The Construction of At-Risk Youth:

A Qualitative Study of Community-Based Youth-Serving Agencies

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the ways in which the 'at-risk' designation of marginalized and disadvantaged youth within youth-serving agencies contributes to a program of governance within a neoliberalized welfare state. I argue that while there is considerable resistance to the risk designation within youth-serving agencies, officially accepting funding for programming designed to target at-risk youth continues to individualize the troubles youth face and responsibilizes youth to become their own risk managers. Through these structural funding constraints, youth-serving agency staff inadvertently disseminates expert knowledges that validate the notion of 'at-risk' youth as a growing problem while legitimating the perspective that social problems can and should be addressed through individual treatment rather than social policy. This both disciplines youth to become better liberal subjects while leaving structural constraints unaddressed. I conclude with some examples of resistance that show promise of working outside of these technologies of governance.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The dominant view of youth—and especially of troubled or marginalized youth—is of a volatile, potentially dangerous, and out-of-control population that lacks the fully-developed social controls inherent in adulthood. This view is exacerbated by the popular media and political representation of youth as violent and criminal, regardless of the fact that this image of youth "teeters on the brink of fiction" (Schissell 1997: 11). Nonetheless, this current public perception of youth is consistent with historical patterns of treating youth as "folk devils" (Cohen 1980), people who are portrayed in folklore or the media as outsiders and deviant, and who are blamed for crimes or other social problems. This construction of youth as outsiders creates the context within which to understand both the troubles youth face and their behaviours as deviant, and therefore warranting particular interventionist, punitive, and corrective measures in response.

Currently, one of the most prevalent ways youth are understood is through the framework of 'risk' and, in particular, the construction of 'at-risk youth,' which has permeated aspects of society, from tabloid articles to government policy. In fact, in liberal democracies, the crisis of at-risk youth has become "a key marker in debates about youth among intellectuals, social commentators, politicians, bureaucrats and experts in various domains of expertise" (Kelly 2000: 463). Based on the principles of actuarial science, the risk discourse promises to objectively establish characteristics that put youth 'at risk' of any number of social ills, and therefore directs solutions towards modifying or changing these characteristics or conditions to reduce the risks they pose. While the 'risk' designation is similar to older categories of deviancy, in that it is used to

understand and respond to deviant behaviour, it also expands the reach of this discourse to a much wider population because youth do not have to have committed any deviant acts—they need only to be 'at risk' of doing so. In essence, this construction of 'at-risk youth' extends to all marginalized or disadvantaged youth, subjecting them to newly informed programming and treatment that aims to manage them as 'risks.'

This thesis explores the ways in which the 'at-risk' designation of marginalized and disadvantaged youth contributes to a program of governance within a neoliberalized welfare state. It does so through a qualitative exploration of how youth are constructed by youth-serving agencies, and how aid is prescribed to youth based on this construction. Since understanding the troubles youth face through a risk discourse has implications for how this population is governed, it is important to understand if 'risk' is being used in the construction of youth in youth-serving agencies. As such, the question is posed: to what extent are youth-serving agencies contributing to a regime of governance in line with neoliberal notions of risk and responsibility? This question is addressed using a governmentality theoretical framework, in which the exercise of power is seen to be dispersed in a multitude of localized sites and relations of power (Foucault 1990, 1991). A governmentality perspective recognizes that power is everywhere, and all forms of power and governance are linked discursively. This framework opens a space from which to explore the ways in which social service agencies may contribute to a regime of governance of youth through the risk discourse, even while their intention is to help, and provide resources to, youth.

In Chapter One I outline the theoretical basis for this study, including a discussion of how the construction of youth has been influenced by a risk discourse within

neoliberal rationalities of governance. The construction of youth has particular currency within neoliberal societies that emphasize individual and economic freedoms over political interventions: youth are offered the freedom to manage these risks individually, thus constructing youth as rational actors in charge of securing their own successes or failures. Those who appear to refuse to make choices to manage the risks they are faced with are deemed as incorrigible, since these 'bad' choices are interpreted as actively defying society's rules, laws, and moral standards. In this sense, the construction of youth as 'at risk' can both extend the range of interventions into the lives of youth and justify external discipline if youth refuse to discipline themselves accordingly. The risk discourse thereby individualizes social problems, making youth responsible for their own difficulties while leaving political and economic factors unaddressed. In this way, 'risk' acts as a technology of governance through the responsibilizing strategy used to treat those designated as 'at risk.'

Chapter Two outlines the methodology used in this research. This study is based on a set of 25 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with youth-serving agency staff working in both administrative and front-line capacities. Talking to both these groups was necessary in order to understand how risk is used both officially in funding applications and program development and in practice during interactions with youth. During these interviews respondents were asked to reflect upon and provide their understandings of issues such as the troubles youth face, the causes of these troubles, and the use of 'risk' in discourses about troubled youth.

Chapter Three examines the ways in which 'risk' is used to construct youth in youth-serving agencies. This includes an exploration of how youth workers understand

both what puts youth 'at risk' and what they are 'at risk of.' This construction of youth is affected by the way the risk discourse shifts the focus of troubles onto risk factors and off of structural causes, falling in line with neoliberal principles of risk. Yet, a closer look at this construction in the everyday practices within agency programs shows that youth workers resist the responsibilized construction of youth. Instead, while these workers appear to use the discourse of risk in official mandates, in their practice they recognize the structural constraints youth face and act on principles of need and entitlement consistent with older models of welfare and social justice. Rather than emphasizing the risks youth must learn to manage, this alternate construction leads to programming that defies responsibilization by focusing on the needs youth have in the present. This chapter also outlines the ways that youth themselves resist the risk discourse.

In Chapter Four, I employ a governmentality framework to look at the ways youth-serving agencies contribute to a larger regime of governance through the use of the risk discourse. Despite the resistances that subvert risk in practice, youth-serving agencies, by officially accepting the risk discourse in line with government funding requirements, lend credibility to the principles of individualism by publically supporting the view that individually treating youth is the appropriate way to address social issues. This helps to keep political and economic restructuring off the public agenda and justifies criminal justice responses for youth who 'choose' to make bad decisions in spite of what the public may see as considerable resources allocated to helping these youth. The risk discourse also informs the design of programs that can, by their very nature, only focus on individual youth and not on changing systemic barriers. Despite genuine concerns regarding the systemic barriers and inequalities youth face, agency staff are forced to

conform to the standards of success as measured by individual achievement and transformation. In addition, the funding structure necessitates considerable documentation of outcome measures, progress reports, and evaluations of youth that validate the existence of 'at-risk youth' as a problem—or potential problem—population. While this funding structure allows for agencies to access much needed resources, these data can also be used statistically in other areas of governance to justify increased regulation, discipline, and punishment of youth who refuse to conform.

Chapter Four finishes with a discussion of some of the ways youth-serving agencies exercise resistance that show promise of being able to more actively break out of the neoliberal framework of risk and responsibility. The first of these is demonstrated by a few agencies that resist funding tied to the risk discourse, although this is done at considerable financial sacrifice and therefore is not a viable option for all. The second promising form of resistance is the formation of a coalition that can advocate for the structural changes youth workers recognize need to happen. This strong collective voice offers an opportunity to change the political and economic systems that produce troubled youth, thereby releasing youth from the responsibilizing strategy found within the construction of at-risk youth.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONSTRUCTION OF 'YOUTH'

It has become increasingly recognized that youth constitute one group in society that encounters a myriad of troubles, including: difficulties in the labour market (Beaudry et al., 2000; Baron, 2001; Betcherman & Leckie, 1997), lack of recreational facilities (Ostiguy & Hopp, 1995), homelessness (Higgitt et al., 2003; Bodnarchuk et al., 2006; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2006), and exposure to drugs (Roy et al., 2007; Wood et al., 2006; Saggers et al., 2006), gangs (Mellor et al., 2005; Aboriginal Issues Branch, 2001; Nafekh, 2002; Correctional Service of Canada, 2003; Mathews, 2005), violence (Baron, 2003; Tanner, 2001), and crime (Dauvergne, 2009; Kong, 2009). While youth face very real difficulties, popular conceptions of troubled youth often focus on the violent or criminal nature of young people. As Bernard Schissel writes, "although habitual and potentially dangerous offenders are the small minority, only their activities and characteristics seem to inform the moral panic debates" (Schissel 2006: 11) Much of what is known about youth is media driven, which affects the public discourse around youth (Tanner, 2001; Schissel, 1997; Barron, 2000).

While youth crime figures prominently in the narratives of popular television shows, news reports, and front page headlines, these portrayals of youth crime are at odds with empirical evidence. "Media discourse exaggerates, sensationalizes, and decontextualizes by presenting atypical cases as representative and constructing a *problematic image* of youth that does not always correspond to actual behaviour" (Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009: 11, italics in original). The media also help to promote the

general impression that youth crime and delinquency are a new and growing concern (Schissel, 2006). Yet, evidence shows that similar levels of alarm regarding delinquent youth have existed throughout Canada's history, including concerns about youth gang riots in Toronto as far back as 1875 (Tanner, 2001). "What we are left with, then," writes Schissel, "is a gulf between reality and perception. The reality is that youth are mostly disenfranchised from the democratic process at all levels of governance, they are disadvantaged in the labour market and they have few services available to them, unlike their adult counterparts" (2007: 11).

This chapter considers the ways in which the category of 'youth' has been constructed through moral panics that frame youth as 'folk devils' and blame them for social problems and insecurities. In contrast, rather than assuming that deviance is an intrinsic characteristic of youth, a transactional approach focuses on the social reaction—or the problematizing of youth. This problematizing of youth informs state and public reactions to handling this population, affecting the forms of governance youth experience, including the allocation of services for those in need. Currently, the discourse of 'risk' has become one of the most prevalent ways of describing troubled youth and this has had an impact on the allocation of aid to youth in need through social services. 'Risk' shifts the emphasis from providing resources within a system of entitlement towards the management of risk in which youth must prove they deserve such aid. This is often framed within a crime control mandate that provides resources in an attempt to circumvent criminal activity, rather than as a right of youth to have their basic needs met. When aid is allocated this way, it reduces who is eligible because youth must meet the criteria for being 'at risk' and demonstrate that they are able to change.

The risk discourse is consistent with neoliberal principles of individualism and deregulation as the responsibility for social problems is shifted off of the state and onto individual youth who must become their own risk managers. Within this neoliberal framework, 'responsibilization strategies' are deployed indirectly through non-state agencies to bring about the desired pro-social changes on behalf of the individual. Social services, such as those that help youth, can become implicated in these responsibilization strategies by functioning at an arms-length from government and implementing programs based on the criteria of targeting 'at-risk' youth in order to qualify for funding. In this way, youth-serving agencies may be contributing to the neoliberal construction of youth as 'at-risk.' A governmentality perspective, which is concerned not only with how 'problems' are made 'thinkable,' but also with the techniques or interventions designed to tackle them, is useful in exploring how youth serving agencies both contribute to and resist a neoliberal regime of governance based on risk.

Folk Devils and Moral Panics

Stanley Cohen (1972) coined the term "moral panic" to describe a situation when "a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; [and] ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to…" (Cohen, 1972: 9). According to Cohen, the most recurring types of moral panics have been associated with various forms of youth culture, and subsequently youth, through media

representations, become contemporary "folk devils" blamed for crime and other social ills.

These moral panics create social consequences for youth because they affect the way we understand youth and the difficulties they face, and what the appropriate response should be. In late 19th century Canada, for instance, when thousands of children were sent to Canada from Britain to provide a source of cheap labour, fears heightened about the epidemic of crime that homeless youth or "street urchins" would generate (Tanner, 2001). Although reformers felt that prison for young offenders was counterproductive, and argued for separate penal institutions, their emphasis on saving children from a life of crime led the state to become increasingly inclined "to intervene on behalf of all problem children, irrespective of whether they had committed an illegal act" (Tanner, 2001: 27). Whereas fear of street youth resulted in the perception of youth as being especially prone to deviant behaviour, the emphasis on reform allowed for increased interventions into the lives of youth who were considered "pre-delinquents": street children, children from broken homes, and those from orphanages. As Julian Tanner writes, "The future course of juvenile justice legislation in Canada, as elsewhere, was predicated on expansive assumptions about what constituted 'delinquent behaviour'" (Tanner, 2001: 27).

The panic surrounding the fear of youth as harbingers of crime influenced both the way troubled youth were understood (as criminal or pre-criminal), and what was understood to be the appropriate response (increased legislation and criminalization). The once-used term "juvenile delinquent" captures this move by denoting that there is something different about the wrongdoings of the youth or juvenile that requires special

consideration, and that the problem lies in the individual youth who is understood as delinquent or dysfunctional within the corresponding functional society. In other words, "the criminological canons depict delinquency as a text located in the body of the juvenile. Laws, practices, and policies respond to trouble as an autonomous object with a system of propositions" (Visano, 1996: 71). Youth, through the production of this discourse, become "Other"—something separate from "us"—and imbued with associations of danger. Through statistics, images, corporate power, and individualism, the discourse of delinquency becomes "indistinguishable from forms of representations of youth" (Visano, 1996: 72).

We are far from relegating moral panics about youth to the annals of history. The construction of youth as self-seeking, out of control, and in danger of undermining the stability of society continues today within our institutions (such as the media and criminal justice system), and influences the public's response by making it easy for the average citizen to call for harsh justice (Schissel 1997). For example, according to Jim Hackler, "despite very low levels of lethal violence in schools, the media hype and the 'violence' crisis has led to cuts in after-school programs, police officers in schools, and the expulsion of students for minor acts of violence" (Hackler, 2005: 197 cited in Minaker & Hogeveen, 2009: 7). The depiction of youth as folk devil or "Other" contributed to the success of punishment-based lobbies because these constructions portray youth as people unlike the rest of society, generating fear of this population (Schissel, 1997). Thus, understanding discursive constructions of youth is vital for understanding how this population is governed.

The Problematization of Youth

Studying reactions to troubled youth is as important as studying the actions of this group. Indeed, some theorists counter the common sense notion that reactions to youth are based on their actions through a transactional approach that looks at the category of troubled youth as a social construction; as a product of social activities. Delinquency is seen to be a problem because it has been defined or labelled as such (Cohen, 1972: 12). In this framework, the reaction, or labelling of youth, comes before the deviant behaviour, and indeed allows for youth's behaviour to be understood as deviant or not. In fact, terms like 'deviant' are viewed sceptically and proponents ask, "deviant to whom?" or "deviant from what?" This is not to say that there isn't evidence of the deviant acts in question, or that the persons in question may consciously partake in deviant acts, but, as Cohen warns, this "should not lead us to assume that deviance is the intrinsic property of an actor nor a quality possessed by an actor" (1972: 12). Cohen quotes Howard Becker in explaining that,

> …. [D]eviance is created by society. I do not mean this in the way that it is ordinarily understood, in which the causes of deviance are located in the social situation of the deviant or in 'social factors' which prompt his action. I mean, rather, that *social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance* and by applying those rules to particular persons and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is *not* a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to the 'offender'. The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label. (Becker 1963: 9, cited in Cohen 1972: 12-13)

Opposed to the notion that deviance leads to social control, Cohen (1972: 15) states, "I have come to believe that the reverse idea, i.e. social control leads to deviance, is equally

tenable and the potentially richer premise for studying deviance in modern society." In this regard, while the media may offer the most obvious depictions of delinquent youth, it is important to explore the ways in which other social bodies are invested in particular constructions of youth, or segments of youth culture.

Australian sociologist Judith Bessant (1995) has researched the political and cultural dimensions behind constructions of youth, exploring the 'discovery' of an emergent 'juvenile underclass' after decades of major economic restructuring in Australia that resulted in increased unemployment and social dislocation. Her research 'brackets' the question of empirical truth claims regarding the material impact on young people's lives and takes as her focus how "claims made about certain 'types' of people may bear the marks of the socio-political conditions under which those claims were produced" (Bessant, 1995: 33). In this regard, discourses of youth rely on "complex configurations within culture, law and the political economy" (Visano, 1996: 71) to create certain constructions of youth.

Bessant's focus on the construction of youth as an underclass allows for an exploration of how these representations affect forms of governance over this 'problem population,' since policing 'the underclass' is reliant on certain perceptions of the poor or of youth. The result, according to Bessant (1995: 45), is that, "whatever the perspective of policy prescription (whether it be in support of more laissez-faire or increased state intervention and guardianship by the state and/or the professional), regulation will continue to be the fate of those who fit the description of 'the underclass.' In this sense, the 'problematization of youth' (Kelly, 2000) results in both criminal justice and social policy responses, and thus regulation can be found in the form of criminal justice controls

and programs and interventions aimed at 'helping' troubled youth (Kemshall, 2008: 22). For instance, one result can be the increased surveillance of young people's lives by regulatory authorities (Kelly, 2000).

Welfare Models

In Canada, a variety of social services provide resources to youth within a welfare state regime that can be considered both liberal and social democratic. This designation is based on the work of Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990), whose typology uses the degree of de-commodification and stratification of various welfare regimes to classify contemporary Western welfare states as belonging to one of three 'worlds of welfare capitalism': liberal, social democratic, and conservative. According to Esping-Andersen, the liberal welfare regime embodies laissez-faire capitalist principles, emphasizing the logic of the market and minimal state interference. As a result, social benefits are moderate, are usually means-tested, and have a tendency to be extremely stigmatizing. The primary objective is to deal with existing poverty, not to develop a more egalitarian income structure that would alleviate conditions that create it (Olsen 2002: 73). Since the 1970s, liberal characteristics have been increasingly apparent in North America, largely dismantling the notion of social welfare to create conditions for responsible citizenship (Rose, 1996).

These liberal tendencies have decreased the strength of what Esping-Andersen calls the 'social-democratic model,' which, as an ideal type, shows a strong commitment to full participation in the labour market and universal rights of citizens. "Rather than tolerate a dualism between state and market, between working class and middle class, the

social democrats pursued a welfare state that would promote an equality of the highest standards, not an equality of minimal needs as was pursued elsewhere" (Esping-Andersen 1990: 27). While transfers are low compared to the liberal regime, the social democratic regime is characterized by a wide range of universal public services, including childcare, health care, retraining programs, housing programs, and other services for specific groups (Olsen 2002: 76). The promotion of equality through social provisions at all levels is seen as a vital part of the social-democratic composition. Although Canada has never represented a perfect model of social democratic welfare regime, these social democratic aspects of welfare provision have come under increasing attack in neoliberal times, resulting in a shift in focus off the needs of youth and onto the prevention of crime and management of risk.

The Discourse of 'Risk'

In the past two decades one of the most pervasive discourses to emerge regarding youth centres on the notion of 'risk.' The description of children and youth as "at risk" has gained widespread currency across a variety of disciplines (Wotherspoon & Schissel 2001; Bessant 2001), including education, health, and law, and within the criminal justice system and social services. The notion of 'risk' has supplanted older categories of 'delinquency' and 'maladjustment' that were once foundational to the sociology of deviance (Bessant, 2001). Yet, whereas the terms delinquency, maladjustment, and deviancy are more readily interpreted as negative, identifying youth as 'at-risk' implies a desire to protect youth from harm, from whatever is posing a risk to them.

As allocating aid requires knowledge of what ails youth, this designation is often accompanied by the evaluation of statistical and demographic markers of a variety of social ills that make marginalized or disadvantaged youth 'at risk.' The provision of resources, services, and opportunities to succeed to children and youth are determined through these evaluations, tailoring the treatment to the risk (Wotherspoon & Schissel, 2001). Because it can be interpreted in so many ways, and can apply to so many circumstances, actions, and behaviours, 'risk' has become a categorization that now enjoys common sense status for social scientists, policy makers, and practitioners alike:

> It has become part of the contemporary common sense that leaving school 'early', living in certain family arrangements and having a particular socio-economic or ethnic background put a young person 'at risk' of various other social ills like unemployment, crime, suicide, homelessness, substance abuse and pregnancy. (Bessant, 2001: 31)

Indeed, since 'risk indicators' are almost unlimited, the reach of risk categories can be extensive.

Yet, this 'new' classification of 'at-risk' youth, Bessant (2001: 32) argues, offers little in the way of a new analysis as the "methodologies, epistemological assumptions and politics of governance inherent in the older projects remain the same." Despite the apparent social welfare motivations of helping this disadvantaged population, the at-risk discourse comes with a program of treatment aimed at the responsibilization of youth in their own risk management. In other words, youth are encouraged individually to embrace pro-social behaviours that help to mitigate their adverse circumstances (Hannah-Moffat, 2005), leaving broader social causes unaddressed. In addition, an individualization of risk in general is called for that demands greater intervention on

behalf of parents, schools, and communities, resulting in a decentralized state response to underlying social causes of crime (Muncie, 2009). This shift is representative of a larger economic, political, and social movement within the past two decades away from a social democratic welfare model and towards a model of neoliberal governance associated with market freedom, flexible regulation, and responsibilization (Muncie, 2009).

Neoliberalism

While the liberal welfare state has always privileged individual freedom and the market over collectivist mentalities, the past two decades have increasingly witnessed the effects of neoliberalism on state governance models of youth and youth agencies. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, North America, as in other industrialized nations such as the United Kingdom and Australia, witnessed a re-assertion of market discipline that rejected many of the solidaristic premises of the welfare state—including its concern for social equality, social security, and social justice—in favour of "market fundamentalism and an unquestioning faith in the value of competition, enterprise, and incentives" (Garland, 2001: 99). In Canada, for example, there have been efforts to align social and economic policies with one another and with conceptions of what liberal market economies require in order to remain competitive internationally (Teeple, 2000). In parallel, there has been a move away from welfare programmes towards welfare-to-work incentives (Evans, 1995). For youth, federal financial supports have been located under the umbrella of the Youth Employment Strategy (YES), the primary goal of which has been 'to support Canadian youth as they move into the world of work' (Klodawsky, Aubry, and Farrell 2006). The result has been a widening of inequalities and a structure of incentives that encourage the

rich to work by making them richer, and compel the poor to work by making them poorer (Garland, 2001). In this way, the consequences of neoliberal economic policies have left many already financially disadvantaged inner-city residents in a precarious position (Wacquant, 2007).

In response to such challenges, neoliberal politicians have devised a number of strategies to contain and regulate potential negative effects of these spaces on the larger "economic engine" of the city. For example, to capture the contours of this emergent regulatory regime, David Garland identifies how social issues, such as high crime rates, have become accepted as a normal social fact:

> Despite the fact that crime has a very uneven social distribution, and high risks of victimization are disproportionately concentrated in the poorest urban districts, crime is now widely experienced as a prominent fact of modern life. For most people, and especially for those living in cities and suburbs, crime is no longer an aberration or an unexpected, abnormal event. Instead, the threat of crime has become part of modern consciousness, a standing possibility that is constantly to be 'kept in mind'. Crime has come to be regarded as an everyday risk that must be routinely assessed and managed in much the same way that we have come to deal with road traffic—another mortal danger that has become a normal feature of the modern landscape. (2001: 106)

What has developed is a 'risk society' that is increasingly preoccupied with the future and safety (Giddens, 1999: 3). Change and threat have now been tamed, as Ulrich Beck (1992) suggests, by the presumption that a globalizing restructuring social formation needs to manage the multiplicity of risks it now confronts.

In this sense, in addition to being an economic doctrine giving supremacy to free markets, neoliberalism also acts as a political ideology which can be applied to all manner of governance issues (Hartman, 2005: 59). Nikolas Rose (1996) argues that neoliberal governance rationalities are characterized by: a reliance on social science as

the knowledge base for government; the use of technologies of rule which create self-governing, self-provisioning individuals; the production of autonomous subjects which is achieved by governing at a distance through the use of experts; and the continual questioning of the legitimacy and efficiency of government. These characteristics complement Richard Ericson's (2007) description of social regulation under neoliberalism in which he notes an emphasis on risk and prevention that shifts greater responsibility toward individuals and other self-governing entities. Risk works within this system of governance as a technology since it is based on the research and knowledge of experts and acts to shift the responsibility of social issues onto individual management, thus distancing the role of government from issues of inequality and injustice.

Within this system, various groups—such as youth—are profiled and regarded as 'at risk,' and social problems associated with these populations become viewed as calculable, avoidable, and/or governable risks (Hannah-Moffat: 2005). Since the causes of these risks become a taken-for-granted aspect of the social landscape (Garland, 2001), solutions are geared towards the outcomes of risk, for which each individual is personally responsible. The causes of risk, even if identified, are presumed static in nature and thus individuals must do what they can to protect themselves from the outcomes these risks present. In this way, individuals are more than simply categorized as belonging to risk cohorts (Feeley and Simon, 1992 and 1994); they are viewed as having a personal set of risks and needs that must be individually addressed (Hannah-Moffat: 2005). For example, if poverty is taken for granted, then solutions would be geared towards the risks poverty presents; for youth, these might include dropping out of school, joining gangs, or

contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Individuals must make choices that mitigate these risks, such as getting tutoring support, avoiding certain groups, or having safe sex, while the economic and political policies that have driven rates of unemployment up and social assistance rates down remain untouched.

Consistent with liberal notions of economic freedom and small government, this individualizing of risk goes hand in hand with an off-loading of state responsibility for the dangers found in society. These risks must now be 'governed at a distance' (Rose 1996) within neoliberal societies that have displaced government from its central role in managing social welfare. While some theorists argue that risk and connected strategies are replacing welfare strategies (Garland, 2001), others argue that we are observing 'mixed models of governance' or a 'hybrid formation' whereby risk is combined with welfarist policy orientations (O'Malley, 1999). While not abolished, welfare regimes are reshaped into new forms governed by this neoliberal rationality (Hartman, 2005), seen for instance in "responsibilization strategies" (Garland, 1996: 452) that involve acting indirectly through non-state agencies and organizations. These strategies entail a series of new techniques and methods "whereby the state seeks to bring about action on the part of private agencies and individuals—either by *stimulating new forms of behaviour* or by *stopping established habits*" (emphasis in the original; Riley & Mayhew, 1980 cited in Hannah-Moffat, 2001: 165).

The result is the dual effect of, on the one hand, social services being shifted from government onto private agencies, public/private partnerships, or community and not-for-profit agencies, all of whom must now compete for funding and resources within a neoliberal strategy of marketization and entrepreneurialism (Coleman 2003: 22) and, on

the other hand, a redirected emphasis onto changing the behaviours of the individual to mitigate the dangers of the risk society. In this way, social services, such as those that help youth, become implicated in these responsibilization strategies through constructing youth as at risk.

Youth as Risk Subjects

Youth, as a cohort, occupy a specific place within this risk discourse. Bessant (1999), in a discussion of youth in Australia, links government restructuring and globalization to the increasing difficulties youth experience, and identifies the disintegration of the full-time youth labour market through government deregulation as a factor in producing increasing inequality and poverty. Although youth constitute a population already experiencing disproportionate levels of poverty, disempowerment, vulnerability, and victimization (Muncie, 2009), public anxieties about young people pertaining to unemployment, homelessness, suicides, juvenile delinquency, and drug addiction have been growing. In order to maintain support for the neoliberal free market sensibilities that lead to this increased marginalization of youth, these anxieties need to be directed away from government deregulation and onto youth themselves, who are constructed as a problem population. Thus the decline in the ability of nation states to deliver protection, regulation, and support has "major repercussions for how young people are conceptualized—as vulnerable or as a threat—and how they should be governed" (Muncie, 2009).

Risk discourse, with its individualized focus, allows these anxieties to be directed at certain 'crime problems,' and makes it clear that "the risk referred to 'targets' one

specific section of the population, namely, urban young people who offend" (Bessant, 2002: 41). Like earlier forms of governance over youth deviancy that justified interventions for the protection of youth, risk discourse has the capacity to embrace a wide youth population since youth need not have actually offended to be governed; they need only to be at risk of doing so (Bessant, 2001). Thus, troubled youth are automatically positioned as potential criminals in need of interventions to mitigate this possibility. Meanwhile the 'risks' associated with government mismanagement—the collapse of the youth labour market, and the failure of governments and private elites to invest in social and physical infrastructure—are dropped from the public agenda.

The individualized focus of risk discourses allows youth to become what Kelly Hannah-Moffat (2005) calls "transformative risk subjects," which means that youth are considered able to transform if they, with the help of social services, make the choice to change. Youth are subject to programming designed to correct or circumscribe risk factors, allowing the individual to embrace "pro-social" values. This transformative process, though, is not something that happens at a political or economic level, but rather youth must take responsibility for their own change, although family, community, and schools may be called upon to help youth make these positive choices. Thus, the individualization of risk management for youth is underpinned by the concept of responsibilization, whereby individual 'offenders,' families, and communities are encouraged to face up to their own responsibilities to reduce the risk of criminal or dangerous behaviours (Muncie, 2009). So, for example, unemployment—and the risks associated with it—are managed through job training or skill development, rather than by

addressing the processes of free trade and globalization that result in massive local job losses.

In contrast to a system of external discipline in which youth are punished for criminal activity, the widening network of responsibilization means that governance is extended through 'informal social controls' into almost all areas of a youth's life, especially those who are deemed 'at risk.' Indeed, Bessant points out that while the identification of various at-risk populations is closely linked to the policing of the social problems through the community, the schools, and the family, there have also been a range of preventative programs designed to prevent youth unemployment, homelessness, juvenile crime, and youth suicide (Bessant, 2001: 34). These preventative and interventionist programs allow for an increased network of people who have access to, and potentially control over, this population through what appear to be welfare strategies. Community responsibilization strategies move beyond governments acting upon crime directly through state agencies, towards the involvement of non-state agencies (Garland, 1996). In this regard, these processes of responsibilization lie at the centre of a new mode of youth governance based on a notion of 'risk' that extends past the processes of criminal punishment.

Youth-serving agencies play a key role in this emerging system of governance that reaches beyond state authorities and beyond criminal justice responses. For example, Graeme Withers and Margaret Batten's (1995) review of the at-risk literature identifies two central and often competing intentions within at-risk discourses. The first is a "humanistic intention" that structures the identification and intervention processes enabled by constructing youth-at-risk. This intention is grounded in concerns about

harm, danger, care, and support for those young people who might be 'at risk.' The second is an "economic intention" that legitimates these attempts to regulate youthful identities. This intention foregrounds the costs and the benefits—to young people and families, but primarily to communities and the nation—of identifying risk factors and populations-at-risk, and of mobilizing certain interventions on the basis of these identifications (Kelly, 2000: 464-465). While the primary motivation of these agencies is to care for youth, funders often require the implementation of programming that addresses issues of crime prevention and intervention for youth.

Other theorists have also found that the risk discourse is able to support what may appear to be conflicting agendas of welfarist intentions and discipline. Hannah-Moffat (2005: 30) argues that "risk knowledges are fluid and flexible and capable of supporting a range of culturally contingent penal strategies." For example, she studies the way in which the concept of 'need' is fused with risk in a way that is amenable to targeted therapeutic interventions. Arguably, this 'mixed model of governance' can be seen working in the community service agencies that aim to meet the needs of youth, yet are also offering crime prevention or intervention programming. As such, it is important to study the ways in which "particular constructions of risk are mediated, resisted, and re-configured by experts and practitioners" (Hannah-Moffat, 2005: 31). In these terms, it is important in studying the governance of youth to understand how youth serving agencies contribute to the construction of youth using the at risk discourses.

Governmentality

The way in which neoliberal notions of risk open new avenues of governance of youth can best be understood using the concept of 'governmentality' (Foucault, 1991c). A governmentality perspective recognizes that power relations are not just confined to the power that the state possesses, nor are they confined to the power of citizens to influence their governors. Power is everywhere, and all forms of power and governance are linked discursively. This interplay in power relations makes it difficult for governments to govern in a solely top-down fashion because both state and non-state entities participate in legislation and policy initiatives. This framework opens a space from which to explore the ways in which social service agencies may contribute to a regime of governance of youth through the risk discourse, even while their intention is to help, and provide resources to, youth.

Governmentality studies seek to understand the way individuals are governed and govern themselves and how power and knowledge are exercised (Parr, 2009). Governmentality is first concerned with how we *think* about governing; "the discursive aspect of this is important because it involves the '*problematization*' of certain conduct and populations" (2009: 365). According to Rose (1996), as political rationalities, governmentalities are to be analyzed as practices that create these schemata for representing reality.

> …. [P]olitical rationalities have an *epistemological* character, in that they embody particular conceptions of the objects to be governed—nation, population, economy, society, community—and the subjects to be governed—citizens, subjects, individuals. And they deploy a certain *style of reasoning*: language here understood as itself a set of "intellectual techniques" for rendering reality thinkable and practicable, and

> constituting domains that are amenable – or not amenable- to reformatory intervention. (Rose, 1996: 42, italics in original)

Framing youth as 'at risk' allows us to problematize the conduct of this population in a way that makes it knowable within a certain framework, namely, through the individualization of this 'problem.' Following Michel Foucault's analysis, power is thus a productive concept; it is not simply repressive. Power is not simply exerted on those who disobey or resist; instead, it produces both what is to be understood as resistance and disobedience and what is the prescribed treatment (Foucault, 1984).

Yet, as Rose (1990) identifies, governmentality is concerned not only with forms of representation that mark out discursively the field within which 'problems' are made 'thinkable,' but also with the techniques or interventions designed to tackle it. According to Foucault (1991b: 75), "to analyze 'regimes of practices' means to analyze programmes of conduct which have both prescriptive effects regarding what is to be done (effects of 'jurisdiction'), and codifying effects regarding what is to be known (effects of 'verification')." Within this framework of analysis, social service agencies as regimes of practices that aim to provide resources to an at-risk youth population also contribute to a larger project of verification, by 'knowing' youth in a particular way, and prescription, by 'treating' youth based on this understanding. The discourse of risk informs this programme of conduct in that it individualizes the troubles youth face and prescribes a responsibilization strategy as the solution.

Governmental rationalities such as risk should also be studied in the context of *technologies of government*, which allow us to govern and to be governed (Rose, 1996).

> As an array of *technologies of government*, governmentality is to be analyzed in terms of strategies, techniques and procedures through which

> different authorities seek to enact programmes of government in relation to the materials and forces to hand and the resistances and oppositions anticipated or encountered. Hence, this is not a matter of the implementation of idealized schemata in the real by an act of will, but of the complex assemblage of diverse forces (legal, architectural, professional, administrative, financial, judgmental), techniques (notation, computation, calculation, examination, evaluation), devices (surveys and charts, systems of training, building forms) that promise to regulate decisions and actions of individuals, groups, organizations in relation to authoritative criteria. (Rose, 1996: 42)

Risk, as a rationality of government that individualizes and responsibilizes, relies on technologies that predict and assess this risk, calling for a complex assemblage of administrative techniques such as the examination and calculation of risk, and the devices such as surveys and systems of training that aim to document the regulation of identified risk. The governmentality framework, through its focus on power/knowledge relations within the mechanisms and strategies of discipline and normalization (Rose, 1999), can also help to shed light on how interventionist practices based on evaluations of risk allow for the collection of data on at-risk youth, contributing to the research on and legitimizing the existence of a problem population based on this construction.

Moments of Resistance

While it is important to analyze how the rise of neoliberal notions of risk, individualism, and responsibilization enable the governance of youth, it is also important to look for and identify inconsistencies or moments of resistance to these concepts and political regime. This analysis is consistent with work done by Michel de Certeau (1984) who points out that it is important to look at the way language, ideas, and symbols are re-appropriated in everyday situations since in the activity of re-use lies an abundance of opportunities to subvert official representations or strategies. Failing to study this level of practice can

result in missing "tactical" activities that lie hidden behind seemingly conformist actions. For the purposes of the present study, knowing how the idea of risk is both used and understood in the everyday practices of youth workers will enhance our understanding of the construction of youth within this framework.

A governmentality studies analytic (Rose, 1996) can also help to locate instances of resistance within systems of governance because it places discourse within a space of complex and contingent relations rather than in a totality governed by a uniform wholeness. It is the operation of webs of power that enables certain knowledge to be produced and known, rather than a unified exertion of power from above (Foucault, 1984). Foucault cautions that resistance does not necessarily suggest a lack of control; rather, he employs a relational model of power in which power relationships depend on resistance and "points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network" (Foucault, 1990: 95). Yet, Foucault does not stipulate that a model of resistance is "always passive or doomed to perpetual defeat" (Foucault 1990: 96). Instead, both power and resistance are inseparable opposites that are irregularly distributed and spread over time and space at varying degrees. Rather than considering resistance as a "radical rupture," Foucault explains that

> .... more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds. (1990: 96)

Thus, resistance is not futile; it is simply an ever-shifting aspect of power. Governmentality can help to identify the ways in which resistances are implicated within a network of power by revealing the effects of resistance on the lives of youth. In other

words, it is not enough to assume resistance is the defeat of power; it is important to analyze the relational mechanisms of power and resistance in localized settings.

Concluding Remarks

Thus, we can see that the emergence of the discourse of 'at-risk youth' is more than simply a linguistic shift; it denotes a change in the way youth are constructed as 'folk devils' or a problem population. The rise in poverty, crime, and violence that marginalized youth experience becomes framed as a problem that must be managed individually and youth, through social services operating at an arms-length from government, are encouraged to take responsibility for their own risk management that can contribute to both their own success and to the safety and security of society.

Yet, as governmentality theorists insist, power needs to be analyzed locally and for its inconsistencies and irregularities, rather than within a top down model of state control. In this sense, in order to determine the effects that the term 'at-risk' has had on the way service provision for youth is allocated and how this term contributes to a program of governance, it is important to first ask how the understanding of youth is being constructed by youth service workers on the ground. Does risk enter into the construction of troubled youth by youth-serving agency workers? Does this construction contribute to a regime of governance in line with neoliberal notions of individualization and responsibilization associated with the risk discourse?

CHAPTER TWO
METHODOLOGY

The data for this thesis are drawn from 25 qualitative interviews conducted with youth agency service providers in Winnipeg, Manitoba. These data are derived from a study conducted as part of the Manitoba Research Alliance SSHRC/CURA research project, "Transforming Aboriginal and Inner-city Communities" and in collaboration with the Coalition of Community-Based Youth Serving Agencies (CCBYSA). The CCBYSA is an advocacy group of 18 after-school and community-based agencies that work to support at-risk and marginalized youth in Winnipeg.[1]

The Study Sample

Winnipeg has a wide variety of youth serving agencies, and the 25 respondents interviewed talked about the various programs their agencies offer troubled youth. The ways in which agencies respond to the issues youth face are as diverse as the issues themselves, and all provide a variety of activities, programs, and projects. Many provide regularly scheduled after-school drop-in programs that offer a safe place for youth to go to spend time with positive mentors and engage in a wide range of recreational activities, including sports, art, cooking, and dancing. Many also aim to provide necessities to meet nutritional, physical, and mental health needs; for some, this can entail simply providing a place to shower—something most people take for granted. Within these agencies there are programs that range from supporting the needs of young parents to helping youth with

[1] See Appendix 1

addictions to providing language or homework tutoring. All agencies focus on the safety of youth, and programs could include emergency shelter, transitional housing, or transportation to ensure that youth make it home safely at night. Directed skills training programs, and leadership and community involvement initiatives help to present the youth with employment opportunities, while alternative schooling and scholarship programs are in place to help assist in finishing and furthering education. Additionally, some agencies target gang-affiliated youth and/or take a crime prevention role. Some agencies also offer a wide diversity in cultural programming that allows youth to connect with their heritage and maintain an involvement in traditional customs, beliefs, and language.

Respondents for this study include both employees involved in running the programs offered by an agency and those occupying administrative positions within the organization. All of the respondents are over the age of 18; 12 are female and 13 are male. Most of the respondents had many years experience in working with youth, some as long as 30 years or more. Only three respondents had less than five years experience in youth-serving agencies. These experiences range from designing and implementing the programs, working as program managers in charge of running recreational programs (including sports, cooking or arts); skill development programs (including building resumes, learning trades or technical skills, or developing artistic and musical talents); and educational programs (including language development, homework clubs, and gang awareness). Some respondents act as mentors for youth, working closely alongside their mentee for long periods of structured time, while others interact in a less structured way

with youth through organizing and running drop-in programs in which youth come and go as often as they wish.

The Interviews

Consent in writing was obtained from each respondent before the approximately hour-long, semi-structured interview.[2] The 25 interviews took place between November, 2009 and January, 2010 and were conducted at the agencies where the respondents worked. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed before being analysed.

The interviews[3] were designed to address two main areas: 1. to map out the troubles confronting at-risk and marginalized youth in Winnipeg; and 2. to uncover the difficulties encountered by youth-serving agencies in their efforts to support youth and address these troubles. With regard to the present study, the interviews also included questions designed to assess how respondents conceptualize risk and need, such as "Would you say that these youth are "high-risk"?" and "How do you understand that term?" Similarly, an understanding of the challenges these service providers face within the welfare model and neoliberalism was sought through questions such as, "What would you say are the current trends in what funding agencies want to see in organizations that help youth?" My aim was to gather from the interviews an understanding of how youth service providers are constructing youth. To what extent does risk enter into this construction, and what implications does this construction have for the care and treatment of youth? To do so I utilized the method of discourse analysis.

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[2] See Appendix 2

[3] For full interview schedule, see Appendix 3

Discourse Analysis

One of the basic assumptions of discourse analysis is that discourses exist within a wider sociocultural context. Language users construct a representation not only of the text but also of the social context, and these two events interact (Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). In this view, discourse "refers both to the production of knowledge through language and representations and to the way the knowledge is institutionalized, shaping social practices and setting new practices into play" (du Gay, 1996: 43). As such, this method of analysis helps to situate the discourse concerning troubled youth in its social and historical background, to show how terms such as 'at risk' connect to larger social processes, especially in terms of how they produce particular kinds of knowledge. Discourse analysis situates communicative acts within their broader social context in a way that allows for an analysis of both the intended and embedded meanings that shape the ways in which the respondents think the social world (Gee, 2005: xii). In this regard, I looked for information from the interviews that answers the question: when youth are described as 'at risk,' what trajectories of knowledge does this conception rely on, either politically or socially, and what purchase does it have in justifying particular modes of intervention, treatment, or aid?

In addition to using discourse analysis generally, two forms of discourse analysis were employed in order to examine how discourse is used to construct identities or governable subjects: Foucaultian discourse analysis (Diaz-Bone et al., 2007; Cheek, 2004) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; VanDijk, 1997a and 1997b). While Foucaultian discourse analysis looks at how discourse results in the construction of

knowledge at the collective level, helping to determine how people understand the society they live within, it is also useful in studying the impact at an individual level since within this model, individuals, as subjects, are discursively constructed and constituted (Diaz et al., 2007). This enables both an analysis of the ways in which discourses are embedded in social knowledges, and how these knowledges work to construct identities. Indeed, Foucault declared, "discourse is the power which is to be seized" (Foucault, 1984: 110). This is an important aspect of the research since understanding how the construction of youth as 'at risk' contributes to their governance is a primary research goal. In this way, Foucaultian discourse analysis guides my interpretation of the data towards understanding how the collective identity of youth is constructed through notions of 'risk.'

In line with Foucaultian Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis allows us to pinpoint the everyday manifestations and displays of social problems in communication and interaction. Within this framework, "discourse plays a crucial role in ideological formulations of inequality in their communicative reproduction, in the social and political decision procedures, and in the institutional management and representation of issues" (Van Dijk, 1985). Through the use of Critical Discourse Analysis it is possible to map the connections between social actors' or groups' linguistic choices and the broader social contexts in which the texts analysed are formulated. For example, the linguistic choice to identify troubled youth as 'at-risk' connects to the broader neoliberal agenda of individualism and responsibilization. Studies of this nature seek to highlight how certain discourses naturalize social injustice by camouflaging it (see, for example, Fairclough, 2001)

Yet, it is important to note that Critical Discourse Analysis also expands on the Foucaultian perspective by insisting that discourses are never completely cohesive, and are therefore never able to totally determine social reality (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004). Actors are commonly embedded in multiple discourses, providing a discursive space in which the actor can play one discourse against another or draw on multiple discourses (Fairclough, 1995). So while emphasizing the reproduction of power relationships, this method also allows for a contradictory interpretation of the discursive field that leaves room for resistance and change (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004).

Using Critical Discourse Analysis allows for the location of multiple meanings in the discourse of risk. For example, it enables a more subtle interpretation of the data in cases where respondents may use the idea of 'risk' in an official context but resist its meaning on an everyday level of practice. This can include resistance from both those who are positions of authority, such as, in this study, youth-serving agency workers, or from those who are subject to discipline, such as the youth themselves. This is an important level of analysis because it changes the construction of youth identities 'on the ground' compared to the official discourse, and thus can have an impact at the level of treatment and governance that may not be immediately visible.

In analysing the interview transcripts, therefore, close attention was paid to the ways respondents discussed the implicit or explicit notion of risk in their descriptions of youth. This means that terms like 'at-risk' were looked for, as well as how the idea of risk may be embedded in their descriptions of the troubles youth face. For example, a respondent may talk about the crime control aspects of the agency's service without actually mentioning risk; yet, this notion is implied in the idea that the youth are 'at risk'

of partaking in criminal behaviour if this service wasn't provided. This is in contrast to discussing youth services in a way that implies the rights, needs, and wellbeing of the youth as the main goals of the services provided. I also looked for ways in which the risk discourse may be used, but not practiced. In other words, youth-serving agency staff may use the words 'at risk' but not treat youth in accordance with the neoliberal implications of the term.

Concluding Remarks

Interviewing youth-serving agency staff provides a window into the ways in which youth are being constructed. These workers can offer a diverse perspective on the troubles youth face and the ways to best address these troubles. Unlike government representatives who must follow a party line, youth-serving agency staff have the ability to reflect on the ways risk management is both promoted by funders and used on the ground.

The use of a discourse analysis, especially one located within the framework of governmentality, encourages the acknowledgement that no single construction of 'at-risk youth' will emerge. Instead, this method acknowledges that discourse can have both positive and negative outcomes for this population, and that aid and governance can intersect with, and deflect from, each other. Identifying factors that put youth 'at risk' can help enable access to resources and aid beneficial to their well being, but this process can also contribute to increased governance of youth, often simultaneously. Since the notion of 'at-risk youth' is now a common framework for understanding the issue of troubled youth, it is important to study what this term means to those who work on the

front lines of allocating aid. Using a governmentality framework, therefore, the aim is to reveal the discourse used to construct 'at-risk youth' in terms of the competing and intersecting networks of power and governance that this term enables. Is risk here being used, as Rose describes, as a device through which individuals are created who "do not need to be governed by others, but will govern themselves, master themselves, care for themselves" (Rose 1996: 45)? To answer this question, we need to look more closely at the practices in everyday treatment of youth.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CONSTRUCTION OF 'AT-RISK YOUTH'

Risk has become a tool for understanding human relations both in the social science disciplines—including sociology, psychology, and criminology—and in the practice of human service professionals working directly with individuals (Bessant, 2007). This seems to have been particularly true of agencies working with youth, both in terms of those that provide criminal justice services (Garland, 2001) and those that provide care and aid (Bessant, 2007). As mentioned earlier, theorists note that the notion of 'at risk' has now replaced older categories of understanding youth crime such as 'delinquent,' 'pathological,' 'maladjusted,' and even 'criminal,' while 'risk indicators,' 'risk reduction,' and 'risk management' (Bessant, 2007: 60) have come to define the work previously considered youth care, aid, and assistance.

This discursive shift is important because the way we understand youth has an impact on how we treat them. From a governmentality perspective, "before power can be exercised, its objects need to be defined and boundaries established" (Parr, 2009: 365). Thus, calling youth 'at risk' defines or constructs youth in a particular way through the "twin processes" (Gray 2009: 443) of the individualization of risk and the responsibilization of youth embedded in the discourse through neoliberal rationalities of governance, in which the negotiation of risk is seen to be the responsibility of youth individually, while the structural factors that severely restrict their choices are ignored (Gray 2009: 447). Studying how workers in youth serving agencies use and understand the term risk is an important step in the analysis of how youth are governed through actuarial technologies of control. Since actuarial technologies of social control are

representative of a dispersed and diffused form of the exercise of power, it is necessary to explore how they work within local contexts, rather than from the assumption of unilinear development (O'Malley 1996: 192).

This chapter asks: how do youth serving agencies in Winnipeg use the notion of 'risk,' and how does this usage contribute to the construction of youth? I begin by exploring the issue of 'understanding risk,' that is, how familiar agency workers are with the concept of 'risk' and how risk enters into the understanding of the youth they work with, as well as into the design and implementation of programming. What do agency workers see as the causes of risk in the lives of youth, and what do they understand youth to be 'at risk' of? What impact does the risk discourse have on the way the needs of youth are understood and the treatment or resources youth are offered? I also examine the issue of 'risk in practice,' that is, how youth serving agency workers act to resist the construction of youth as responsible for the troubles they face by emphasizing the structural and systemic causes of these troubles. In doing so, I draw upon Certeau's analytical framework that looks at how products from the dominant order, including discourses, ideas, and services, can be co-opted in their re-use to represent invisible forms of resistance that work in subtle, everyday ways. As well, I explore the ways in which youth are also active in the construction of youth as 'at-risk.'

Understanding Risk

The interviews with youth-serving agency workers in Winnipeg demonstrate that they are readily familiar with the notion of 'at-risk youth' and routinely identified that their programs were designed to target youth who were 'at-risk.' For example, one respondent

stated, “we work with at-risk youth for gang involvement, like, youth at-risk or who are already entrenched in gang lifestyles or activities.” Similarly, this respondent identifies that his program

> is aimed at high risk youth. That they think are, I guess, easy targets for gangs, maybe they have problems at home with their parents drinking or something like that. Or they just had a hard life at home and they’re basically on the street kind of thing.

Official descriptions of programs for youth often included this description of targeting ‘at-risk’ youth, or specifically youth who are ‘at-risk’ of joining gangs. When asked, agency workers could also identify *which* youth they felt are at risk.

> Any kid who is on the street in my mind is at risk of something bad. I see that as high risk. I mean, high risk means a danger to themselves or others. High risk can mean that they’re high risk in terms of vulnerability of exploitation of any kind. Depending on who is saying the term ‘high risk,’ we also have level fives which are the most behaviourally out of control, actually there’s level seven and that’s when mental health kicks in.

This respondent uses both a more general interpretation of risk (“any kid who is on the street”) and technical definitions based on risk evaluations measures (levels of risk), which shows both a common sense and official understanding of ‘at-risk’ youth.

Although categories of what caused youth to be at risk and what harms ‘at-risk’ youth face were far from distinct, certain themes did emerge from the interviews in terms of risk factors and risk outcomes or, in other words, what *put* youth at risk, and what it was they were at risk *of*.

The Causes of Risk

Since assessing risk relies on determining factors associated with the individual, identifying who is 'at risk' is synonymous with risk factors, or the causes of risk. Three main themes emerged from the interviews conducted with youth agency workers in relation to the causes of risk: poverty, neighbourhood, and home life. Racial and ethnic characteristics, such as being Aboriginal or a newcomer were also commonly mentioned but were more likely to be identified as a reason youth faced certain difficulties, rather than as an explicit risk factor. This may simply be a semantic distinction in a political climate sensitive to racial, ethnic, and cultural issues, and in a social climate that allows ethnicity to be subsumed under poverty. So, while there was overlap between all these categories, poverty, neighbourhood, and home life were most commonly mentioned as the main conditions that put youth at risk of other social harms. For example, while this respondent identifies a number of possible causes, poverty ends up being called the common factor.

> It could have been neglect as a kid, could have been sexual abuse, it could have been following in parents' footsteps; they're gang members, they're going to be a gang member. It could be just poverty; poverty is usually the common factor. Poverty and people who have been hurt in the past, that's the common factor.

The focus on poverty also extended risk factors to include the effects of poverty and conditions of living in poverty, as demonstrated by this respondent.

> [Our programs are] for kids that would be considered to be 'at risk' by virtue of the fact that they don't have safe stable housing and so these are the kids that end up being exploited on the street or drawn into gangs because they have those very basic needs of shelter, food, clothing that aren't being met elsewhere.

While this comment perhaps implies that as long as their basic needs are met, not all poor youth are 'at risk,' more commonly the association between poverty and risk was accepted carte blanche.

In fact, risk was often extended to automatically include youth who live in poor areas of the city and, as such, the designation of 'at risk' opens the possibility to encompass youth who are relatively better off, simply by virtue of their location. For instance, in the comment below, this respondent identifies both living in poverty and living in an area affected by poverty as risk factors.

> Kids would be at risk because of where they live, probably poverty would put people at risk. Living in the areas affected by poverty would put people at risk just about automatically.

Many respondents linked risk to particular areas of the city, such as the North End or the inner city. These and other poor areas are associated with fear, danger, crime, and violence that put youth who live there 'at risk.'

> Any kid who is on the street after dark in the inner city is at risk. Sometimes they're at risk in the playground during the day with the teachers all around… The inner city life has changed and there's known sex trade around schools, there's drug dealing, I mean, this is not uncommon and with the gang violence, drive by shootings… Talk to Nancy Spence, Beeper's mom, he was riding his bike as a little kid eight years old, he got gunned down.

While this respondent would not deny the structural and systemic conditions that lead to such a tragic outcome, the discourse re-centres risk and the dangers associated with it as something that can be located geographically. The danger in such a construction is that the antidote becomes avoiding certain places, rather than addressing social policies.

Family or care situations were also identified by agency workers as a main reason youth are at risk. This could be due to a number of problems with caregivers—including

abuse, neglect, and addictions—or again environment, such as safe housing or high rates of mobility. It is important to note, though, that issues in the home can only be separated out as a distinct category from poverty and neighbourhood in theory, since family situations are often negatively affected by poverty, and youth who lack parental support are then faced with the risks associated with spending unsupervised time in certain neighbourhoods. For example, in this next comment, all three factors come into play when the respondent explains what puts youth at risk.

> A lot of peer pressure, in a lot of the neighbourhoods we're working in, there's certainly higher rates of crime in the area and they're more at risk in those areas because of the activity, extracurricular activities, negative activities that are in the neighbourhood, and sometimes parents aren't around as much, either they're working lots and youth need a safe place to hang out like that or their parents aren't generally around.

While this respondent is not blaming parents for neglecting their children, since there is recognition that parents are working extended hours because they can barely survive financially, the troubles youth face are again located within the home and within the neighbourhood—and not within the political or economic realm. The discourse of risk enables this construction by shifting the focus onto the risks associated with particular social circumstances and off of the root causes of these circumstances. Thus, poverty is viewed in terms of the risks it presents, and not as the outcome of a troubled political landscape. Children are 'at risk' because they are left unprotected in a (taken-for-granted) dangerous neighbourhood by parents who struggle against (taken-for-granted) poverty.

While poverty, neighbourhood, and family were explicitly identified as risk factors, ethnic or cultural characteristics were more likely to be discussed by respondents

as troubles or problems youth face, and less likely to be labelled as what puts youth 'at risk.'

> Kids coming from the northern communities and kids coming from other countries, they and their families face a lot of cultural shock. I mean, people coming from Africa, I think that's pretty obvious. The people coming from northern communities, I mean, when you take a look at how we in urban centres identify ourselves, it's basically our employment… In northern communities where there's ninety percent unemployment rate, identity is very, very different… I think that parenting, especially with the Aboriginal population, I think there is a huge impact of the residential school situation that has really affected the capability of some people's ability to parent.

Sometimes demographic and biographical information was often listed side-by-side with 'at risk,' implying the relation between these social markers and risk.

> The common characteristic [of our youth] would be that ninety-nine percent are Aboriginal, and the kids would be predominantly between six and twenty-four that are coming here. They would certainly fit the profile that anybody would want to run on them about being 'at risk.'

While less explicitly stated, ethnicity was considered a 'risk,' since the concern was still that these youth needed extra supports in order to avoid negative outcomes, such as lower educational attainment or unemployment.

Although almost everyone agreed that poverty, the effects of poverty, living in impoverished neighbourhoods, family difficulties, and possibly ethnicity are indicators of risk, the comprehensive list of what could be risk factors was extensive. For example, this respondent includes involvement with police or child welfare agencies as well as emotional states as things that can put a youth at risk.

> [At-risk youth have] either had conflict with the police or Child and Family or riskier lifestyles. I mean, they can be certainly physically at risk…they could be at a risk physically, like, within the family or outside the family as depending on who they connect with. Or by somebody that turns you out or later leaves you to, or forces you to

> do stuff that, you know, or take the blame for something you haven't done but you take the blame for in order to, you know, credibility, to prove yourself, to feel valued, to feel a belonging, so there's that, there's the emotional stuff, you know, 'Where do I belong and what will become of me, what hope is there for me?'

Here even hopelessness can put youth at risk of finding themselves in compromising situations. Other respondents identify physical or sexual abuse, parental neglect, unemployment, disabilities, illness, language barriers, bullying, and racism and discrimination, amongst others, as risk factors.

Bessant (2007) notes that the ambiguity of the risk discourse is problematic because it allows factors that allegedly constitute 'risk' to extend from indicators of specific disadvantage, such as poor or disabled, to indicators that could be common to all youth. The following comment represents a common understanding of risk amongst youth workers: that the risk discourse extends to the category of youth itself, with added emphasis on certain youth.

> I think every youth is at risk, so I don't want to just classify these kids in these communities as 'at risk.' I think there seems to be more factors that can affect them and turn them into negative directions.

As we will see later, this expansion of the risk category was most often representative of the sentiment that all youth need and deserve help, although some more than others. In fact, this expansion was also often used in an attempt to minimize the differences between a standard model of well adjusted (less at-risk) youth and those (at-risk) youth in troubled and impoverished neighbourhoods, which acts to defy the notion of risk by refusing to construct an image of poor youth as recognizably different from wealthier ones.

Yet, despite this intention, the flexibly interpretive aspect of risk allows the net to be cast far enough to include *all* youth to be profiled as 'at risk' while definitively implicating *certain* youth, which makes "corrective responses not just a 'necessity', but a responsible solution [and] sanctions any interventions as long as that response is justified in terms of 'reducing' the risk factors" (Bessant 2007: 63). This slippery nature of risk affects the construction of youth by normalizing all youth as potentially out of control, while suggesting an underlying—perhaps inherent—likelihood that certain youth (such as those who are poor, Aboriginal, from the inner city) will become violent criminals who torture animals, commit arson, and join gangs. The concern here is that this construction of youth can be used politically to justify increased control over this perceived volatile population through the implementation of practices aimed at regulating the behaviours and dispositions of young people (Kelly 2000: 470). These practices can include higher levels of surveillance, curfews, zero-tolerance policing, and electronic tagging—all of which is likely supported by a public who fears for its safety. The interviews show evidence of this expanding constructing of youth as a potentially problematic population.

At Risk of What?

Youth workers were also able to articulate the dangers youth face given the risks that they are presented with. These themes included: *a future life of poverty* as well as events that would hinder financial success such as dropping out of school and poor employment skills; *physical and emotional danger*, which included violence, addictions, and ill health; and *involvement in crime*, both in terms of being the victim of crime and criminal involvement, most often expressed in terms of gang affiliation. These themes were

regularly grouped together as a general set of outcomes that risks present. For example, this respondent touches on all three themes.

> Certain youth are at-risk of, if they don't get the help and the guidance that kids need generally, that they'll end up having problems in their future, as far as gaining employment, as far as finishing high school, as far as, you know, staying away from drugs, not becoming an alcoholic, not joining a gang.

Any risk factor seems to put youth 'at risk' for any or all negative outcomes. So, for example, in the comment below, living in poverty raises your chances of both being a teenage parent and being a victim of crime, amongst all the other outcomes listed here.

> The risk, I guess, is relative to the rest of the population. Kids living in poverty are less likely to graduate from high school, they're more likely to not be steadily employed throughout their life, they're, I don't know this for sure, but I would imagine they're more likely to be teenage parents. They're more likely to be victims of crimes, they're more likely to be recruited into gangs, they're more likely to be from dysfunctional families.

What is interesting about the risk discourse is that risks are never ending and self-perpetuating—poverty puts you at risk of poverty, for example. But this flexible nature of risk also results in an easy interchange between what may be considered risk indicators and the effects of risk. For instance, in the quotation above, being from a dysfunctional family in the past and the chances of joining a gang in the future are both simply associated with being 'at risk.'

This conflation between risk factors and risk outcomes was an almost ubiquitous feature of the interviews, as demonstrated in the following comment:

> We developed what we called a 'high risk registry' and identified the kinds of things that staff considered put kids at risk. They would be abusive situations, a kid's history of being abused, whether a kid was in care or not, whether a kid was involved in a gang, whether a kid suffered neglect,

> whether a kid had an intellectual handicap, ADD or FAS or whatever, if a child was involved in gangs, had been involved in delinquent activity or animal torture or setting fires. There was a whole list of things.

Here, the measurement of risk uses both risk factors and risk outcomes to determine a youth's risk rating. A condition that puts youth 'at risk,' such as growing up in a poor family, is listed as a risk factor alongside setting fires, which would presumably be a risk outcome. In essence, what transpires is a conflation of youth who are *at risk* with those who are *a risk,* ultimately fusing youth into a new category of *a(t) risk* and making it very easy for youth to score highly within an evaluative tool such as the high risk registry.

Implications for Causation

One aspect of the risk discourse is that underlying structural conditions are assumed to be permanent features of neoliberal society, and the focus shifts to manipulating the environment or the effects of problem behaviours (O'Malley 1996: 191). For example, in terms of crime prevention, emphasis is placed on the spatial and temporal aspects of crime, "thought out in terms of the opportunities for crime rather than its causal or biographical origins" (O'Malley 1996: 189). When crime or other social problems such as poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment, or addictions are disconnected from structural causes, the dangers associated with these problems are left to the individual to manage. Locating risk spatially and temporally is therefore a first step towards identifying individuals as responsible for their own risk management.

This framework for understanding risk was demonstrated in the interviews with youth workers about the programs they offer to help troubled youth, as this quote from an afterschool program manager suggests:

> Our program is specifically designed to keep kids out of trouble, to prevent them from being involved in crime. The fact that they have somewhere like this to come to, where they know that they're going to get structured activity, immediately solves almost fifty percent of the problem because they're here, they're being monitored, they're safe, they're supervised, they're getting structured activities. Whereas if they weren't, nobody would know what they were up to, most likely their parents wouldn't know what they were up to, and the chances of them getting involved in a gang or causing a vandalistic act or hurting somebody is all of a sudden, the statistical chance of that happening is already fifty percent higher. So, yeah, it's complete crime prevention.

Getting involved in crime is framed here as something that might spontaneously happen to those with nothing else to do, a rehashing of the Christian adage "idle hands are the devil's tools." Both risk and sin imply a need to be personally vigilant—personal weakness, here expressed as idleness, allows risk/the devil to take hold. Within this framework, managing crime calls for the provision of new activities, not economic restructuring, to lessen the opportunities for crime. The risk discourse, with its erasure of causation and illusion of individualism, allows for solutions to be built upon the assumption that crime is out there, no one knows why, but we do know it lurks in certain neighbourhoods and latches onto youth who, perhaps unwittingly, perhaps recklessly, allow themselves to become unoccupied.

Similarly, in the quotation below, vandalism, crime, and addiction are linked to boredom, to sitting in a park. Thus, risks are mitigated by changing the location where youth spend their time. Once their location changed, their activities changed, allowing for the risks that came with boredom (such as partaking in crime and drugs) to be managed.

> I mean, we do a lot here, they're all preventative measures that we get for the kids. I know in the first years of [the program] it was them not having anything to do, sitting in the park, breaking windows, stealing cars, sniffing glue, or whatever, and then they said when [the founder] came around a lot of that changed and they changed.

What this does for the construction of youth is assume that these choices are manageable. Anyone can choose to stay out of trouble if trouble is simply found 'out there' in certain areas. If you don't want to get involved in crime, don't sit in that park. This framework for choice is geared towards the understanding that youth are rational actors who will make "normatively correct choices if only the relevant risk information is given and processed correctly" (Adams, 1995 cited in Kemshall, 2008: 22). While it is not possible for a youth to choose a life outside of poverty, since poverty is a taken-for-granted aspect of our times, it is possible for them to choose which locations they visit. The focus on risk assumes social problems to be manageable rather than preventable, and thus only the dangers that arise from them can be prevented through careful manipulation of environment and activity.

It is also important to note that risk, as conceptualized in the quotation above, separates the leisure of the poor from the leisure of the wealthy. While sitting idly in a park in the North End puts youth 'at risk,' sitting by one's seaside summer home on the Lake of the Woods or on the deck of a yacht does not seem to generate the same concern, regardless of how much scotch is ingested, or how much environmental damage the consumption of fossil fuels and destruction of natural resources results in. Thus, the construction of youth as 'at risk' does more than guide them from harm's way; it normalizes an economic structure based on exploitation by demonizing those who cannot or will not work, while glamorizing the unlimited pursuit of capital gain. Risk is shown

as a technology of rule that produces disciplined liberal subjects who must fall in line with capitalist ideals and expectations or else be subjected to the risks such deviations generate. In this way, the emergence of governance of youth based on risk thinking also acts to articulate class discipline (Gray, 2009).

Thus, the elimination of root causes from the discourse of crime restores responsibility onto individuals who must manage it themselves. It is clear "that risk management may be articulated with an individualizing liberal or neo-liberal political programme through discursive construction in terms of rational choice actors" (O'Malley, 1996: 189). If youth are constructed as rational actors, then their ability to choose the correct path (employment over unemployment, legal activities over illegal activities, the right friends over gang/crime affiliated friends, etc.) will be assumed as a do-able project within the supportive environment of youth-serving agencies. This construction of youth as rational actors who are responsible for risks that have no foreseeable structural cause, though, was not always apparent in the interviews with youth workers, who showed considerable resistance to the risk discourse in practice, despite its frequent use within the official language of youth serving agencies.

Risk in Practice

While the academic literature strongly connects the discourse of risk to the veiling of structural causes by individualizing social problems, there is also recognition that risk, as a technology of power, can vary greatly in its articulation depending on its localized context (O'Malley 1996). Thus, despite the observation that the terms 'risk' and 'youth' have become synonymous (Green at al., 2000, cited in Kemshall, 2008: 21), it is

important to look more closely at how the risk discourse functions in everyday practice in potential sites of neoliberal governance, such as social service agencies for youth. In other words, it is not enough to establish that the term 'risk' is being used; it is also necessary to discover what meanings are being attached to its use.

Resisting Responsibilization

Evidence from the interviews shows that when pressed, youth-serving agency workers express substantial resistance to the risk discourse, and to the assumptions that it carries. For example, this youth worker states that she doesn't really like the term at all, and explains why.

> I worked with sexually exploited girls for seven years that came from all walks of life, all income backgrounds, all cultures. So I don't really like the term 'at risk' because I think it's just a broad general term for being a teenager in society where there's a lot of crap. If you're not at risk for gangs, you're at risk for sexual exploitation. If you're not at risk for either of those, you might be at risk to become a drug user or an alcoholic or whatever. Like who decides that, you know what I mean? Is it because of the community you grow up in? is it because of your parent's economic background? is it because of the colour of your skin? Like, what is the determining factor? I don't know.

Using the example of sexual exploitation, this respondent resists the conception of risk that is associated with, or located in, demographic markers such as the community, family, or ethnicity since the girls she worked with came from all walks of life. So although her agency uses the term 'risk' as part of its official mandate—to treat youth who are 'at risk' of joining gangs—she resists the individualized understanding of cause as located in identifiable aspects of the youth themselves, and places the source of risk back in a society where there is "a lot of crap." While this doesn't explicitly transfer cause to economic and political structures and policies, there is an implied critique of the

power dynamic inherent in constructing an identity of 'at-risk youth' in asking the question, "Who decides?" Posing this question suggests that the worker understands risk as a socially constructed concept, and not a statistically and amorally determined fact. This respondent, as such, does not see youth's poor choices or failure to manage risk as the reasons for their sexual exploitation, and thus is rejecting the term 'risk' because of its embedded individualizing and responsibilizing tendencies.

In fact, resistance to responsibilization was a common feature of the interviews, suggesting that the use of the term 'risk' was often employed in discourse but not as frequently in practice. While youth workers did identify that risks exist in the environments, neighbourhoods, and communities of youth, and that many characteristics of youth—such as poverty, ethnicity, and activities—do put youth more 'at risk,' there was little support for the idea that these risks exist unfettered by structural causes. And while youth-serving agencies work with youth individually, there was considerable resistance to the idea that it is up to troubled youth to manage these risks themselves. Instead, during the interviews youth workers expressed consistent disdain for the understanding of youth as responsible for their own risk management, as evidenced by this respondent:

> People formulate these concepts of who these young people are and it's a very blaming and 'you're responsible and you've made the choice and you're bad, inherently bad.' Well, this horribly bad thug is a child that somehow, somewhere along the line, the system failed, that society failed. So people need to stop putting the paper down and going back to their little world and instead see the reality that as a society we have to ensure that no child falls through those cracks, because if you can't do that and support these kids, you're not going to see this change.

Not only does this respondent take the blame off of youth and put it onto systemic causes by stating, "the system failed, that society failed," she also calls into question the notion of 'choice' associated with troubled youth. A commonly held public view of those who face difficult social issues of poverty, crime, or unemployment is that those who suffer from these difficulties have made 'poor choices' along the way. This view is consistent with the responsibilizing language of risk, and so by resisting the language of choice, this respondent resists putting the risk discourse into practice. Her narrative also offers criticisms of the divisive nature of risk. The respondent draws attention to the duality of 'us' and 'them,' that constructs troubled youth as 'other,' as well as to the duality between 'responsible' and 'bad,' which highlights the processes of inclusion and exclusion found within risk technologies: if you don't choose to be good then you deserve to be excluded from processes of support, resources, and aid.

These themes are witnessed again in the quotation below, in which the respondent condemns this public misconception around choice:

> [The newspaper] calls them prostitutes and there's this mentality that these girls were 'choosing.' Some of the feedback was, 'Well, these girls put themselves in this position.' A child does not 'choose' to put herself in that position, but the mentality was that this is how these girls make their money, they 'choose' to be there. That does not happen. But we need to change our systems, we need to change the mentality of Everyday Joe who has these really skewed ideas that children make these choices. They do not make these choices.

In resisting the language of choice, youth service workers are resisting the construction of youth as rational actors responsible for their own successes and failures through effective risk management by youth serving agencies.

The two comments above also suggest criticisms of how the risk discourse does extra 'work,' in the Foucaultian sense, of producing effects that have meaning and

consequences (Rose, 1996: 38). They demonstrate that since the notion of risk implies individual responsibility, it allows "Everyday Joe" the liberty (literally, in the neoliberal sense of promoting individual freedoms) of "putting the paper down and going back to their own world" after reading about, and condemning, youth crime. This allows society to blame youth for their own hardships and renders class, race, and gender inequalities invisible by removing structural and systemic causes from the equation. As well, these respondents' emphasis on making changes systemically implies a continued focus on addressing the needs of youth holistically, rather than on managing the risks compartmentally.

Reclaiming Need

The interviews certainly demonstrate a use of the 'risk' discourse, but the intention behind this discourse is less clear cut when workers are asked to explain more clearly what 'risk' means. For example, while the commonly tautological understanding of risk (for example, poverty puts youth at risk of dropping out of school, dropping out of school puts youth at risk of poverty) blurs the lines between when a youth is 'in need' and when he or she is 'at risk,' this blurring seems to be less about replacing the concept of need with risk management, and more about trying to work within a new discourse without changing the work they do. For example, in order to feel comfortable using the risk discourse, this respondent identifies that she understands risks *as* needs and shifts the common *implications* of the term 'risk' onto 'high risk,' which she rejects using.

> Remember, they are 'at risk' because of all the challenges that they have. I think it may be appropriate to use 'at risk' rather than 'high risk' because 'high risk' creates connotations like they are risking other people's life... So

> I think it creates problems for kids when you tell them 'You are high risk' because they need to be protected from other people, too.

This respondent re-frames the language essentially to show that 'at risk' denotes 'need,' while 'high risk' denotes 'a risk.' Creative uses of the term 'risk' found in the interviews suggest that youth workers are attaching alternate meanings to language they believe has become part of the neoliberal discourse of youth care. Thus, they may have accepted the risk discourse but resist internalizing a neoliberal disposition that replaces older welfare dispositions based on helping, care, and wellbeing (Woolford & Curran, unpublished manuscript).

Yet, other researchers have argued that this fluidity between risk and need can represent a new 'mixed model' of governance (O'Malley, 1999; Hannah-Moffat, 2005)—and not resistance. Hannah-Moffat's work has shown that constructions of 'need' are fused with 'risk' and reciprocally constituted in correctional institutions (Hannah-Moffat 2005: 31), and a specific type of risk—'dynamic risk'—has been developed in connection with the correctional system's risk assessment models in order to identify responsivity characteristics for treatment. As opposed to older models that produced a 'fixed risk subject' based on the accumulated histories of offenders, dynamic risk is premised on the idea that offenders can change if knowledge of their needs were integrated into the assessment. Thus, dynamic risk simultaneously becomes 'criminogenic need,' the identification of which can lead to programs that help "transform the risky subject" (Hannah Moffat 2005: 40). This construction gives rise to "the 'transformable risk subject' who unlike the 'fixed or static risk subject' is amenable to targeted therapeutic interventions" (Hannah-Moffat 2005: 31) to reduce risk of

criminality. These interventions focus on enhancing the subject's ability to self-govern and manage his or her own risk, representing simply a new way to govern, not to provide aid. As Hannah-Moffat (2005: 41) argues, "The 'new targeted intervention' project then involves the creation of not only a particular type of disciplined normative subject but also the construction of a prudent risk/needs manager, who is responsible and able to identify risky settings, access resources, and avert situations that may result in criminal behaviours. " In this sense, the risk/need fusion again allows for a construction of the risky person as a rational decision maker and "leaves intact the presumption that crime is the outcome of poor choices or decisions, and not the outcome of structural inequalities or pathology" (Hannah-Moffat 2005: 41-42).

This argument certainly warrants consideration when studying the ways risk functions within youth-serving agencies, especially since many are funded through the government as crime prevention/intervention initiatives and since troubled youth are generally understood to be at risk in the 'pre-criminogenic' stage. Indeed, it would not be surprising to find a construction of the 'transformative risk subject' by youth-serving agency workers, especially since youth workers would all support the assumption that these youth are able to change and improve their situations by steering out of risky situations. Yet, the distinction, or lack thereof, between risk and need that is apparent in many youth-serving agencies does not seem to manifest itself in the individualization of risk in practice, since individualization requires the denial of structural causes. Instead, many youth-serving agency workers recognize the risks youth face as stemming from socially systemic conditions and believe that youth should be offered more from society

to address the needs these conditions create, as was evidenced in the statements criticizing the notion of 'choice' presented earlier.

Thus, it is necessary to look more closely at the construction of youth by agency workers, rather than taking their use of risk/need terminology as automatically representative of the construction of youth as self-governing subjects. Indeed, the interviews show that the construction of youth as 'in need'—even if it was referred to as 'risk'—tended to show up in one of two ways: first, by understanding youth as in need of basic necessities within the context that structural conditions create these needs, not poor choices; and, second, in the understanding of youth as people who, like all people, benefit from activities that address needs unrelated to risk at all, such as the need for fun, creative expression, and recreation. Focusing on need in these two ways produces an alignment with principles of universal entitlement and welfarism, and constructs troubled youth as people who are caught within systems of inequality largely out of their control and who deserve not only basic necessities and support, but also wellbeing, happiness, and active engagement.

The first way agencies identify need is through providing basic necessities, something every agency does in some way, such as providing healthy snacks or meals, clothing banks, or emergency or temporary housing. And while it is possible to provide these necessities within a framework of risk management, the agency workers often referred to these provisions as simply offering the means by which youth and their families are able to survive, rather than as a means to reducing risks such as crime. This perspective is expressed here:

> We're trying to support youth and support the families in, in just living and being able to survive. Like, our heart breaks when you hear these

> crazy stories, and we're definitely not trying to, like, protect society from these youth, we're trying to build a community… and to do that you need to support their basic needs and the basic needs of their family.

The reference to building a community as opposed to protecting society shifts the focus off of treating at-risk youth and onto caring for families and youth in need as an end in itself.

Yet, this is not to say that agency workers do not make the connection between crime prevention and supplying basic necessities. Many acknowledge that if youth have their needs met, they would be less inclined towards criminal or anti-social behaviours. But the difference is that this analysis almost always incorporated reference to structural conditions. This implies that the risks present in the lives of youth can, and should, be addressed through social policy or other collective means, which differentiates it from an individualizing technology. For example, the respondent below comments that solely focusing on the outcomes of risk, such as crime, is misguided if the aim is to help youth.

> I think that we have to look at it all, not just the end result like crime, like an influx of car theft… I think we need to look at why. I mean, I know kids that have stolen cars to sleep in them 'cause they don't have housing. I think it's got to be a better view of everything that's going on and not such a linear way of thinking.

The recognition that there needs to be a "better view of everything" demonstrates resistance to the way a risk-focused approach glosses over structural causes. Instead of targeting at-risk youth in the reduction of car theft, this respondent suggests the lack of housing should be regarded as one of the causes of this crime. The link between the choices individual youth make and the crime that results is dismissed as too linear a connection, implying that risk and crime are not the only variables here: the structural

needs of youth, such as safe and stable housing, must first be addressed if crime is to be controlled effectively. Defining need as something that is caused by structural conditions helps construct youth as truly in need of help and not in need of proscriptive disciplinary treatments as per the risk discourse.

The emphasis on 'need' also often included consideration of the family and the struggles families face, although not in the sense that responsibility is being shifted onto the family unit. There was a clear recognition that families, too, were disadvantaged due to structural conditions. For example, the comment below traces the needs youth have to the lack of social provisions for families, and by doing so removes both the individual youth and his or her family from the risk discourse. This respondent starts by describing the dilemma a parent on Employment and Income Assistance faces when trying to survive on inadequate finances.

> I'm limited to where I live because what my rent cheque is worth, now I have to start taking it out of my food, now I'm behind in my bills, now I'm short on food and I've got kids to feed. To get their very basic needs met they're in a constant role of placing patches in their lives. Then somewhere along the line you stop dropping, you're juggling, when are you going to start dropping those balls right? Then as a society we come and we're just, like, 'Oh you dropped the ball, we're going to take your kids away because you made this choice.' Well, was it a choice really?

Youth are at risk, yes, but risk here is not individualized, and thus the responsibility to make better choices is placed on society, not youth or their families.

Again, this construction of families and youth as 'in need' differs from the responsibilization strategy associated with risk that has emerged with the neoliberal rationality. According to Peter Kelly (2000), the family as the setting for nurturance of

the child is also increasingly responsibilized for the care of the youthful self in a manner that represents transformations in the ways subjects are conceived as autonomous, choice-making, and responsible. Kelly explains that these transformations

> .... are structured by the activities of various experts who restlessly monitor and problematize the nature and truths of youth and families and the forms of regulation which promise to "make up" these subjects…Youth and families, by adopting freely and by choice the practices for the responsible self, can attempt to ward off the uncertainty and risks structured by processes of reflexive modernization. (Kelly, 2000: 469)

As experts in the field of youth care, youth-serving agency workers resist this construction of youth and families as being autonomously responsible for their difficulties by identifying families as existing within a system that both creates the conditions for their failures and restricts the ability to choose much of anything, as implied by the metaphor above in which people are blamed for dropping the ball after being forced to juggle finances under impossible conditions.

The second way youth serving agency workers resist a construction of youth as 'at risk' is through acknowledging that all youth have needs, as all people do, for happiness, wellbeing, and creativity. Rather than seeing youth as perpetually engaging in risky behaviours that they must continually guard against, youth are instead constructed as people who deserve, simply on the merit of being human, intellectual, creative, cultural, and relational engagement for the purpose of experiencing wellbeing and happiness. For example, this agency tackles, as one of its priorities, the poverty of experience. This is not to prevent crime or to help youth become employable; it is simply to offer youth the joys of new experience.

> We're dealing with poverty of experience, which a lot of these kids experience, right? So our kids have never been to Assiniboine Park or have never driven down a certain street to see the lights at Christmas, just weird things like that. Or even, like, having birthday parties or arts involvement and culture. So, like, there's a free day at Assiniboine Park where they offer Ballet in the Park. Just getting them to events like that becomes a priority because getting them there exposes them to some things that they may not have had.

The motivation to provide youth with fun, new experiences, engagement with other youth, and other cultural experiences reflects a construction of youth as deserving, not disciplined, subjects. Youth care workers are not there to make youth become anything other than happy, active citizens although this goal can still entail helping youth develop skills, self esteem, confidence, and relationships.

While there is evidence in the literature that the need/risk fusion is used as a novel way of expanding the category of risk to incorporate need, this does not appear to be reflected in the construction of youth operating within youth-serving agencies. Instead, while the employment of the a(t) risk fusion uses the official, dominant discourse of risk, in practice their understanding of youth is based on an older social welfare model of need that emphasizes the entitlement youth have to basic necessities, but also to wellbeing, happiness, and joy.

Tactics and Strategies

Finding these resistance practices operating within an increasingly neoliberal field is consistent with work done by Michel de Certeau (1984), who studied how language, ideas, and symbols are re-appropriated in ways that fail to represent the dominant intention or purpose of these cultural products. For Certeau, resistance should not solely

be identified with direct opposition or revolution, since it can also be found within a "re-use" of products that could include the ideas, rationalities, technologies, and services imposed by a dominant order. In the activity of re-use lies an abundance of opportunities to subvert official representations or strategies. Rather than simply seeing the "common people" as passive receptors of the dominant culture's products, therefore, Certeau explores how people consume, or what people 'make,' with these products. Failing to study this level of practice can result in missing more subtle aspects of resistance that lie hidden behind seemingly conformist actions.

These alternate ways of consuming the cultural products of the dominant order become "tactics"—everyday practices used by individuals to create space for themselves—within the dominant "strategies" defined by institutions and structures of power (Certeau 1984). Tactics are makeshift in nature and work within the strategies in subversive ways without trying to take over. Thus tactics oppose the dominant order, but in dispersed and often invisible ways because resistance "does not manifest itself through its own products, but rather through its ways of using the products imposed by a dominant economic order" (Certeau 1984: xiii). Certeau says that the tactic's diffuse form does two things: it effectively deflects a strategy's influence, and it renders its own activities an "unmappable" form of subversion. He points out that in a tactic's slipperiness lies a good deal of its power: what looks like falling in line with the dominant culture goes unnoticed by the dominant order and thus is left unchecked, unlike other forms of resistance associated with counter-culture activities.

The insistence on behalf of government and other major funders that the notion of 'risk' be used as a criterion for youth programming is a strategy that follows the

dominant neoliberal economic and political order that emphasizes neoliberal principles of responsibilization and individualization. Agency workers resist this conception, but they do so, in the tactical sense, silently, under the continued use of the risk discourse. This is realized not simply through the use of the term 'risk,' but also through the adoption of terminology that represents aspects of risk management, such as crime prevention. For example, one respondent's comment demonstrates the interchangeability between any number of terms associated with 'risk' and what she believes to be her true work: supporting youth.

> I think we need to just support families and support youth in a way that they're strong and they have potential to live out their dreams, whatever you want to call that, poverty reduction, crime prevention, you know, we can name it whatever, early intervention, I don't know.

This respondent shows a willingness to replace older discourses with risk terminology, but not a willingness to alter the established underlying goal of supporting youth and families in a way that helps them "live out their dreams;" a goal more closely associated with a social democratic principles of welfare. This demonstrates a reflexive understanding or awareness on behalf of the respondent ("whatever you want to call that ... we can name it whatever") of the way certain discourses become politically popular in the social services, but that the integration of these terms is not necessarily corresponding with changes in the underlying motivation for helping youth—the words may change but the new meanings may not follow.

This reflexivity on the part of service providers is also evident in the acknowledgement that certain discourses, such as risk, represent a form of capital within

a system that relies on external funding sources. If they speak the language of 'risk,' they are more likely to secure funding from government agencies.

> The Province, City and Feds again it's really government related, it's really how they're writing the provincial budgets, the federal budgets and what their priority is. Our funding will also be dictated by, like for example, the latest federal grant that came through was we want gang members off the street, we will give you x amount of dollars if you take x amount of gang members off the street. Now living on the frontline and working on the frontline, it's an irresponsible unfair request. So what are we going to do? Lasso them and, you know, stick them in the trunk of our car? Like, how do you expect that to be done? It's done through building relationships, it's done through providing alternatives and showing them a different means and ways of living, different considerations. That takes time.

Here the tactic is clear: 'risk' is used in order to accommodate the mandate of the funders, even though agency workers resist the way the risk discourse establishes change as something that can be done quickly, efficiently, and individually through responsibilizing gang members.

The result of these tactics is that agencies officially target 'at-risk' youth but do not necessarily shift their beliefs or even the practices within their programs as readily as they adopt new discourses.

> The money that we get is all 'at-risk youth funding.' Now that's a term that we don't like to use, 'at risk,' you know, that's a real negative label… But the vast majority of the funding we get is at risk-funding and under that category we can continue to work with youth in housing, sexual abuse, violence, crime, safety, education.

'At- risk' is used in the quotation above as an official description of the youth they work with, but informally the term is not used, nor is it liked. Instead, the language that is expected—and required—of youth-serving agencies by their funders is used to camouflage the continued focus on helping youth meet their needs. As the respondent

above notes, using the risk discourse to garner funding allows them to continue to work on issues that the agency deems as important, such as housing and education.

Officially using the 'risk' discourse does not preclude agency staff from resisting, within day to day practice, the criteria used to determine who is eligible for this aid.

> And it could be, like, a seven year old has a brother that's B Side so the chances are pretty darn good that, you know, he's going to be in a gang, but I also have kids here that get beat up by gangs, that would never join a gang. They're still vulnerable, they're still kids. I would still use the funder's money to help that other kid.

This narrative reflects an older model of welfare where youth are entitled to resources and support because they are "vulnerable" and because they are "kids"—and not because they are 'at-risk' of causing or experiencing future harm.

Similarly, the respondent below, who works at a federally funded program targeting youth 'at-risk' of joining gangs, talks about 'risk' in terms of a program "flavour"; the term is used officially in the title of their program but not accepted as a legitimate way of distinguishing those who can access help from those who don't.

> I know that depending on the program they build these criteria and so if you can check off, like, five out of six things then you're 'at risk' for whatever that program flavour is, right? I say that because that's the title of our program, that's our umbrella, but personally my belief is that any kid anywhere is 'at risk' for anything. Because we look at all the reasons kids get involved in gangs but, you know, poverty and lack of family structure and fear or wanting to be protected or all those things can happen to a kid anywhere, right?

While criteria based on 'risk' is used officially as their program "umbrella," this respondent still believes that all youth should be entitled to the resources they need, thus rejecting the neoliberal criteria-based assessment of who 'deserves' aid. Although she uses the word 'risk,' the statement, "any kid anywhere is at risk for anything" rejects the

actuarial nature of risk that assumes that information can be collected and classified into various risk evaluations that will differ from person to person. Instead, the meaning embedded in this description of risk is more consistent with a social democratic welfare model that provides all citizens with the support and resources they need.

In fact, there was reflexive recognition by respondents that the discourse of 'risk' represented a sort of occupational hazard in accessing the funding needed to provide youth with resources; while there were financial advantages to using this discourse, there was also a social cost. For example, the following respondent understands both the problems with constructing youth as 'at risk,' and the external constraints that necessitate using the term in order to help youth at all.

> We're looking to pump up how bad these kids have it, when really we should be focusing on all the positive things, but otherwise we won't get the funding if we don't tell them that 'these kids might join a gang, like, look at his kid, like, he's selling drugs at eleven,' instead of saying, 'Look at how resilient he is, look at the skills he has, but this is an issue and this issue needs to be resolved, but he is a good kid.' It puts the responsibility back on the youth to make better decisions, and we do help youth make better decisions by showing them things, but there's only so many decisions they can make, there's only so many choices they actually have. But if we don't use those terms then the funding that's available is not going to come to us.

In sum, what appear to be readily accepted constructions of youth based in the dominant discourse of 'risk' are often tactics that allow resistance to go unnoticed within a neoliberal strategy of risk management in order to continue to, in practice, help meets the needs of youth in whatever way youth-serving agencies can. Thus, 'risk' is used in frequent measure by agency staff without substantially altering these workers'

understandings of who the youth they work with are, what troubles they face, or what resources should be available to them.

Resisting Discipline

If, according to governmentality theorists, the way problems are understood or 'made thinkable' inform the techniques or interventions designed to address these problems (Rose 1990), then resistance to the neoliberal construction of at-risk youth should influence the ways in which programs are offered through youth-serving agencies. Since there is evidence that youth are not being constructed as autonomized and responsibilized subjects by youth-serving agency staff, then it stands to reason that programs, at least in practice, will not reflect individualized treatments of risk. Resistance to this understanding of risk should be identifiable through the rejection of programming aimed at helping youth adopt more pro-social behaviours in an effort to individually mitigate the risks they face by making themselves, for instance, more employable, more educated, more agreeable, and more rational. Resistance at the level of programming should also be evidenced through an acknowledgment on behalf of agency staff that youth serving agencies are not the place where social issues can be identified, and through the subsequent redirection of programming that benefits youth in the here and now, and with a focus on wellbeing, happiness, and fun without an individualized neoliberal agenda of, for example, crime control. Indeed, this resistance at the level of programming does appear to be evident in terms of how programs are practiced on the day-to-day level.

The understanding, commonly held by youth-serving agencies that the troubles youth face are social problems and not individual problems means that youth workers

often also recognize that solutions cannot come from agencies that direct their efforts at individuals. In other words, once an agency has constructed youth as in need and entitled to support, rather than as at-risk and responsible for their own advancement, programming can focus less on changing the individual and more on providing a rewarding experience for youth.

> It's almost like presumptuous to say a) that these kids are high risk, or b) that we're doing anything to prevent, like, if they are, like, … in our experience in this neighbourhood if a kid grows up in a family that is gang involved, it takes a lot to help that kid. An afterschool art program is not, like, you know, maybe it's a piece of it but it's not going to be the answer. We can give that kid some great experiences to have in his memory and hopefully maybe that will help as he's coming along. But there's so much going on in his or her life, like, 24/7.

If youth are not 'at risk,' but rather just viewed as people who have any number of needs, then programming becomes focused on the present, with a recognition that positive experiences may contribute to positive futures, without the intention of reducing specific statistically identifiable harms that result from a youth's social environment. The social problems are not theirs to fix—neither the agency's nor the youth's—so programs can get back to the business of providing youth with great experiences.

Youth-serving agency workers often admitted that, while their programs may officially be described as crime prevention or intervention, their true motivations were simply to support youth in whatever areas they may have need. The respondent below addresses this directly when she states that her agency's official goal of gang intervention or prevention is unrealistic.

> Our goal is to get kids out of gangs or prevent them from joining gangs. Honestly, I don't think that's a reality. I don't think that for a kid who is a

> third or second generation Manitoba Warrior whose family is completely gang involved, who has been gang involved since he was twelve years old, I'm not saying it will never happen but… It's not leaving the gang that should be our goal; it should be developing a healthy lifestyle for youth regardless of whether or not they're in a gang.

Contrary to its official mandate, this agency, in practice, refuses to see itself as a crime prevention tool and re-centres its service around supporting youth regardless of their gang involvement. Unlike the neoliberal conception of risk that silences alternative needs claims since only 'manageable' problems are targeted for intervention (Hannah-Moffat, 2005: 43), this respondent recognizes gang affiliation as a so-called 'unmanageable' risk, yet continues to provide resources to youth. In fact, risk—here identified as gang affiliation— is side-stepped altogether as an issue and resources are redirected specifically to the 'alternative' needs of youth: a healthy lifestyle in its own right, not as a means to a crime-control end. If this agency constructed youth through a purely neoliberal risk model, gang entrenched youth who were identified as unlikely to change would experience a process of exclusion: these risky youth would be identified as unmanageable and resources would be reallocated to youth whose risks are recognized as manageable.

In addition to basing programming on the assumption that all youth, not just 'responsible' youth, deserve to have their needs met, there is also evidence that programming recognizes the need for wellbeing and creative expression, and that a focus on basic material needs simply isn't enough. This perspective is eloquently expressed by a respondent from an agency that offers art lessons to youth, who expresses that their goal is to help youth find "simple joys":

> That's our challenge, to figure out what can we do with what we have and how can we make it fabulous, not the best that it could be, but how can we make this awesome, is a goal of ours all the time. We're teaching these youth not just about pencils and paper but how you make what seem like unfair situations awesome, not just 'making do.' We teach them to really enjoy things and get joy out of creating something; it doesn't matter what it's created out of, it's just, like, simple joys.

While this respondent discusses how to change what can appear to be "unfair situations"—what could otherwise be identified as risky situations—into something "awesome," the goal of finding "joy" is not based on a construction of youth as responsibilized automatons. From a neoliberal perspective on risk, we would expect to find programs that aim to encourage youth to mitigate the harms that will be inherent in their risky circumstances by adopting prosocial behaviours such as employment skills and a work ethic, leadership skills, or educational attainment—things that discipline a subject in line with capitalism and neoliberal values. Since there is no way to eliminate risks, subjects are in essence always simply "making do"—minimizing or managing risk—in a world that presents unlimited future scenarios of potential harms. Yet, this respondent specifically rejects the idea of "making do."

In fact, rather than managing at-risk youth in these centres, youth-serving agency staff frequently mentioned that their programs offered youth opportunities to get away from the stresses and pressures of their lives; a place where youth can perhaps have respite from managing the risks in their lives. One respondent described a "weariness" that youth develop from feeling unsafe and constantly on guard in their lives, and that the camping trips his agency offers allows the youth to finally have time to relax. Similarly, the respondent below recognizes the adverse social conditions youth are confronted with and sees her agency as offering a break from the stress this causes.

> For the most part our participants choose us as a break. Just like an adult would choose an art class, a lot of our participants choose as a break from life. You know, within a drawing class they're getting away from pressures, and I know from them saying things verbally that that's important. Like, it's a break just like an adult needs a break.

These programs are not treating the risks youth face. Instead, they are helping youth who need a break from social traumas, disappointments, and sadness. That goal in itself resists in practice all that is associated with governance because it aims to make society a better place for youth, rather than making youth better subjects within a society that creates these pains. In short, these programs are not designed to responsibilize youth; they are designed to release youth temporarily from the heavy responsibilities that many already face in their daily lives.

The programming offered through youth serving agencies represents an approach that goes hand in hand with recognizing that agencies are not the places where the structural social change needs to happen in the lives of youth—economic and political restructuring is where these changes need to occur. Thus, if individuals are not constructed as responsible for the social inequalities they face, risk management as an everyday practice is removed from the agenda of these agencies; crime prevention and increased employment rates can no longer be identified as primary or even realistic goals. Instead, many agencies have expressive goals of providing opportunities for wellbeing, happiness, fun, and creative expression; experiences that youth workers feel all youth are entitled to, regardless of socioeconomic background, ethnicity, or area of the city. The construction of youth as in need and entitled to wellbeing limits the extent to which their programs take aim at preventing future danger and harm through the management of at risk, in spite of what their program goals are officially mandated to be.

Youth Resistance

Although the interviews for this study were conducted with youth-serving agency workers and not the youth themselves, the intention is not to imply that youth are passive in the construction of their own individual or group identity. On the contrary, there was substantial evidence that youth, too, resist constructions based on risk. For example, many respondents noted that youth dislike and resist the term 'risk' being applied to them, as shown in this example:

> Kids particularly get upset when they hear those terms because when they're being labelled 'at risk' or 'high risk' they're, like, 'I'm just living my life', do you know what I mean? 'Cause these kids are doing the best that they can.

This comment suggests that youth are cognizant of the implication a 'risk' identity carries and instead they see the choices they make within the context of the lives they live and within the social structures that shape those lives. They resist the individualization of risk that promotes responsibilization because what these youth know they have enough of, if nothing else, are endless responsibilities: they are often responsible for their own food, shelter, safety, money, and clothing. For example, the responsibility to stay in school, do their homework, and get good grades is predicated on the responsibility to find safe shelter, something to eat, some way to bathe, something to wear, and get a good night's sleep. They may have taken on the responsibility either financially or emotionally for helping parents who struggle, for younger siblings, and for others around them. These responsibilities are imposed on youth who may have little or no emotional support, learned coping mechanisms, or role models, and who may have difficulties with language and cognitive or physical disabilities. All of this is expressed by youth as "just living my life."

Thus, while youth-serving agency staff resist the notion that youth are making choices to live the lives they do, this doesn't mean that youth are seen as lacking the agency in decision making altogether. As the same respondent tells us, these youth are resisting this construction when they say, "look at how hard I'm trying, and, like, I'm still surviving. Like, could you survive in this situation?" These are not bad choices; they are choices made in the context of survival. In these terms, youth are making the best choices they can under the circumstances.

There is also evidence of youth resistance to the individualizing nature of the risk discourse and its implication that there is something wrong with youth, especially certain youth, and not society. This respondent explains how youth dislike the term 'at risk' because it labels them as different, as lacking potential.

> They don't want to be labelled 'at risk.' They'll be, like, "What are you talking about?" Like, it's almost demeaning to them 'cause it's telling them that for some reason they don't have the potential of other youth. And it's pretty obvious to them that these barriers are around them and this is why they're being labelled like that. But I know from talking to youth that they don't like those terms at all, 'cause it's labelling them and telling them that they're different from other youth.

The youth clearly don't see these difficulties as personal deficiencies. While they recognize the structures they live within as different and the opportunities they have as different, they do not see themselves as inherently different from other youth.

Youth workers also identify resistance by youth to mandates or agendas that are trying to mould youth into something more compatible with a neoliberal society, as the risk discourse encourages through the promotion of pro-social conformity to neoliberal values. For instance, this youth care worker suggests both he and the youth resist the

mandate of an "agenda" when working with youth and that youth are smart enough to see through the disciplinary nature of social services.

> This is a place for [youth] to come together and explore who they are and who other people are, without the agenda. I think kids are really sensitive to stuff being forced down their throat all the time and the more they hear "You should be responsible, you should do this and you should do that and learn your…" They are, like, "F*uck you*, I'm not going to do that. I want to be cool, I don't want to be responsible," you know? And that part I can relate to.

By rejecting this "agenda" both the youth and the agency worker reject the construction of youth as a transformative risk subject—someone who, through the proper training, can become a disciplined liberal subject. Instead, they both promote the construction of youth from within the framework of what youth themselves want, as evidenced by the worker's desire to let youth explore who they are, and the youth's desire to be "cool" or, in other words, resist mainstream culture and values.

In this sense, youth are resisting a construction of themselves as 'at risk,' as someone who is different than other youth and who needs to become someone different than they are in order to received aid and succeed. This is evident in the rejection of labels such as 'criminal' or 'gang member,' as is shown in the comment below. This respondent refers to the risk evaluation the agency uses to chart a youth's progress ('transformation') through its program. Although the evaluations are designed to objectively determine the level of risk these youth present, youth recognize this actuarial apparatus as a way of determining criminality, and thus a construction of the risk subject.

> [The evaluation asks] 'Does your group like to spend a lot of time together in public places, like, the park, the street, shopping areas or the neighbourhood,' right. And they're, like, whatever, they're filling it

> out, no, no, no, no… These kids aren't stupid. I had one girl write on it, "***I am not a gang member***" in huge black letters.

Rather than unquestioningly completing the evaluations, youth are actively participating in the resistance of constructions of youth based on the actuarial determination of risk markers.

Identifying aspects of resistance to the notion and use of risk in youth-serving agencies is an important contribution to the understanding of how actuarial forms of governance work in a neoliberal society, and follows other theorists who acknowledge that neoliberal regimes of governance should not be viewed as simply the evolution of increasingly efficient forms of power compelling us towards a totalizing vision of regulation (O'Malley 1996, Muncie, 2005). Instead, according to O'Malley, the nature and impact of technologies of governance, of which risk is one, need to be thought out in terms of "their relationship with sovereign and disciplinary forms, in terms of articulations and alliances, colonizations and translations, resistances and complicities between them rather than in terms of their unilinear development (1996: 192).

The resistance found within the everyday practices of youth-serving agency workers—a resistance that involves circumventing the discipline of bodies through the construction of risk subjects within the goals of safety, crime control, and regulation with a construction of youth as active, critical citizens who require the provision of care, assessment of need, and the promotion of enjoyment and creative expression—offers a more complex and less linear view of the regulating tendencies of risk discourse. As Certeau writes,

> Although [discourses] are composed with the vocabularies of established languages… and although they remain subordinated to the prescribed syntactical forms (temporal modes of schedules, paradigmatic orders of

> space, etc.), the trajectories trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop. (1984: xviii)

Thus, while the vocabulary of 'risk' is used in applications for program and agency funding, in practice these syntactical forms are "techniques of re-employment" (Certeau 1984: xxiv), used to other ends—in this case to helping youth based on 'need,' not 'risk.' In the present study, the rhetoric of risk is a strategy established through the neoliberal rationalities that determine the environments in which youth receive aid. Tactics are manipulations that turn this rhetoric into opportunity, but without changing the framework of strategy. Thus, we see resistance to the language of risk in practice at the same time that it is used as an opportunity to qualify for program development and funding.

Concluding Remarks

Youth-serving agencies are clearly immersed in the discourse of 'at-risk' youth and use the language of 'risk' when describing the youth they work with and the programs they offer. There is also recognition that certain demographic, spatial, and biographical characteristics put youth 'at-risk' of a number of harms, including partaking in, or being the victim of, violent or criminal activity and being unable to realize their potential in terms of financial and personal success. This understanding of 'risk' does affect the ways agencies try to mitigate youth problems, such as involving them in sports or other activities in an attempt to alter temporally the risks they face. Yet, despite the prevalence of risk discourse, youth serving agency workers also resist 'on the ground' the construction of youth as responsible for the troubles they face. Agency workers instead

emphasize the structural and systemic causes of these troubles. 'Risk' often becomes a word used in place of 'need' but does not always shift the work in practice away from addressing the needs of youth in a way that implies entitlement and wellbeing. Resisting the construction of youth as 'at-risk' in the neoliberal sense of being responsibilized and individualized is shown to affect the way programming is delivered in everyday practices by re-directing programming towards activities that youth feel are fun and relaxing and, in some cases, take the pressures and responsibilities *off* of youth. In addition, this study shows that the youth themselves can be active participants in protesting the construction of youth as 'at-risk.'

Yet, while everyday practice demonstrates that these agencies use "ways of operating" outside the dominant construction of at-risk youth, their tactics continue to work within a dominant strategy, and therefore are unable to secure an independent strategy outside this framework: they treat youth as 'in need' while simultaneously proclaiming youth as 'at risk' in funding applications and program mandates. In this regard, how effective is resistance in the form of "tactics" for altering the systems of governance of youth? Since the resistances are largely invisible to the public, are there forms of governance associated with continuing to use the risk discourse officially?

CHAPTER FOUR
CONTRIBUTING TO A LARGER REGIME OF GOVERNANCE

We can assess the ways youth-serving agencies contribute to a larger regime of governance by turning to governmentality as a framework. Like Certeau, Foucault (1991a) asserts that the exercise of political authority does not lie in a centralized sovereign nation state, but is dispersed in a multitude of localized sites and relations of power. While consistent with Certeau's view that power is not exercised uniformly from above onto passive subjects, Foucault differs in his analysis by privileging the productive apparatus that disciplines even as it is diffused amongst local sites of power. In this sense, for Foucault, resistance as we have identified it within the everyday practices of youth serving agencies, as one aspect of this network of power, may indeed work to disrupt power, but this does not mean that these agencies are removed from the larger grid of governance. Employing a governmentality analysis, it remains important to also identify the ways in which the microphysics of power contributes to the governance of a population within these localized sites.

In this regard, two areas can be identified that contribute to a larger regime of governance, despite the localized resistances. The first is that agencies who work within the strategies of neoliberal political rationalities legitimate the view that social issues can—and should—be addressed through the individual targeting of youth themselves. The second is that youth-serving agencies produce expert knowledge that helps to define and construct a problem population through the use of neoliberal technologies of governance; in other words, data collection based on the actuarial evaluations, outcome measures, surveys, and reports based on risk. These data, even if they are dismissed as

irrelevant by youth-serving staff, can be used elsewhere to justify other forms of discipline. While each of these areas will be discussed in turn, the chapter also includes a discussion of ways in which resistance by youth-serving agencies has the potential for breaking free of the confines of the neoliberal risk discourse and the governance associated with it.

Legitimating Individualism and Responsibilization

According to Rose (1996: 296), one feature of neoliberal governance is the pluralization of new social technologies, which involves "a detaching of the centre from the various regulatory technologies that it sought, over the twentieth century, to assemble into a single functioning network, and the adoption instead of a form of government through shaping the powers and wills of autonomous entities. This decentralization of government has meant that youth-serving agencies function within a neoliberal marketized funding relationship with government that off-loads public services onto social service agencies.

This aspect of neoliberalism is apparent from talking to youth-serving agency staff. Within this climate, youth-serving agencies are expected to act as independent entities, but must apply for funding from government—funding that, more often than not, corresponds with particular political mandates. Many respondents talked about the frustration of having to continually adapt their programming to meet the demands of their funders. As one instance:

> It's difficult because again without multi-year, when you go year to year there's always the opportunity that the funder will change their priorities, and "This is what we're funding this year, this is what we

> want focused on and how do you guys fit into that." So now you're always trying to meet their needs.

While it appears that these are independent agencies deciding to run certain programs or target certain youth, they instead often find their decisions are influenced politically because of the financial constraints this decentralized funding structure necessitates. Thus, the 'shaping of powers and wills' of youth-serving agencies happens at a distance, but ends up following the government rationalities in order to access the resources needed to function.

Indeed, even before agencies decide what programs should be developed to treat youth, the fact remains that treating the individual at all for societal problems follows a neoliberal political mandate of individualism. So while there is recognition that structural barriers need to be addressed to change the lives of youth, youth-serving agencies are receiving funding to help individual youth and their programs must be geared towards this end if they want to qualify for funding. The interviews demonstrate that youth workers are very invested in the wellbeing of youth, and this compassion means agencies will find whatever funding they can to attain the resources youth need: youth in trouble need support and any support is better than none.

> I'm going to apply for everything, I'm going to figure out some way for our programs to fit into every single thing that you can apply for and hopefully one of them says, 'Yeah, okay, that fits.'

Until political will changes and adequate social assistance is implemented, doing what they can for youth now is indeed an understandable motivation. There is no doubt that individual youth are indeed in need of resources, and thus if there is funding to help those in need now, this funding will be accessed in whatever way it can be.

Yet, while youth-serving staff would perhaps agree that this is not the ideal way of helping troubled youth, they may not recognize the contribution to governance this approach enables. This funding system creates distance between political decisions and social actors—the latter of whom are now conceived of as "subjects of responsibility, autonomy and choice" (Rose 1996: 54)—and they are governed through the very freedoms they are offered: the freedom to take care of these problems themselves, albeit through the help of 'independently" mandated social services. Thus, regardless of the practices 'on the ground' at youth-serving agencies, they are working within a framework of treating youth for the systemic problems they face. This has two implications for the governance of youth. First, it validates a cultural belief that helping troubled youth through the allocation of individual aid is the acceptable, perhaps even politically progressive, way of addressing youth in trouble. Second, it infiltrates into the programs offered by youth serving agencies.

Validating Cultural Beliefs

In the first instance, treating individual youth for issues such as gangs, unemployment, homelessness, and poverty establishes within the public discourse the construction of youth as responsible for turning their lives around despite the structural conditions that shape their experiences, and reaffirms risk as individualized, not politically or economically, determined. These social problems become constituted through concrete discursive instances (Resende, 2009). Thus, neoliberalism as a political rationality uses risk as a technology that acts to reinstate its principles within the very functioning of social services. Helping youth in this way underpins the message that the state is not

responsible for the control of crime, poverty, etc. as these risks can and should be managed individually. Stated differently, the risk discourse naturalizes social injustice by camouflaging it.

The use of discourse analysis helps us to identify how the construction of youth as 'at-risk' is both already constituted within the social relations of this neoliberal political and economic alignment, and simultaneously works to reconstitute these same principles through the deployment of the risk discourse in youth-serving agencies. Working within a strategy designed and implemented through financial and governmental stakeholders requires agencies to publically tow the line of a political rationality that endows the individual with personal freedom in the attainment of success, thus implicating individuals in their own failures. In this way, "knowledge is generated in relation to the use of linguistic structures for political purposes and the relation between discursive and non-discursive moments in specific social practices" (Resende, 2009: 365). In other words, it doesn't matter if the risk discourse is used in everyday practice or not, since 'risk' has already helped to establish the very framework within which youth-serving agencies work.

The net effect is that the public is left thinking that if youth will not take responsibility for themselves, then there is nothing left to do than to protect society from those who will not conform. Stiffer laws and more imprisonment become the solution once the public feels that they did all they could. Thus, this individualization of risk justifies the processes of exclusion found in risk discourse: the emphasis on self regulation and the individual responsibility assumed for the management of risk allow responsible citizens to be managed through 'circuits of inclusion,' while those who will

not—or cannot—manage their own risk are then managed through 'circuits of exclusion' (Rose, 2000: 324) and sent to other regulatory bodies such as the prison system. Presented with this rationality, the public not only agrees with the increased forms of intervention and discipline, they often demand it, reinforcing once again a neoliberal political will.

Program Characteristics

Another similar process of governance happens *within* the programs that youth-serving agencies offer, despite the desire to resist these tendencies. Again, this is a function of the structure of the system within which these services are set up. Since funders approve applications for programs that work within their mandate, programs do change over time to adjust to these funding trends.

> I meet their criteria by saying exactly what they request. I just need to get the money so I can continue to do the work that I know is right. I don't change my mandate, I'll just tell them my process about I'm going to achieve their goals that they've outlined for me in order for me to get my money so I can do my work. Typically there's somewhere along the line some application I will fit into because there's a number of services, but that does not mean to say that everything is status quo, I mean if it's a trend then certain parts of my service are going to lack because the trend is focused somewhere else.

So while agencies resist the conception of 'risk' as far as they can, they must work within a system that has significant ability to dictate which programs are approved and how they target, treat, and classify youth.

Of particular significance is the ability of funders to restrict who is and who is not eligible for the programs services. Since welfare regimes have been reshaped to form part of a network of governance "coupled with new modes of administration and underpinned

by a theoretical rationale which has shifted from entitlement to obligation" (Hartman, 2005: 61), social assistance is allocated on the basis of risks, not needs, and thus youth must fit the criteria of the programming. These programs are already designed to treat particular risks such as gang or crime affiliations, and thus have pre-established criteria for who is and is not eligible to access them. For example, if an agency worker cannot prove that a youth has had interactions with the criminal justice system, their willingness to permit other youth to partake in programming for crime prevention may be restricted if the program mandate identifies past criminal involvement as a criteria.

For many youth-serving agencies, being 'at risk' is part of this criteria, but so too is a personal commitment to change and improvement since success has been defined within these boundaries. Since targeting at-risk youth implies the goal of mediating these risks, the youth also have to demonstrate a willingness to participate and engage in the raison d'etre of the program. For example, if the program is designed to help gang-affiliated youth get out of gangs, then any youth who does not want to get out of gangs is likely not going to attend, even if they would welcome the chance to participate in what the program has to offer in other ways, such as access to audio and visual recording equipment. It is also possible that a youth who is truly gang involved would never identify as such for fear of the repercussions from the gang to this type of involvement or because the reality of the program actually succeeding for these youth is so unlikely that youth don't bother trying As one respondent explains,

> Like, one of the criteria is that the youth has to want to work with us, and we find that youth lots of times in gangs, unfortunately we don't have the supports to be able to help them leave that gang. Like, it's just, it would be such an intense process that we can do what we can for that youth, but often at that point the youth doesn't want to engage with us anyway.

As such, youth who refuse to acknowledge that transformation needs to happen, or are not in a position to access resources because it would be antithetical to gang culture, simply appear as refusing the resources being offered. This isn't because the youth workers feel that some youth aren't worthy of support. Instead, these youth just simply don't qualify. In contrast, social services that offer resources on the grounds of entitlement would not need youth to self-identify and therefore might be able to reach more youth.

The goal of self-transformation that is implicit in the programming developed under a risk discourse also has the potential to 'rub off' on youth workers who naturally develop a personal investment in seeing the youth they work with succeed on an individual basis.

> They have to actually want to be here and have goals that they're setting for themselves. We can't do it for them. It's like an addiction, right?

Although youth workers almost ubiquitously reject the responsibilization strategies explicity, their focus in the context of programming shifts towards making sure these youth are doing the best they can to alleviate their adverse circumstances, since this is the only avenue youth workers have to help these youth in need. Nevertheless, the addiction analogy in the quotation above is telling since common wisdom asserts that the first step is for individuals to admit they have a problem, showing the infiltration of individualizing tendencies that this structure promotes.

Thus, while youth workers care for the wellbeing of youth and recognize the structural constraints, they also legitimate a system of inclusion and exclusion consistent with neoliberal discourses on risk: those who refuse to admit they have a problem and

agree to make changes are not eligible for aid within programming that has had to meet the demands of neoliberal funders. The tactical resistances that agency workers practice happen *after* the structural constraints of risk have imposed a process of exclusion that denies certain youth. As Rose suggests, "this alloy of autonomization and responsibilization underpins shifts in strategies of welfare, in which substantive issues of income distribution and poverty have been displaced by a focus upon processual issues that affiliate or expel individuals from the universe of civility, choice and responsibility, best captured by the dichotomy of inclusion and exclusion" (Rose, 2000: 324). In contrast, if social services were based on a rights-based model, then youth would not be expected to admit they have a problem and want to change—they would simply have a right to resources regardless.

The neoliberal system of allocating aid also affects the way success is measured, both officially and in the lives of youth. Since social services are designed to address the holes left in the lives of youth, not the structural causes of these holes, success is measured by watching individual youth find improved wellbeing. In addition, youth workers have often taken what amount to low-paying jobs based partly on the rewards inherent in helping others. This investment in helping youth means that regardless of what caused their problems, workers want to help youth find their own potential and succeed in whatever way they can. What this can result in, though, is the reassertion of individualized aspects of social problems through programming. A key example of this is the way unemployment and financial need is handled. For example, the respondent below recognizes the financial needs of the youth he works with, and encourages them to do what they can to improve their employability.

> There's a McDonald's at the end of the street, so it's the classic example where they don't want to work there 'cause it's hard work and it's low pay and low appreciation. In the long run it's really going to pay off for them but they don't have that long-term vision 'cause they need quick cash for themselves or for family or whatever it might be. It's to get that work experience, the employment, and have something on your resume. They can't get jobs at Safeway 'cause it's all unionized and big deals. And other than that, there's really no other major commercial things until you get out to Garden City where I believe that there's a prejudiced issue saying, 'An Aboriginal kid coming from the North End, they're not going to show up' or whatever.

This respondent encourages the youth to accept the hard work, low pay, and low appreciation because of the pay-off in the long run, while simultaneously recognizing the poverty these youth experience (the need for "quick cash"), the difficulty getting higher paying (unionized) jobs, the lack of commerce and therefore job opportunities in the inner city, and the racism Aboriginal youth encounter. While he doesn't believe these to be problems 'of' individual youth, or that is it their responsibility to fix them, the effect is very similar simply because helping individual youth is one of the only options available. This reinforces and deepens social inequalities because the responsible choice "is to accept and conform to normative post-Fordist socio-political and economic arrangements even though they are likely to keep them in a state of perpetual economic marginalization and social exclusion" (Gray 2009:453). This is not because youth workers are complicit in this outcome. Instead, it is a by-product of a system of social services that leaves targeting youth as the only avenue available for accessing resources in the current funding arrangement.

Risk, as a technology of neoliberal governance, creates the conditions within which youth serving agencies are funded. For example, they work within the pre-

established assumption that unemployment is an individual problem that is best identified in terms of individual risk factors and not something arising from changes in the job market, the impact of liberal economic policies, and shifts in the economy. This assumption reinforces neoliberal capitalist principles of "social investment and opportunity creation" that emphasizes "social inclusion via the labour market and equality of opportunity to succeed by one's own efforts" (Kemshall 2008: 25). Government funds are being spent not on job creation, but on the development of employment skills that conform to the capitalist dynamic through the production of 'docile bodies' rather than active citizens (Hartman 2005: 58). Youth are expected to accept low paying, part time, and insecure work environments without questioning the political and economic dynamics that cause the lack of job opportunities and the meagre conditions of those jobs that are available. Missing from this consideration is the impact of decisions and actions by both employers and policy makers.

In sum, youth-serving agencies—despite their welfarized motivations and tactical resistances—contribute to a larger regime of neoliberal governance because their programs are both created out of, and work to support, the illusion that the state is no longer implicated in, or responsible for, the troubles youth face. Structural constraints result in programs that publically support this view, but it also shows up through programming due to the constraints such a system imposes. Thus, although some youth may be helped in the process, youth serving agencies end up validating a system that continues to produce a society in which youth are in need.

Expert Knowledges

Another significant aspect of advanced liberal government is a new relation between government and knowledge based on actuarial regimes of accounting and management (Rose 1996). Whereas all forms of government use knowledge to govern, liberal strategies depend more on the social and human sciences and expertise is used in the production, circulation, accumulation, authorization, and realization of 'truth.' This knowledge "is the "know-how" that promises to render docile the unruly domains over which government is to be exercised, to make government possible and to make government better" (Rose 1996: 45). Thus, a second area of governance youth-serving agencies participate in is the collection of data that support a construction of at-risk youth that leads to the control of this population through neoliberal rationalities.

As mentioned, techniques of control have become 'pluralised' in neoliberal states (Rose, 1996: 56), which means that governments must rely on agencies that exist at an arms-length from government to provide these data. Since the funding structure necessitates that agencies comply with funders' requests for accountability, agencies must produce outcome measures that show evidence that their programs are accomplishing what they set out to accomplish. Since managing risk is often a component of the funding, youth-serving agencies become key experts in the dissemination of knowledge regarding at-risk youth. The youth themselves become sources of information, and the gathering of these data is one of the primary responsibilities of the service providers in return for the funding granted to them. These ratings determine how 'clients' are managed within a system of "individualization of social inequality" (Beck, 1992: 126, cited in Rigakos 1999: 139); thus, these technologies, although they have their own

dynamics, nevertheless develop primarily in terms of their role in relation to specific political programmes (O'Malley 1996: 193). In other words, these data produce knowledge or truths about the subject that can then be used to categorize and discipline the subject accordingly.

Data collection is especially important in regard to risk management. Since actuarial practice relies on prediction and minimization of risks statistics are necessarily employed to determine risk profiles. In the case of those deemed to be 'at risk,' a large array of techniques of social investigation—such as risk assessment tools, surveys, and interviews—are used to assess the level of risk they present, as well as the changes to their risk profile over the course of treatment. We see this trend very clearly from the interviews. For example, this respondent discusses the data collection the agency does when administering a program for youth 'at risk' of joining gangs.

> Over the course of the year we are to administer three of these data instruments which are essentially, not surveys, but a series of questions that are aimed to identify whether or not [youth] belong to certain populations and to try to identify certain aspects of their behaviour.

Officially, collecting these data is meant to know more about, and determine the success of, the programs agencies offer, but it achieves a second goal of identifying, documenting, and classifying at-risk youth who require intervention.

This is not to imply that youth-serving agency staff believes that risk evaluations are necessary, meaningful, or useful. In fact, this is the power of neoliberal strategies of control that are dispersed, and work through, a variety of technologies of governance. The youth-serving agency workers themselves do not need to believe in the risk assessments for them to be an effective form of governance; they only need to administer the tests, record the outcomes, and submit the data. This is evidenced in the ways agency

workers in this study were consistently sceptical about both the legitimacy of what the surveys and interviews were able to assess, but completed them because funding requirements dictated they do so in order for the program to continue. For example, the respondent below recognizes that while it is being established that the youth he works with are 'at risk,' he is not convinced that the criteria used to determine risk is meaningful.

> Now, whether or not I feel like these questionnaires provide accurate information or are somehow evidence of their belonging to a particular group, I mean, sometimes I even question that myself. But this is the system that the government has put in place to try to measure whether or not we are in fact working with the target population, which is youth who are at-risk of joining gangs.

There was even a common acknowledgement that the risk profiles are evaluating and measuring the wrong indicators of youth troubles and agency successes. This respondent discusses the limitations she sees in the risk evaluations measuring the right outcomes.

> I don't know if this is the best way to have a sense of what's really going on because this is going to show that maybe a youth came in, their housing situation got better, they built a better relationship with their parent or caregiver, they might have escalated in their gang or decreased in their gang over time since they've been here and they left with a job. Ultimately, the point of our program is to tackle the gang issue and decrease crime in the neighbourhood, right, by doing this. But I don't see it that way.

Here the youth worker objects to the measurement of risk because it ignores the needs of youth and only focuses on one element: risk of joining gangs. Yet, this does not mean that these data weren't collected and submitted.

We see, then, the ways in which the technology of risk works within the framework of decentralized state welfare. In fact, the ambiguous definition of risk allows the reach of these technologies to expand as youth service workers do justify evaluating

any youth as 'at risk' if they feel that the youth would benefit from the program, even if they don't exactly fit the risk profile, as explained here:

> You know, if there's a youth who is just having trouble in the community and just struggling and, you know, having a mentor would really help, well I think that's how we look at this… That's where I think that term 'at risk' is so, it's a big broad umbrella, you know?

Thus, whether or not the agency workers believe in this construction of youth, substantial *evidence* of this construction is being produced. While this is perhaps innocuous, even beneficial, at the level of art classes, sports recreation, and leadership training, it is less so if used to justify increased surveillance and policing of youth.

It is important to note, however, that the expanding governance of youth the risk discourse allows does not affect all youth equally. Youth in certain neighbourhoods, of certain socio-economic backgrounds, and of a particular race or ethnicity are documented as 'at risk' much more frequently because, frankly, while all youth could be at risk, the ones who are using youth serving agencies tend to fall along certain class and racial/ethnic lines, as this respondent identifies:

> When you call a fourteen-year-old kid from North Point Douglas an 'at-risk youth' what are you saying to that kid, you know, you're saying one of two things, either you're 'at risk' of doing something real bad or you're 'at risk' of having something real bad done to you. Now, we certainly don't go into Charleswood and look at a fourteen year old there and call him or her an 'at risk youth.' We look at that fourteen year old and say, 'You know, your future's so bright, you've got so much potential, the world has so much to offer you.'

So while not all youth are understood to be 'at risk,' they are being documented as such through youth-serving agencies in order to fulfill their funding obligations. This means that poor, racialized, ethnic, and marginalized youth are the ones being constructed as 'at

risk' through these expert knowledges, legitimating the political view that society is experiencing a problem with potentially dangerous, potentially violent, and potentially criminal youth—the majority of whom appear to come from poor and marginalized backgrounds.

Youth serving agency workers are not unaware of the power that discourses hold, as we see in the quotation above and here in this comment that outlines more explicitly how discourse shapes the way we understand the behaviours of certain youth, but not others:

> You know, it's like, 'Well, it's the North End,' everybody talks about it, but in Tuxedo people aren't talking about that kind of stuff, do you know what I mean … And it's not illegal activity—it's more just kids are being kids and it's like the lens it's seen through is, is interpreted in this very different way. Like, you drop them off to the parents and the parents are like, 'Oh, you know, you're going to be in trouble tomorrow.' But the police don't feel—like, then you have to send Child and Family Services in.

We can see the power of the risk discourse at work here, in that the same behaviours are not deemed 'risky' if they happen within affluent neighbourhoods. This is in keeping with Foucault's (1990) view that it is within discourse that power and knowledge are joined. In this case, the risk discourse allows for a construction of poor youth as different from, and more at-risk than, their wealthier counterparts. Regardless of the resistance found within youth-serving agencies, the risk discourse must be used to acquire and maintain funding. In turn, as experts in the field of troubled youth, the risk discourse used in programming further legitimates this view. Thus, as Foucault (1990: 100) asserts, "[W]e must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a

multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies." Within the strategies of neoliberalism, 'risk' is used as a discursive element in the collection of knowledge on youth as an 'at-risk' population, even though it is resisted in the everyday strategies of youth-serving agencies.

The concern here is that while youth-serving agencies interpret this term to mean that youth are 'at risk' of harm or danger and thus in need of help and care, how these data are put to use is out of their hands. Depending on the political will, these data can just as easily be interpreted as youth who are 'at risk' of becoming criminal, violent, or a threat to national security—thus justifying restricted freedoms and harsh interventions—but these strategies are hidden from view, as demonstrated here:

> All of the information that they get from us is done strictly anonymously so we have a number associated with each participant and the information they receive is all done anonymously through these numbers that are identifying the participants. So they don't get any names.

While this anonymity protects individual youth from being disciplined for behaviours that are revealed through these interviews, it does nothing to protect the construction of youth as a problem population statistically. Focusing on risk conceals the investment in reproduction that this knowledge gathering contributes to: a reproduction of the construction of youth as contemporary folk devils choosing to engage in anti-social behaviours.

In sum, the entrepreneurial aspects of social services found in neoliberal rationalities that requires the submission of outcome measures and evaluations to funders means that an immense amount of 'expert knowledge' documenting this problem population is able to be collected by the state and other financially powerful organizations in an arms-length and, thus, seemingly amoral fashion. This documentation

works to legitimate that which the government already understood: that there is a population of youth (perhaps all youth, but especially marginalized youth) who are in need of intervention, treatment, and discipline. Youth as a population become classified in terms of 'risk' in order to manage behaviours in a de-centralized way (Rose and Miller 1992 cited in Rigagkos 1999: 139), yet resulting in more intense levels of intervention to target groups deemed to be 'problematic' or, in this case, 'at risk.' Within the technology of 'responsibilization' found in transformative risk governance, this intervention can end up channelling marginalized youth into two directions: success means they choose responsibly by taking low paying, dead-end jobs; and failure means they choose to reject pro-social behaviours and warrant harsher, often criminal justice, responses.

Resisting Governance

It is not a foregone conclusion that youth-serving agencies are destined to be agents of governance over youth. The development of risk management has been adapted to political programs such as welfarism, but this does not mean that the continued power of risk technologies is assured (O'Malley, 1996: 193). Youth-serving agencies are neither spaces of total resistance, nor spaces of total governance; instead, it is more important to identify the ways in which both governance and resistance work in order to find ways of supporting youth in long-term and meaningful ways. Youth-serving agencies may indeed act to publically legitimize an individualized approach to finding solutions to social issues caused by economic and political injustices, as well as fostering opportunities for government to gather expert knowledges used to construct and therefore better control problem populations, but the tactical resistance to these strategies is not to be dismissed

as wholly ineffective. Resisting discourses in any way is an essential cultural component to large scale political change. As Foucault purports,

> We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. (1990: 101)

Small resistances keep an alternate belief system alive; they may not immediately lead to a revolution, but they set the conditions necessary for action to follow in the future.

Resistance beyond the tactical realm is already evident in subtle and emerging ways in the interviews with youth workers. Two examples of this resistance are, first, the refusal of funding that requires agencies to use the risk discourse and, second, the move towards public advocacy, as suggested by the formation of coalitions that can act collectively on behalf of youth. These two forms of resistance are less tactical in nature because, in the case of the first situation, agencies are not consuming or using risk differently—they are refusing to consume it at all. In the second example, the recognition that structural change needs to be addressed has resulted in the youth-serving agencies forming a coalition that can provide a platform on which to advocate for political and strategic change. So while these forms of resistance are not yet able to change the dominant neoliberal strategy, they do demonstrate that tactics are able to develop into, and create the beginnings of, more substantial change.

Refusing Funding

Youth-serving agencies do more than refurbish the risk discourse to make it work within a mandate based on meeting the needs of youth; some agencies go further by refusing to access certain funding at all if it means that the agency will have to officially change its

mandate in doing so. Although this is only possible for agencies that are in a stronger position financially, we see from the interviews that some that are able to, do decide to operate on a smaller budget in order to maintain control over their mandate, goals, and programming. This agency worker frames this decision in terms of the impact it has on the quality of the programming within an agency that rejects an emphasis on risk, described here as crime prevention.

> We used to get federal funding without having to state that we were doing crime prevention, and now you actually have to change your programming, you can't just be like, this is what we believe is a good program and this is what works… Basically, we're not going to change our program to be a government study. It would detract from what we're doing and it wouldn't be a high quality program, it would be a government study.

This respondent is implicitly acknowledging that the construction of youth as 'at risk' changes the way treatment is designed, and refuses to participate in treating youth as 'pre-criminals' who need help in adopting more pro-social behaviours. Without this construction tied to programming, this agency is able to focus more on delivering programming that they believe youth need now for their increased and continued wellbeing.

In another case, funding and the requirements that come with it were also refused because of a belief that solutions based on 'risk' are not effective avenues for change.

> We get very little federal funds and we choose it that way. It's not worth it because in the end if you get your program approved you won't be achieving what you set out to achieve. For example, crime prevention, we would submit a program that would be really to prevent crime, and they would say 'Well, this would take more than just one year so it doesn't fit our criteria.' Well, when does crime prevention just take a year?

This respondent is adamant that real crime prevention takes more than quick solutions that target individual change rather than structural systemic change. Refusing the funding again means that the agency refuses to participate in this construction of youth as a 'transformative risk subject.' Both these quotations above show that by refusing to target at-risk youth, they remove themselves from the process of collecting and compiling evaluations and outcome measures that act to construct troubled youth through a framework of risk. While this approach may not lead to changes in the dominant order, it does remove the agency from the participation in the construction of youth based on 'risk,' and thus removes the agency from acting on the will of the state. This approach, as such, differs in nature from the tactics used by other agencies who acquire the funding for at-risk youth, yet resist in the re-use of this concept in practice.

This form of resistance to neoliberal values and directives is made possible, in part, because social services function at an arms-length from government. Rather than government-run social services that would be controlled directly through a government mandate, this distance allows community agencies to apply for funding from a variety of sources and, thus, maintain their own visions and goals. So, while this structure does make it difficult to secure stable funding, it also opens this space of resistance. For this reason and others, many agency workers admitted that they prefer this model over government-run social services, as expressed here:

> I think we should be eligible for some federal government funding and it's too bad that we haven't been, and we do struggle more probably because of that, but I like the idea of us being arms length, I like the idea of us not being mandated by the government.

Agencies are using this feature of a neoliberal funding structure to their advantage. Yet, this is not a tactic in Certeau's (1984) sense of the word because it is a refusal to consume, rather than a re-use of neoliberal production.

Public Advocacy

The second form of resistance suggested from the interviews is the creation of a coalition between youth-serving agencies. If youth are not being constructed as at-risk subjects, then it becomes apparent that structural changes need to be implemented to meet the needs of youth. The focus is thereby shifted off of individual youth and onto political change, which, as discussed earlier, many respondents acknowledged.

> I think there's two pieces of the puzzle. One is at a grassroots level. We need to be running ongoing programming based on what our youth want, so that its interesting, it's fun, its engaging and its relevant to them… But the other piece of it is there are systematic barriers, you know. For instance, at the moment the federal government's focus is on intervention for youth in gangs, rather than prevention. What we notice is that families who have safe, decent, and affordable housing feel more secure, there's less family breakdown, there's fewer challenges within the family. Those who have access to daycare or to family supports again are more stable so there's more chance that families will stay together and be strong and support each other.

Thus, youth workers believe that helping youth also means reforming social policy, and while simply believing this does not make change, beliefs such as these did lead to the development of the Coalition of Community Based Youth-Serving Agencies in Winnipeg.

These views now have a vehicle for expression through a coalition that can be a strong voice of advocacy working to bring attention to the structural issues affecting

youth. The tactics used by youth workers suggest that this service sector fosters a culture that supports aspects of a rights-based model of welfare (Esping-Andersen, 1990), as opposed to a strategy of responsibilization found within neoliberal allocation of aid. The forming of a coalition is a step towards acting on these beliefs. For instance, this respondent identifies the coalition as being an opportunity for resistance on a larger scale because it acts as a unified voice speaking on behalf of youth.

> We're all individually representative of our organizations, but we really think that that's an opportunity through the coalition to be a united voice so that we can go to government and we can try and influence policy and legislation... I think individually we're strong but together we're that much stronger.

So although the coalition does not automatically equal political advocacy, we do see evidence of tactics of resistance leading to action-oriented changes that may be able to counter the strategies of neoliberalism more directly in the future.

This advocacy work has the potential not only for resisting risk as a strategy, but also other aspects of neoliberalism. For example, this respondent believes that if social issues were addressed adequately at the structural level, then her agency and others like hers would cease to exist—a possibility she wishes was a reality.

> There are lots of systemic changes that have to happen, otherwise organizations like ours will only continue to grow. You'll get more and more and more of these… As much as we range from prevention to intervention, you know, I would prefer organizations like ours not to have to exist. But we exist because we've created a society that has basically left an entire population of people out in the cold. As a community, we blame the kids. How does that even make sense to people to blame children?

Within the dominant neoliberal framework, 'risk' is unlimited and therefore can only hope to be managed and not ended. This respondent's perspective counters this view by restating social problems as preventable through public policy. In doing so, she puts into

question the way social services are increasingly being run under a business-like model that manages clients, rather than helps those in need. The coalition, and the advocacy work it could accomplish, might also lead to changes within the broader neoliberal tendency of seeing social services as a growth sector, in which notions of entrepreneurialism, accountability, and economic growth are promoted.

Concluding Remarks

The ability of risk to work as a technology of governance promoting neoliberal individualization and responsibilization results in youth-serving agencies contributing to a larger regime of governance despite everyday resistances to the risk discourse. Succumbing to the demands of funders ─ which is often a crucial aspect to continued access to much needed resources for youth ─ means that targeting the individual in response to social inequalities becomes established as a cultural and political norm, publically validating the neoliberal approaches to social services and welfare provisions. Programs become tailored to the needs of youth only in so far as they help the individual become better adjusted to survive within an individualized free-market society that perpetuates on a social scale the inequalities youth face. In addition, the accountability and outcome measures demanded of agencies by funders results in a stream of expert knowledge that legitimates a culture of neoliberalism through statistics and evidence – evidence, often, of what 'works' in the transformation of youth, even though agency workers often deny that the present system is working. This suggests that, in certain aspects, agencies who use the risk discourse inadvertently contribute to the process of

governance by acting as smoke screens that protect neoliberal interests, guiding attention away from structural inequalities and towards individual responsibilities.

Yet, everyday resistances found in the ways the discourse of 'risk' is used are crucial aspects in developing a cultural milieu able to support more substantial changes. As agency employees resist the construction of youth as 'at risk,' a cultural understanding within these social services is developed on which to base future decisions and actions. As the interviews reveal, youth workers continue to acknowledge systemic and structural barriers to helping youth, rather than blindly absorbing dominant principles of neoliberal individualization and responsibilization. While their daily practices based on these beliefs may not result in immediate revolt, the necessary cultural landscape for change is being cultivated. This can be evidenced through the will of some agencies to refuse funding tied to risk and other neoliberal principles, as well as the formation of coalitions that recognize structural inequalities and have the potential to affect political and economic restructuring through youth advocacy work.

CONCLUSION

The construction of troubled youth as 'at-risk' performs a particular function in states of neoliberal governance: it redirects the focus from the root causes of social problems towards the risks associated with these problems, and positions youth as individually responsible for the management of these dangers. In this new culture of control, transformative risk technologies are used to oblige troubled youth to take responsibility for the management of their own needs and risks in order to increase their own wellbeing and chances of success—without any attempt to eliminate structural impediments. As such, the construction of youth as 'at risk' is a powerful form of governance that allows policy makers to direct their attention towards the targeted population. In contrast, if the 'problem' of troubled youth was redefined as a failure of the economic and political sector to invest in social assistance, opportunities for employment, and economic re-distribution strategies, the 'problem' would be framed differently and different policy implications would follow.

This thesis addressed the question: to what extent are youth-serving agencies contributing to a regime of governance in line with neoliberal notions of risk and responsibility? Interviews with youth workers have revealed that youth-serving agencies can act as a site for the deployment of these neoliberal technologies of risk—both by constructing youth as 'at risk' in their official language and program mandates, and by addressing these problems through programs that target the individual. This deployment helps to legitimate the treatment of individuals for the inequalities they experience, and to substantiate statistically that at-risk youth are a problem population through production of expert knowledges that conform to government demands for accountability, outcome

measures, and evidence of program success. Thus, although very few youth-serving agencies actually understand youth as 'at risk' within a neoliberal framework—and in fact very plainly acknowledge the political and economic conditions that create the troubles youth face—'risk' nonetheless acts as a technology of governance that helps determine and implement the very system youth-serving agencies function within, thus hampering the ways the risk discourse is valiantly subverted in youth workers' everyday practices. The risk discourse establishes a system in which youth continue to face both troubles that result from leaving the structural inequalities un-tethered, and the prospect of criminalization for those who are unable to 'choose' to find a foothold in the steep wall of neoliberal capitalism.

Yet, resistance to the risk discourse, evident in daily practices of youth-serving agencies, is not futile or in vain. Instead, these tactical responses represent and reproduce an oppositional culture of welfare and social justice, setting the stage for more substantial future changes to the way aid is allocated within neoliberal societies. In fact, these changes are already evident in the ways some agencies sacrifice funding to avoid using the risk discourse, defying both the construction of youth as transformative risk subjects and the neoliberal trend towards the entrepreneurialization of social services. It is also apparent in the collective formations of agency coalitions that can work to act on what all the agency workers acknowledge: that marginalized youth are being set up to fail in a system that ignores the needs of its most vulnerable populations. A coalition is a powerful voice that can help to reconstruct the problem of troubled youth as a problem with government and private elites in order to make it obvious that corrective measures need to be directed towards those groups and away from youth themselves. Thus, while

youth serving agencies represent sites of both power and resistance in the struggle to construct and manage youth in neoliberal times, their potential for becoming sites of defence and change for youth is also evident.

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Appendix 1

The Coalition of Community Based Youth Serving Agencies

Member List

Art City
616 Broadway Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0W8
(204) 775-9856
http://artcityinc.com

Boys & Girls Clubs of Winnipeg
929 Main Street
Winnipeg, MB R2W 3P2
(204) 982-4940
www.wbgc.mb.ca

Broadway Neighbourhood Centre
185 Young Street
Winnipeg, MB R3C 1Y8
(204) 772-9253
thebnc.ca

Graffiti Art Programming Inc.
109 Higgins Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3B 0B5
(204) 667-9960
www.graffitigallery.ca

Indian & Métis Friendship Centre
45 Robinson Street
Winnipeg, MB R2M 2R8
(204) 582-1296
www.imfc.net

International Centre
2nd Floor, 406 Edmonton Street
Winnipeg, MB R3B 2M2
(204) 943-9158 ext. 300
www.international-centre.ca

Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM)
95 Ellen Street
Winnipeg, MB R3A 1S8

(204) 943-8765
www.ircom.ca

Kildonan Youth Activity Centre
800 Salter Street (Seven Oaks Middle School)
Winnipeg, MB R2V 2E6
(204) 223-2639
www.7oaks.org/kyac.aspx

Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre
94 McGregor Street
Winnipeg, MB R2W 4V5
(204) 925-0300
http://www.mamawi.com

N.E.E.D.S. Inc
251-A Notre Dame Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1N7
(204) 940-1260
http://www.needsinc.ca/

Ndinawemaaganag Endawaad
370/372 Flora Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2W 2R5
(204) 586-2588

Maples Youth Activity Centre
1520 Jefferson Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R2V 2W5
(204) 632-0258
http://www.7oaks.org/myac.aspx

Resource Assistance for Youth, Inc. (RaY)
195 Young Street
Winnipeg, MB R3C 3S8
(204) 783-5617
www.rayinc.ca

Rossbrook House
658 Ross Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3A 0M1
(204) 949-4090
www.rossbrookhouse.ca

Spence Neighbourhood Association
430 Langside Street
Winnipeg, MB R3B 2T5
(204) 783-0292
www.spenceneighbourhood.org

Teen Stop Jeunesse
533-A St. Anne's Road
Winnipeg, MB R2M 3E8
(204) 254-1618

West Broadway Youth Outreach
203-222 Furby Street
Winnipeg, MB R3C 2A7
(204) 774-0451

West Central Community Program
103-365 McGee Street
Winnipeg, MB R3G 3M5
(204) 772-9315

YMCA/YWCA
301 Vaughan Street
Winnipeg, MB R3B 2N7
(204) 953-7311
www.Ywinnipeg.ca

Appendix 2

Youth in Trouble Interview Schedule

The purpose of this study is to draw upon your experience as a person who works in an agency that provides services for youth. We are interested in exploring two main issues: 1. what you consider to be the main difficulties or troubles that Winnipeg youth are presently encountering; and 2. the challenges that you encounter in your work in supporting youth and addressing these troubles.

Background/Experience:

1. Can you give me a brief overview of your agency/program?

Part One – Issues Facing Youth

1. How would you describe the population of youth that your agency works with?
2. What do you see as the main issues currently confronting these youth?
3. How do these issues affect the daily lives of youth?
4. What do you see as the causes of these problems?
5. Would you say that these youth are "at-risk" or "high-risk"? How do you understand that term?

Part Two – Issues Facing Youth Serving Agencies

Questions for Program Providers

1. What is the mandate of your program/organization?
2. How is 'youth' defined within that mandate?
3. Describe the program(s) you offer to youth

- Who are the youth you target for this program?
- What criteria are used to select the youth eligible for this program?
- How do you find/recruit youth for your program?
- How many youth are involved?
- What does your program hope to achieve/prevent in the lives of youth?

4. What do you see as the major barriers in helping the youth you target?
5. Is your own work ever constrained by the mandate of the larger organization you work within? If so, do you apply any strategies to help mediate your own concerns with the official mandate?
6. What do you feel is the greatest achievement of your program overall?

Questions for Funding Administrators

1. What are the main sources of funding for your agency?

2. What strategies do you use to secure funding?
3. What would you say are the current trends in what funding agencies want to see in organizations that help youth?
4. Do you ever feel strain between your organization and others based on competition for funding?
5. What do you feel is the greatest achievement of your agency overall?
6. What percentage of resources go toward securing funding?
7. How many funding bodies do you work with within a year approx?
8. Do you wish to see an alternate model for how agencies are funded?

Thank you for participating in this study.