standards.

The mapping of Chenille's movement within and across the club and the family unit works toward a reading of *Save the Last Dance* that complicates the binaries of white/black and Man/Woman because it makes visible a racialized gender dynamic that cannot be thought of apart. However, without mention of the film's disavowal of systematic institutionalized racism and inequality in favor of coloring certain characters' outcomes as punishment for "bad choices," my reading runs the risk of purporting that the film should no longer be read as problematic. Before concluding, then, I turn to an analysis of a prominently featured "motivational" poster plastered on the wall of the school. Important to this analysis is that we see the poster during a dialogue between Derek and his friend Malakai, who is continually coded and racialized as a black hyper-masculine thug throughout the duration of the film.

In the scene, Malakai and Derek discuss Malakai's return to school after being suspended for criminal activity that took place off school grounds. The two men sit in front of a

prominently displayed poster in the lunchroom, which reads, "Consider the Consequences." This poster works to recall Malakai's recent past, but also foreshadows a drive-by shooting he orchestrates, culminating in his arrest at the end of the film. In doing so, the poster negates the possibility of a presumably seventeen- or eighteen-year-old boy being the victim of systematic institutionalized oppression or imposed standards of respectability in which he must perform the hyper-masculine role in order to be considered "Man," shifting all responsibility for, and blame of, gang violence on Malakai alone. In situating Derek and Malakai together, in front of the poster, the film's discourse attempts to construct race as secondary to the choices one makes. Because Derek has been coded as intelligent and driven, and Malakai as a hyper-masculine thug, the implication the film pushes is that each has made choices, the outcomes of which have led to their circumstances. While reading the film from the perspective of Chenille momentarily brings to the fore complicated racialized gender dynamics, *Save the Last Dance* ultimately disavows even the *possibility* of systematic institutionalized inequality, and thus renders racialized gender dynamics invisible in the representation of Malakai. For Chenille, the film ends ambiguously, though it implies that her relationship with Kenny will improve, even that she may go to design school.[15] For Malakai, the film is explicit in punishing a hyper-masculinity constructed by a white colonial discourse, persisting into present-day standards of respectability. However, this is not to say that ultimately one should read Malakai against Chenille, for that would fall back into a binarism that one should avoid. Rather, a racialized gender dynamic persists, in the coloniality of black hyper-masculinity and in the complicated position of Chenille, relationally, to those

[15] Though Annika Hymlö uses Chenille as representative of the ways in which "most African Americans are likely to stay put in the violent ghetto" and how "only the anomaly of Derek . . . will likely move out" (180), I would argue that her argument is very much grounded in white standards of respectability, especially seeing as in no way does the film allude to Chenille as seeing her home as a violent ghetto. Additionally, when Chenille discusses her designs with Sarah, it is implied and explicitly stated that her entrepreneurial spirit in making clothes for her friends will "pay her way through design school." See Hymlö, "Girls on Film."

inhabiting shared spaces.

Conclusion

Jean and John Comaroff take up the racialized and gendered impact of black "youth's"[16] exclusion from neoliberal capitalism when they write:

> The modernist ideal in which each generation does better than its predecessor is mocked by conditions that disenfranchise the unskilled young of the inner city and the countryside ... Denied full, waged citizenship in the nation-state many of them take to the streets, often the only place where, in an era of privatization, a lumpen public can be seen and heard ... The profile of these populations reflects also the feminization of post-Fordist labor, which further disrupts gender relations and domestic reproduction among working people, creating a concomitant "crisis of masculinity." (Comaroff and Comaroff 17)

In chapter one, the inclusion of characters in the marketplace (e.g. Claire and Keith) positions them as ideal subjects because they can be or are already productive. Here, Comaroff and Comaroff lay bare the exclusion of black bodies from those markets, shifting blame from the conditions of disenfranchisement to their positioning on the streets, a public and thus unproductive space—a position that gets masked as a choice. Further, if Fordism employed standards of respectability that enforced a nuclear family system, positioning men as the strong, laboring breadwinner, then women's entry into the workforce brought with it a crisis of masculinity as the working woman resists the family system championed in standards of respectability. This crisis mobilizes black hyper masculinity, and, as shown in the analysis of

[16] Comaroff and Comaroff distinguish the terms "youth" and "teenager," when they write, " While, in much of the late-twentieth-century English-speaking world, young white persons are *teenagers*, their black counterparts are *youth*, adolescents with attitude. And most often, if not always, male" (16).

Save the Last Dance, standards of respectability normalize the structurally relational positions of black men and black women.

Using an intersectional framework in analyzing *Save the Last Dance* allows for the visibility of multiple intersecting structural positions, as well as the ways in which those positions are masked by the imposition and normalization of standards of respectability. Importantly, standards of respectability are always already tied to human capital and production because they work to control and order laboring bodies. While neoliberalism uses standards of respectability as a tool to subsume or erase black bodies from the market, intersectionality continues to stand as a useful framework because it helps locate sites of resistance and erasure, highlighting the invisible neoliberal forces that put blame back on the individual, as well as the "choice" one exercises in traversing the private spaces of the market or the public spaces of the streets.

Coda

This project started as a way to bridge a gap between the films I grew up watching and my academic interest in the very real effects of a neoliberal order that I embody each day I wake up at 6:30am to write or read. In the previous chapters I attempted to answer a question about resistance: can anyone locate resistance in the age of neoliberalism? I am confident that I have not adequately answered this question. In fact, writing this thesis has only further absorbed me into a double bind, a blaring contradiction inherent to this question of resisting neoliberalism.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines resistance in three ways that are of interest to this project: the first as "Organized opposition to an invading, occupying, or ruling power," the second as "Power or capacity to resist something," and lastly as "The tendency to slow or hinder the conduction of electricity" ("resistance"). These three definitions are of interest to me because they all, in some way or another, reference power, and in doing so provide three very different explanations for how power works. Based on these definitions, power is something one must oppose, something one must possess, or something one must hinder or stop if resistance is a possibility. Taken apart, in order to resist, one would need power to oppose power, or, alternatively, one must do away with power all together. Taken together, resistance lays in the interstices of power, in the liminal spaces through which power traverses.

In the 1970s identity politics took off in the academy, and at the same time Michel Foucault theorized American neoliberalism as an economic game, of which he said: "we find that no one originally insisted on being part of the economic game and consequently it is up to society and to the rules of the game imposed by the state to ensure that no one is excluded from this game in which he is caught up without ever having explicitly wished to take part" (*Biopolitics* 202). Society and the rules of the game, as Foucault puts it, employ personal identity

as a technology of power. This iteration of identity ensures inclusion because it extends a very limited amount of agency to individuals. It is no surprise then that identity politics, arguments not for the consideration of personal identity, but rather for structural identity, emerge contemporaneously with the rationality Foucault was outlining.

While the argument could and has been made that identity politics are neoliberalism's end goal, this discourse assumes that identity politics speaks to the subjective ways in which personal identity extend agency, conflating personal and structural identity. For it is the personal that neoliberalism employs in order to continually produce productive, calculating human enterprises. Rather, identity politics are imperative to finding interstitial and liminal spaces in which bodies and power exist. Identity politics are a response to the threat of a growing neoliberal rationality and discussions of winners and losers. Whether it is metaphorically liminal spaces, such as doorways between the upper and lower class, or the structural identity positions that suffer invisibility in binary conversations, identity politics and an intersectional framework are important aspects of discovering and making visible liminal sites of resistance. The dark side of the interstices of power, however, lays in the alienation, oppression, and lack of legal recognition that contributes to systemic inequality.

What, then, is the answer to our current neoliberal crisis? If the outcome of a neoliberal rationality is the alienating effects of seeing individuals as always competing, and the outcome of resistance is alienation from those completely taken up by the system, what does the future look like? What does the present look like? Considering that the teen film genre today consists of *The Hunger Games* trilogy (2012-2015), the *Divergent* series (2014-2016), and a variety of vampire films, such as *Warm Bodies* (2013), and *Vampire Academy* (2014), our current crisis plays out a post-apocalyptic or dystopian American imaginary, from which the future is thought. While there

may be no clear answer to what comes from or after the neoliberal age, the work being done with identity politics both in the humanities and in the interdisciplinary vein has been indispensible in charting our current crisis. Perhaps a path for the future can be forged from the interstices of industry and academy, Hollywood and the humanities.

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