
Playing with Names: How Children Create Identities of Self in Anthropological Research

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Abstract: Children have long been present in anthropological research but rarely does their involvement receive the critical attention that is given to adult participants. This paper examines what is revealed about the construction of identities of self when the research-related play of two girls in quite different ethnographic contexts is examined. Drawing on research in Bridgetown, Barbados, and Saskatoon, Canada, it is argued that through the playful search for a pseudonym, these two girls speak to issues of poverty and prostitution that highlight how they see, experience and contribute to the world around them as active agents, rather than passive recipients, of cultural processes.

Résumé: Les enfants sont présents depuis longtemps dans la recherche en anthropologie, mais leur implication a rarement reçu l'attention qu'on a accordée aux adultes. Cet article décrit ce qui est exprimé de la construction du moi quand on examine le jeu proposé à deux fillettes dans des contextes ethnographiques différents. M'appuyant sur une recherche à Bridgetown, aux Barbades, et à Saskatoon, au Canada, je soutiens que grâce la recherche d'un pseudonyme, sous forme de jeu, ces deux fillettes commentent des questions de pauvreté et de prostitution qui expriment la façon dont elles voient, subissent et contribuent à construire le monde autour d'elles en tant qu'agents actifs des processus culturels et non comme des objets passifs.

Introduction: Positioning Children in Anthropological Research

It appears as though the Victorian adage that children are to be seen and not heard resonates today throughout the many academic studies of global poverty, social adversity and personal despair. Heightening the visibility of children and persuading readers of the significance of the issue being discussed, images of children often emerge in these studies through thick descriptions of mundane and extraordinary human activity that takes place under adverse conditions. As Susan Moeller (1999) so aptly illustrates, this academic trend mirrors the prevailing discourses of disaster and aid projected through Western media in which the bodies of children and (to a lesser but still significant extent) women are posed and choreographed to reflect the ravages of disease, famine, war and death in order to elicit compassion and, of course, money from a more affluent audience that consumes these images. However, despite the undeniable visibility of children in these academic and popular representations of despair, rarely are the experiences, thoughts, actions and opinions of the children themselves explored analytically in a way that gives voice to these marginalized social actors or that elucidates what it means to be a child under such conditions. In effect, the children are seen, but not heard.

Anthropological research is certainly not exempt from this general trend. Indeed, much of my own work on the cultural constructions of disease, violence, invasion and risk (and hence my focus here on representations of despair) has involved children, and yet it has only been recently that I have begun to theorize childhood in any meaningful way. Although I consistently incorporated discussions of difference throughout my work in order to explore issues related to identity (such as dynamics of race, regionalism, nationalism and globalization), I unquestioningly extended adult-oriented perspectives of cultural

processes to children, viewing them as “little people” who are the objects, not agents, of those processes. Lest I become too mired in my own *mea culpa* here, it is important to note that I was not alone in doing so. Virginia Caputo (1995) cogently argues that children have long been present in our descriptive ethnographic accounts, but seldom central to the theoretical foundations in which these accounts are embedded. There are, therefore, few works within the field that can substantively inform our research with children or our thinking about childhoods. She notes that “In many of the societies where anthropologists carry out research, children are usually accorded a great deal of importance and concern. The problem remains, however, that anthropologists . . . exclude children by representing them as appendages to adult society. Therefore, while it would be unfair to argue that children have not been visible in anthropological writing, the problem of their inaudibility remains” (Caputo, 1995: 22).

This “seen but not heard” approach to representing children may well be a reflection of the anthropological tendency to adopt “the historically and culturally-bound model of children as pre-social, passive, dependent and part of a private ‘natural’ domestic sphere beyond the realm of social or cultural analysis” (Helleiner, 1999: 31). However, this model—grounded in psychological and sociological theories of socialization wherein children are viewed as if always in a state of becoming and not, as Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Carolyn Sargent (1998: 13) put it, as “being-in-and-for-the-world” in a contemporary sense—has begun to be challenged by those who are establishing a unique anthropology of childhoods and children. These scholars are contesting, more so than ever before, the marginal status often assigned to children through their analytical absence and we now have ethnographies in which children are active participants, “setting agendas, establishing boundaries, [and] negotiating what may be said about them” (Scheper-Hughes and Sargent, 1998: 15; see also Caputo, 1995; Goldstein, 1998; James, 1993, 1995; Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman, 1998; Stephens, 1995; Thorne, 1993). This paper aims to contribute to this mounting challenge by presenting the ways in which two girls enthusiastically engaged as research participants in two different fieldwork settings, one in Bridgetown, Barbados and the other in Saskatoon, Canada.

Because children often relate to and represent the world around them in unique ways that reflect their contemporary social localities and individual interests, their investment in anthropological research often takes a different form from that of most adult participants. Through-

out my work, I have found that children become very interested in the performative aspect of research, acting out—in playful and what many adults would see as unfocused ways—those cultural dramas that they feel are important and that I might want to see. Even under what I would consider dire circumstances of poverty and forced prostitution (to be considered here), research becomes a game full of laughter, unpredictable twists and turns, impromptu action, sudden stops and energetic starts. If the researcher partakes as a player in this game, systematic note taking and in-depth interviewing are often implausible. There are, therefore, very real methodological challenges for the anthropologist who has most likely been trained to conduct research among adults. But, as I have recently come to appreciate, there are also great possibilities to uncover important cultural dynamics through the engagement in and analysis of research related play. Indeed, one of the meanings of “play” that Barrie Thorne (1993: 5) explores in her ethnography of school children relates to “a scope of opportunity for action . . . [that is] grounded in the concept of possibility.” In this paper, I examine how two girls playfully acted to construct and reconstruct representations of self for an anthropological audience as a way to represent both who they believe themselves to be now and who they could possibly be in different worldly contexts. These constructions and reconstructions of self were mediated and expressed through the girls’ enthusiastic search for the pseudonyms by which they would be known in the work.

Similar to children’s place in anthropological research, the processes we use to name where and particularly with whom we work are familiar to most but critically analyzed by few. Usually, a very brief statement—most often buried in an endnote—informs readers that in order to protect the anonymity of our research participants, pseudonyms will be used for the people who worked with us in our endeavours. My aim here is to begin to excavate these naming processes from the endnote depths. I argue that looking at them for what they reveal about cultural constructions of identities is particularly relevant to a discussion of children and child research. I have found that among the children participating in my research projects, the idea of choosing a new name by which they can be known, even for a short time and in written work that they may never read, fascinates them, perhaps because they are more explicitly engaged in processes of language acquisition than many adults. These children are therefore very aware of the power of names and naming, a power that is also readily recognized by many anthropologists and social linguists. Richard Alford (1988), for

example, echoes many feminist scholars (e.g., Lakoff, 1975; Pramaggiore, 1992; Preston, 1994; Spender, 1984) when he argues that the suggestion that names are superficial and bereft of significant effect (reflected colloquially in the well-known children's maxim "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me") does not reflect the abstruse power dynamics of language and discourse that are played out in communities of all kinds. Rather, "names do color our perceptions of named entities, whether they are objects, places, or people. Semantically meaningful given names . . . appear to have significant effect on their bearers" (Alford, 1988: 59). As children name, rename, and nickname those who are around them as well as themselves, we have a great opportunity to explore the cultural dynamics that underlie their perceptions of self and others. My interest in this paper is particularly in how these perceptions are forged through children's involvement in research, how they craft an anthropological presence through their participatory search for a research name, and what we can learn from their efforts.

Kizzy's Search for a Research Name

Sometimes I feel very tiny . . . Like I [could] fit in a thimble, like the tooth fairy . . . but all's I gotta do is imagine someone calling my name and I be feeling big again. That is why I like thinking about what name you should call me in your notes.

— Kizzy (Bridgetown, Barbados, 1999)

I first met "Kizzy," a seven-year-old girl who lives with her grandmother in a very poor part of Bridgetown, Barbados in June, 1999, while conducting a study of how women and children relate the poverty and violence in their communities to their health status. Sandra, Kizzy's grandmother, was tremendously helpful to me in my work, spending many hours telling me about her life and the ways in which the escalation of violence and the pronounced poverty in her community were affecting her own health because her ability to care for her granddaughter was being compromised. During our very first interview, I mentioned, as most anthropologists routinely do, that I would use pseudonyms—"fictitious and made-up names"—to ensure that their anonymity would be protected. Instantly, Kizzy sprung up and repeatedly asked "What name you be using for me?" I replied by asking her what name she wanted me to use and from that point forward, all of our subsequent meetings involved lengthy discussions and playful performances as she deliberated what name would best suit her. During these encounters, Sandra kept interjecting, "How 'bouts Kezziah?" but Kizzy always shook off the suggestion,

preferring Dinah, Lelanna, Sonya, Safeya and Jamaella. As she pondered each name, Kizzy would act out the characteristics that she thought the names conveyed, and these performances inevitably led to rather elaborate "what if" games in which Kizzy would craft identities for herself and others that she imagined could exist in a different country or community. The name "Sonya" was Kizzy's favourite for several weeks. She explained that "it be pretty 'cause it be French and English and it be makin' me feel like a *real* Caribbean girl 'cause with this name, I be from all over the Caribbean, not just Barbados." Despite the Russian origin that most scholars of onomastics attribute to the name, Kizzy believes it to be of regional significance, reflecting two of the major languages most commonly spoken in the Eastern Caribbean. With this name and, as we will see, the rhyming variations of it, Kizzy is able to transport herself to different "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1983) beyond Barbados, affirming her Caribbean identity. This kind of regionalism, which figures so prominently in Kizzy's attempts to construct an international research persona, reflects her awareness of the widespread migration that marks the Caribbean and has led many residents to "assume the permeability of national boundaries" (Thomas-Hope, 1992: 20) and "question the notions of a bounded state" (Carnegie, 1982: 13). Trinidad, the closest neighbouring island to Barbados, is one destination that Kizzy envisions as she "tries on" the names that reflect the imagined character of nation and individual:

Yeah, I be liking the name Sonya, but I be liking Tonya and Lonya, and oh yeah, Shoshanna, and what's 'bout Bonya and Konya? . . . Tonya and Lonya, they be long, tall girls, both of 'em rich and fancy and stuff. They be from Trinidad for sure. If I were Trini [Trinidadian], I be a Tonya or Lonya for sure 'cause I know that I be rich in Trinidad. I just hate bein' so poor here . . . I know we's poor. Granny says we aren't but I be knowing we's real poor . . . But Lonya, she aren't poor . . . She's a beautiful rich girl. Maybe you should be callin' me Lonya in your notes so I can be rich! Rich! RICH!

Here, Kizzy constructs an image of wealthy, thin Trinidadian girls and in so doing embraces the popularized view of Trinidad as an island of economic prosperity and possibility (a view that is hardly endorsed by the Trinidadians who now live in Barbados) that she then contrasts with the poverty of her current life. She had great fun dramatizing Lonya's stature and wealth by pretending to throw what she called a "furry scarf" (a stole) around her neck, swivelling her hips, and imitating one of the dialects that reflects the East Indian heritage of many

Trinidadians. At first, her portrayal of Lonya seemed quite adult and, with the exaggerated hip gestures, sexualized; however Kizzy insisted that Lonya was only seven, proving how “rich, fisticated [sophisticated] and sexy them Trini girls be.” After some thought, though, she decided that Lonya was “too far gone” from the reality of her life and she was particularly concerned that she would have to “be leavin’ Granny behind” were she to assume this pseudonym. Her comments suggest that the anthropological presence she was crafting through her participation in my work and her engagement in this “what if” game were of consequence, for she was visibly distressed by her belief that were she to portray herself as affluent, she would sever the only immediate family connection that she had and that, at seven years of age, was dependent on for her survival. Perhaps, if Elizabeth Thomas-Hope (1992: 6) is correct in her claim that “Caribbean people order their external universe in direct relation to [the] opportunities for migration,” Kizzy’s paradoxical attraction to, but ultimate rejection of, this fictional Trinidadian identity may be demonstrative of the way in which she sees her childhood, and by extension all similar childhoods, as being affected by this focus on “external,” global travel but at the same time necessarily bound by the immediate local and family contexts. As a social terrain, childhood is certainly one venue in which global visions and local realities play out in complex ways, and Kizzy’s engagement with what she called “off-island girls” through our name game was a way for her to voice these complexities.

The attractive image of Trinidadian affluence that Kizzy associated with the names Tonya and Lonya were in direct opposition to the images she created through the “off-island” character of Bonya who she drew on to imagine herself in Jamaica:

If I be a Bonya, I be a fat, smokin’ [drug-using] Jamaican girl. But please don’t be using that name in your notes ‘cause I [wouldn’t] be a Bonya, always walking ‘round with my jaggabat [prostitute] hips and not be knowin’ up from down. Bonya be doin’ drugs, fat drugs, fat Bonya, fat Jamaica. Fat Bonya, Fonya. Jamaica Fonya, Jonya. Drug Jonya, Donya . . . That girl not be me, that’s for sure . . . I never want to be doin’ no drugs . . . Even though I be a poor Bajan [Barbadian] girl and I be an off-island girl—I mean I know I not be off-island yet ‘cause I don’t be travelling nowhere but I know I be someday—I not be doin’ no drugs and gettin’ all stupid. That’s for Bonya, Fonya, Jonya, drug Donya.”

As with her constructions of Lonya, Kizzy reaffirms her desire to be represented in a regional “off-island” way

and she draws on prevailing images of Jamaica and Jamaican women in this scenario. However, a negative and more immediately rejected identity is constructed here as the proposed Jamaican name is portrayed as being synonymous with an unappealing appearance (“fat”), prostitution (“jaggabat”) and drugs (“smokin”). The summer of 1999 was indeed a particularly difficult one for Jamaica because of the organized crime and drug trade that attracted so much international news coverage. In Barbados, a country with increasing but still relatively low rates of crime and drug-related community violence, this news coverage (along with various reactions to it) often included an undercurrent of caution, warning that the kind of violence erupting in Jamaica could “spread” to other Caribbean nations. Although Sandra made great efforts to reduce Kizzy’s exposure to what she saw as alarmist warnings of violence, they evidently had noteworthy influence. Kizzy’s comments suggest that were she to choose the name Bonya—or its rhyming derivatives Jonya, Donya and Fonya—she would become emblematic of the sexualized, drug-using and criminal girls who she believes live in Jamaica. It is as if that identity would be inevitable were she to don these names or find herself in Jamaica.

Although there is much that Kizzy’s representations of her possible research identities reveal, what interests me here is the ways in which she uses playful pretence to imagine and describe these identities. As Laurence Goldman (1998: 2) explains, pretence involves “the creation of an artefact that stands for or portrays some aspect or knowledge of the world. In pretence an actor conjures up an alternative, counterfactual state that is temporarily overlaid onto a conventionally understood ‘reality’ conceived as veridical.” Whereas pretence is most commonly modelled within developmental psychology as a “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1966: 16) that is indicative of the various stages in human growth and maturation (Bretherton, 1989; Dixon and Shore, 1993; Ellis, 1973; Piaget, 1962), it has tremendous relevance to an anthropology of children and childhoods because each episode of pretence play gives rise to “a dramatic mimesis of human behaviour; a mimesis in the sense not of bland reproduction but of something transformed” (Goldman, 1998: 21). This performance allows the children both to reflect and to distance themselves from the social order in which they are currently immersed, to construct a slippage between what is and what if, “to dance between the very same and the very different” (Taussig, 1993: 129). In Kizzy’s search for a fictional name by which to be known in my work, she constructs fictional scenarios that allow her to craft iden-

tities of national others that she then overlays onto her reality, bringing together her locally based reality and regionally based fantasies. She draws on what she believes to be true in order to create a recognizably untrue or pretend character who would portray her in the anthropological drama of health and violence that I was creating.

This process is very telling because the identities of Kizzy's characters are decidedly gendered and classed in ways that reveal a great deal about the cultural dynamics informing her narratives. Lonya is alluringly thin, sophisticatedly sexualized and her wealth allows Kizzy to escape the poverty in which she currently lives. Bonya, on the other hand, is grotesque, drug addicted, vulgarly sexualized through references to prostitution, and uncontained as illustrated by the way in which Bonya is mimetically reproduced as Fonya, Jonya, and Donya. The strategic alliteration Kizzy uses to introduce these names indicates, once again, that these characters represent a particular and unappealing bodily, national and drug-induced state of being. In contrast to the way in which she portrayed her community poverty as something to be escaped in her construction of Lonya, that same poverty became a preferred scenario to that characterized by Bonya. Because Kizzy repeatedly distanced herself from this character and even humorously suggested at one point that I call her "Never-a-Bonya," she might be using this pretence as a way to minimize and relativize the extent to which she would ultimately be represented as a "poor Bajan girl." In addition, then, to what this pretence play might reveal about Kizzy's developmental process, what is of greater interest to me as an anthropologist is the way in which she, like most children in similar contexts, actively used this make-believe and mimetic name game to produce stories and scenarios as a way to represent herself and her local place within a wider cultural and geographical region.

The research context is certainly important here. Whereas children's pretence has been primarily seen and studied as "child-structured play" (Schwartzman, 1991: 215) that is "neither inspired, instigated, supervised by nor undertaken in the presence of adults" (Goldman, 1998: 12), this case was different. Not only did my presence motivate Kizzy's make-believe play, I was a participant in it and continually reminded her that, with her permission, I would be writing and talking about our imaginings. Her pretense play, then, unlike similar encounters with other children, had a sense of permanence about it, and perhaps it was because of this, and my relationship with her grandmother, that she ultimately chose the name "Kizzy" as her research name.

As noted previously, all of our playful encounters were set against Sandra's continued suggestion that "Kezziah" be her chosen pseudonym. Although a biblical name (given in the Old Testament to one of Job's daughters), "Kezziah" and its derivative "Kizzy" were made popular through Alex Haley's novel *Roots* and the ensuing TV mini-series. In this Americanized history of slavery, the name is explained as meaning, "you sit down" or "you stay put," and was bestowed on the character Bell's third daughter in hopes that, unlike her previous children, this girl would stay with her family and not be sold. Sandra has read this novel many times and the narratives that unfold throughout this fictional tale are woven throughout Sandra's her own life stories (bringing together an interesting clash and compliment of different national and cultural contexts), and she is particularly taken with several of the female characters who Sandra believes reflect her "heart and soul." She explains that,

Women who come from slavery be strong women and they know who they be. I want my Kezziah to be a strong woman, to never be forgetting the opportunities she [has] and what she always need be fighting for even still. I don't be wanting her to end up washing some white underclothes for them rich tourists . . . She might as well be working the cane if that what she be doing. I be wantin' my Kezziah to be a strong Black woman and be really free and be making her own money.

Sandra's words echo the anti-slavery discourse that circulates throughout Barbados. Although this discourse takes many forms, it is expressed in part through the ongoing critique of the island's booming tourist industry which many local Barbadian people, including Sandra, see as a form of neo-slavery wherein Black labour is exploited to support White leisure (Gmelch and Gmelch, 1997). Proposing this pseudonym, then, is a way for Sandra to assert for her granddaughter an identity that separates the girl from the past oppression that Hilary Beckles (1989, 1990), among others (Bolles, 1993; Gmelch and Gmelch, 1997; Sutton and Makiesky-Barrow, 1981), argue still imprints on the lives of many Barbadians who constitute the racially marginalized majority.

It is also important to note that because it is the adults and particularly women who generally assign names to children in Barbadian culture, Sandra saw it as her job to name Kizzy. During one of our final interviews, Sandra firmly explained, "I be wanting her to be a strong Black woman but she [isn't] there yet, so I think I be naming her Kezziah." Before the ethical dilemma regarding which pseudonym I would use, and thereby whose wishes I would honour over the other's became over-

bearing, Kizzy surprised me by acquiescing to her grandmother's request without consternation. The one condition, though, was that rather than "Kezziah" she be referred to as "Kizzy." She explained her willingness to accept this name by stating that although it was fun playing our name game, she wanted to do as her grandmother wished:

A grandbaby is s'posed to be doing as her granny says. And I still be Caribbean with the name Kizzy, I still be an off-island girl 'cause Kizzy be a name in Trini, for sure, and St. Vincent and Martinique, and Antigua for sure. But with this name, I be staying in my granny's heart, and I be staying in the house too, see? B'sides, Kizzy is like Dizzy and Dizzy is cute and fun.

She began laughing with delight as she spun around and around, associating the name Kizzy, not with symbols of racialized strength or anti-slavery discourses, but with family obligation, regional affiliation and fun. The integrity of the women-centred family configurations that characterize much of the eastern Caribbean (Barrow, 1996) was therefore maintained by Kizzy's choice to honour the cultural power of her grandmother and, on one level at least, she was performing what was expected of her as a child. In so doing, she was "upholding, rather than subverting, the dominant formulations of the category 'child' . . . reinforcing the categories that otherwise exert control in [her life]" (Caputo, 1995: 34). On another level, though, Kizzy crafted for herself a space within the anthropological process in which she could actively construct potential identities and her final choice was perhaps less of a compromise as it was a cultural compilation of many of the ideas and possibilities that had previously informed her play.

Kizzy was able to uphold the culturally recognized categories of child and actively select a revealing pseudonym that highlighted aspects of her identity as a Barbadian girl in large part because those around her readily recognized and treated her as a child. Had she been socially displaced from this age-category and positioned more as an adult, her ultimate engagement with the name "Kizzy" might have been different. In order to explore how young girls, who live and work in contexts that are usually and normatively reserved for adults, similarly construct identities of self through the research related assignment of pseudonyms, I turn to my second example, drawn from research on the health repercussions of international sex trafficking.

"Ashley-Mika": Mediating Metis Identity

I think that them regular girls who, like, aren't in the [sex] trade have no idea what it really means to be a different kind of girl, a whore girl, you know. They, like, get all freaked out when an older guy looks at them or whatever . . . but when you're a whore, travelling all over and stuff, the guys do a hell of a lot more than look and your job is to, like, let them, you know? Then when you're with them regular girls and they're all, like, "oh he's so gross," what are you supposed to say to that? It's like you are a girl but you're not 'cause, like, you have nothing in common with them, you know?

— Ashley-Mika (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 1998)

Approximately, and conservatively, two million women and girls every year, around the world, are forced or lured into sexual service by mostly male managers who are interested in the profit that the international sex trades can currently ensure (Altink, 1995: 22; see also Jeffreys, 1997). A fairly extensive global network in which the bodies of women and girls are exchanged among cartels is currently thriving and hundreds of international orders for girls and younger women (who are referred to as "fresh produce") are placed daily with sex brokers who work transnationally. This network relies on established trafficking routes and patterns that are uniting communities and regions in unprecedented ways. Although sex trafficking is by no means a new phenomenon, it is occurring today within the context of globalization and it is therefore embedded more firmly than ever before in the increasing international distribution of products, people, media and ideas. It was while I was studying the culturally based perceptions among prostituted women and girls of the health risks associated with this traffick and trade that I met Ashley-Mika, a 15-year-old girl who has worked as a prostitute for four years. Since she was 11 years old, Ashley-Mika has been trafficked quite extensively, from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (the city to which Ashley-Mika ran after leaving home) to the Philippines, Vietnam, Tokyo, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Toronto, and then back to Saskatoon where I met her in the winter of 1998 when she was once again working on the cold streets that she thinks of as "home."

With an Aboriginal mother and Euro-Canadian father, Ashley-Mika identifies herself as Metis and, through the course of our research, she struggled to understand and articulate how this identity shapes her life in the differing cultural contexts in which she finds herself. Initially, she had heard about my work with women who had wanted to establish a Prostitute's Empowerment, Education and Resource Society (PEERS) in Saskatoon and because

she felt excluded from this initiative, largely because of the overrepresentation of Euro-Canadian and First Nations women who Ashley-Mika believed were too critical of Metis girls, she approached me to ask if I would assist her and several others in compiling an account of their experiences in the international sex traffick and trade. These young women hoped that this account, which graphically detailed the difficulties and dangers (including health risks) of sex trafficking, could circulate among and perhaps dissuade other young women from being lured into similar situations by promises of travel and adventure. This research, then, was framed by the girls themselves and constitutes a form of advocacy research that had as one of its primary goals the empowerment of the participants in a political and explicit way.

As noted in other advocacy research with prostituted women (Downe, 1999), the basis for much of this empowerment is in the collaborative and participant-driven research design that allows each of the women to configure very specific research personae. In this case, it was not adult women, but girls and young women (aged 12 to 18 years) who were the players in this process, unequivocally demonstrating the cultural agency that is so often denied to children in anthropological research. Yet these girls and young women exhibited agency in, and often based their research personae on, the experiences that they had while working in a highly sexualized environment that has normatively been reserved for adults. These girls and young women, then, are occupying a transnationally recognized age-category that defines them as children in the eyes of international law, pimps and clients, and yet they are firmly mired and well acquainted with what is simultaneously defined homogeneously as an "adult world." Negotiating the divide between child and adult while constructing a racialized identity of Aboriginality was a central occupation for Ashley-Mika in this research and, once again, her search for a pseudonym proved to be a tremendously revealing process.

While she is working in international settings, Ashley-Mika's pimp insists that she dress in stereotypical First Nations apparel—what she and the girls with whom she is usually trafficked refer to as "squaw gear" or "Pocahontas dress"—in order to attract clients, the vast majority of whom are tourists seeking out an "exotic" sexual adventure. Interestingly, and somewhat ironically, many of Ashley-Mika's clients are Canadian who travel to other countries as sex tourists to sample what is referred to by marketers and consumers as "the international buffet of bodies." Clearly, it is on the basis of Ashley-Mika's Aboriginal heritage that she is included

as one of the exoticized dishes in this buffet, and through the course of my research with her, and seven other Metis girls who have been prostituted internationally, she has recounted numerous stories of clients requesting her to "do rainedances while [naked]," "make war cry sounds while they're getting off," and "talk gibberish 'cause they think it's Indian." The primitivist and stereotypical expectations of her have a strong influence on how she attempts to mediate a national and racialized identity for herself. She explains:

It is just ultra-weird being squawed out so much when I'm away because I'm Metis, a half-breed, and so, like, I'm not *really* an Indian, but I have played one so much that I feel like it's kinda' part of me, too . . . But when I'm back in Saskatoon it's, like, the Indians think I'm, like, this little White [girl] working on their stroll, you know? I guess I'm both. I guess all Metis are in some way both [Indian and White] and so it's like ok for me to play that I'm Indian . . . But I guess it's, like, not so ok because, like, how I'm playing it, has nothing to do with being an Indian. It's just squaw sex, you know? Even though it sells, that's not what my Native part, or whatever, means to me . . . My Native part is the part that most White people don't like 'cause their racist [and] it's the part that most Indians don't like either because I'm not the *right* kind of Indian kid, you know? To me, though, I'm just this girl who likes to be Native because, like, I look Native, you know, and I play one so I guess I'm it . . . but I'm kinda' in the middle, you know?

This interview excerpt is characteristic of the many attempts Ashley-Mika made through the course of our research to explain how she sees herself in relation to the dominant discourses of race and culture that currently prevail in Saskatchewan as well as in relation to the sexual exploitation to which she is subjected. She attempts to reconcile the performances of exotic "Indianness" that she engages in while working with her identity as a Metis girl. Such attempts are examples of what Elleke Boehmer (1995: 196) describes as "self-making" through the interplay and mediation of many reified identities, such as that of Aboriginal, White, girl and prostitute. However, this process of self-making was not only revealed through our interviews, but also through Ashley-Mika's search for a research pseudonym, a search that she engaged in with as much playfulness and enthusiasm as Kizzy.

Over the two-year course of this research, Ashley-Mika's interest in finding a pseudonym that would "capture what it feels like being in the middle" increased and she eventually asked me to buy a name book, the kind that she has seen expectant parents use when they are

considering what to name their new child. She pored through this small pocketbook but kept coming back to one of the early entries listed as a potential girl's name. "Ashley," she said "is a pretty cool 'White girl pop' name that these, like, regular girls get called." Interestingly, she ignored the name's meaning as set out in the book and instead developed her own definition of "White, rich and perky." Like Kizzy, she (very humorously) dramatized this by bouncing around, laughing loudly, and having a great deal of fun. Through the laughter and revelry of this name game emerged a very clear picture of the kind of girl who Ashley-Mika imagined as "regular": "You know, a 'regular girl' is, like, one who gets to think about what they want to be when they grow up, like a wife who thinks up names for her kids . . . A regular girl always knows where she lives . . . She isn't some half-breed having squaw sex all over the . . . world, you know." As she elaborated on this view of a "regular girl"—depicting material wealth, loving parents, community acceptance, and, above all, personal safety—Ashley-Mika described the kind of romanticized, future-oriented childhood that Sharon Stephens (1994, 1995) argues is a Western trope that has come to stand iconically for *the* authentic child. Because Ashley-Mika has never experienced childhood in the way she thinks "regular kids" do, she continually created an opposition between the conditions of her life and those typifying "regular" childhood. In doing so, she set herself apart from childhood, as if she did not qualify for it:

I'm fifteen now. Sometimes, you know, I like forget how old I am! I know that happens for older people, so, like, I guess that means that in some ways I'm older, and . . . I think that is true because I've been shipped around so much and I feel like I've been beaten down a lot, you know? I mean, I'm a fighter but most fighters are older, you know? So, like, I'm real old in lots of ways, maybe even, like, forty or something, like forty year old cargo . . . But then some days I wake up and I see this little Indian girl in the mirror and, like, I want to skip rope. For real, I want to jump and laugh, and so I do . . . but it's different, you know? Like I really shouldn't be doing that, 'cause you know . . . I'm like this Indian whore.

These words, along with those in the quote that began this section, appear to support Donna Goldstein's (1998: 411) claim that, for many, childhood "is a privilege of the rich and is practically nonexistent for the poor." For girls, like Ashley-Mika, who are caught in international systems of prostitution, it may be that the continual movement from one place to another, the lacking

sense of safety and home, the sexualized distortion of cultural heritage, and the racially-based discrimination they encounter and internalize mean that there is no room for a childhood which, in Western Canada, may be seen by some to be the reserve of privileged White children. Ashley-Mika may be carving a space for a childhood by engaging in pretence play and constructing a fictionalized image of "Ashley" that collides with the very real and very adult demands that are routinely placed on her body and mind. The name "Ashley" comes to represent the racialized and gendered girlhood that Ashley-Mika dreams about and she therefore lays this image over the veridical as a way to claim that identity for herself. However, Ashley-Mika was always quick to remind me that the imaginary Ashley is not entirely beyond her grasp because, as a Metis girl, she has a "real" and "blood" claim on a "White" identity. "Remember," she said, "I'm in the middle. So I have her in me, I know I do." Just as "Indianness" is exoticized in her work, "Whiteness" is romanticized in her construction of childhood.

The second half of her hyphenated name, "Mika," appealed to her because of its cultural associations and meaning. Attributed to a generic "American Indian" origin, "Mika" was defined by our name book as "wise little racoon." Recognizing racoons as homeless, urban pests, Ashley-Mika saw them as in need of care but still very intelligent, and she developed an ardent and reflexive affinity for this image. "They're just . . . poor little animals, you know, forced into the city for, like, reasons they don't even . . . know. I like them." I have no doubt that she was speaking metaphorically of herself and the way in which she felt forced to leave her northern community because of the ongoing sexual abuse she was subjected to by her mother's boyfriend, and the failure of the social service systems to deal adequately with the number of such cases they face each month. Ashley-Mika went on to describe the urban racoons as being unfairly persecuted by community residents who were unwilling to feel compassion for these "lost little things," at the same time as they "worship their own cats and dogs." Again, she is referring metaphorically here to the two constructions of childhood that emerge throughout her narratives, one being the unrecognized terrain inhabited by supposed urban, homeless pests, and the other being the esteemed category reserved for the deserving but exclusive "Ashleys." Clearly, she considers the former subaltern childhood more reflective of her current life as she emphasized the negative responses she elicits from people not participating in the sex trade as well as the clients and managers who "sneer and look down on us

girls, 'specially us half-breed and Indian girls who they would, like, hate 'cept for the fact that we bring them money and sex.'" Though such reactions from clients and managers were of significant concern, particularly when they would manifest into physical violence, Ashley-Mika seemed more concerned with the reactions of other community residents who, in fighting child prostitution, vilified child prostitutes.

Although it is very difficult to assess how many women under the age of 18 are involved in the Saskatoon-based sex trade (in part because the profit associated with trafficking young women ensures that the population remains transient), the director of the city's most successful outreach program reported that in 1998, 90 children under the age of 14 and another 233 between the ages of 15 and 19 had reported being involved in prostitution to outreach workers (Zakreski, 2000). The numbers of children involved in the trade, therefore, appear to be quite significant and in those vicinities where prostitution is most visible, community residents have long described these children with a great deal of hostility. This is not exclusive to Saskatoon and my research with trafficked prostitutes in four countries (Canada, Barbados, Costa Rica and El Salvador) confirms Ashley-Mika's claims that children in the sex trades are often viewed with truculence regardless of where they might be. They are not the "right" kind of children nor the "right" kind of girls in that they do not exhibit the romanticized "Ashley"-like childhood that is fast becoming a globalized standard that girls everywhere are expected to meet (Stephens, 1994). Therefore, the name "Ashley-Mika" allowed a Metis girl, in the context of anthropological research, to bring together this idealized view of childhood with her lived reality as a young, trafficked prostitute, superimposing a globalized (and globalizing) category of childhood onto the comparably global rejection and marginalization of sexually exploited children.

In addition to speaking to the consistent hostility that she has experienced in her different working environments, Ashley-Mika was also drawn to this pseudonym, and particularly the hyphenated combination, because it provided a way for her to speak to greater length about her Metis identity. When she had settled on this name, she explained its meaning by returning again to the imagery of the racoon (a historically significant symbol of racialization in North America) and by describing the physical combination of colours as a way to discuss the blend of cultural and racial categories to which she sees herself (and by extension other Metis people) belonging:

Racoons, they got lots of colours on them, you know. I mean, they're like, all shades of black and brown and stuff, and . . . that's, like, how I feel. I'm, like, this medium brown 'cause I'm in the middle, like a mix, you know, of White and Indian . . . Half-breeds, we're like the Indians striped with White . . . kinda' like them racoons are striped. That makes sense, eh? . . . You see, I am, like, a "wise little racoon" but I got White girl in me, too. That's why Ashley-Mika is, like, such a good mix. Yeah, it's a mix.

In describing Metis peoples as "in the middle" and "a mix" of First Nations and Euro-Canadian heritages, Ashley-Mika echoes the ways in which those Aboriginal people of diverse heritage have long been viewed under colonial order. Indeed, Julia Harrison (1985: 11) notes that "The word 'Metis' comes from the Latin *miscere*, meaning 'to mix,'" and was used originally to describe the children of Native mothers and French fathers. Another term for the Metis is derived from the Ojibwa word *wis-sakodewinmi*, which means 'half-burnt woodmen,' describing their lighter complexion to that of full-blooded Indians." As the number of people of mixed heritage has increased, and particularly as more people have begun to claim an Aboriginal heritage, "Metis" has, in many ways, become very contested cultural terrain. Whereas this term was once reserved primarily for those who are or were (either personally or through parentage) affiliated with the Red River (Fort Garry) communities in Manitoba, the Metis National Council in the late 1970s insisted that the term be used to "those who can trace their roots to the intermixing of whites and Natives in western Canada" (Harrison, 1985: 14). Those of similar heritage in the rest of Canada, it was argued, should be considered "Nonstatus Indians." Since then, much of the important work on Metis nationalism (e.g., Chartrand, 1991; Dickason, 1985; Foster, 1986; Sawchuk, 1978 and 1991) has concerned itself with and addressed the burgeoning and sometimes heated debates regarding where the cultural and ethnic boundaries should be drawn when determining who actually constitute the Metis people. Fuelling these debates are bureaucratic distinctions between those Aboriginal peoples included in treaty and scrip legislation, and those excluded by it. These distinctions were, and to some extent still are, based on "factors such as lifestyle, language, and residence or, in a word, culture" as well as self-identification (Waldram, 1986: 281). However, but because social roles shift and community affiliations change, these distinctions are, in fact, quite arbitrary.

Cultures are not static organizations with standing membership lists and yet cultural identities are repre-

sented in a variety of legislative and informal quotidian contexts, including the sexualized context of prostitution, as if they were. Ashley-Mika's struggle to define herself in relation to two seemingly dichotomous categories, "Indian" and "White," exemplifies this and is undoubtedly shared by others who continue to view and experience this supposed "middle ground"—represented by a proliferation of labels, including "Metis, half-breeds, non-Natives, 'borderline Indians', non-treaty, non-status and mixed bloods" (Coates and Morrison, 1986: 253)—as decidedly liminal. Her attempt to represent this middle, liminal position by bringing together one name that represents a privileged "White girl pop" childhood and another that highlights the marginalized vulnerability of a racialized "raccoon-pest" childhood is a way for her to negotiate an identity that emerges through her forced association with exoticized "Indianness," her personal recognition of Aboriginal heritage, and her apparent desire for what she sees as a "regular" childhood. Therefore, while she is discursively bound by and thereby reinforces the dichotomous categories that serve to create this uncomfortable middle-ground, Ashley-Mika also undermines those same categories by overlaying one onto the other through pretence play and our research related name game. Attending to this game, engaging in it as a player and performer, better allowed me to appreciate how Ashley-Mika positioned herself in the world and in the various national and cultural contexts in which she has lived and worked.

Conclusion

Vernon Noble (1976: 4), one of the most frequently cited scholars of onomastics, states that "each personal name [has] a place in history, a niche in the story of its particular period." In this paper, I have presented examples of how two girls in quite different research contexts have created a niche for themselves—an anthropological presence—through the self-assignment of personal research names. Much of the anthropological focus on names has been on elaborate naming ceremonies that usually involve the assignment of identities given by adults to children (Alford, 1988; Geertz and Geertz, 1964; Maxwell, 1984; Price and Price, 1972; Rosaldo, 1984). Very little work has been done on the cultural implications of what, when and how children name themselves and in what contexts. There is even less consideration given to the ways in which anthropologists assign pseudonyms to research participants and what this research-based nomenclature reveals about the research process. Given the influence of postmodern ideologies on our ethnographic writings and representations, it is surprising that this has not

received more attention. Within the burgeoning anthropology of children and childhoods, attention to these naming practices may be of particular relevance because it further highlights the active role children take as agents as well as recipients of cultural processes that affect and define their lives. Although children have largely been seen and not heard in anthropological investigations and popular representations of all kinds, including those dealing with poverty and prostitution, there is much that can be learned from attending to the cultural agency that both constitutes and is constituted by children's play, laughter, rhymes and words.

In desiring a regional, Caribbean research identity, Kizzy engages in a kind of pretence play that gives rise to mimetic reproductions and transformations of national caricatures and international personas in relation to which she situates her own life. Because Kizzy ultimately acquiesces to her grandmother's strong suggestion regarding her pseudonym, she reinforces the familial power relations and established boundaries of childhood, but she gives nothing up in doing so for she still crafts an identity that signifies both the anti-slavery discourse to which her grandmother contributes and a broader regional identity that she finds so appealing. With comparable conviction and enthusiasm, Ashley-Mika plays a similar name game as part of a self-making process that reveals the tensions around negotiating her identity as a Metis girl within the sexualized context of prostitution. Through her engagement with prevailing categories of cultural heritage, she describes two oppositional constructions of childhood, one which she associates with racial and class privilege and the other she views as a subaltern childhood that is, in many ways, impossible to realize because of the prevailing demands that are put on her body and mind. Both she and Kizzy construct and reconstruct images and boundaries of childhood thereby demonstrating that it is not a bounded category defined solely by delimitations of age but is a contested and cultural terrain that is discursively created by children as well as adults.

While both girls stressed the ways in which their chosen pseudonyms reflect the cultural and regional aspects of their research-based identities, constructions of gender are interwoven throughout the name games. Kizzy, for example, drew on dominant stereotypes of femininity in her portrayal of Lonya, represented as a rich and sophisticatedly sexualized Trinidadian girl, and Bonya, represented as an unattractive and negatively sexualized girl. At one level, the feminine characters that Kizzy presented as a potential set of identities for herself represents a continuity in gender, suggesting that Kizzy

imagines and wishes to represent herself only in relation to these dominant images of girls (rather than images that could be interpreted as more androgynous or adhering to cultural stereotypes of masculinity). At another level, though, these imagined characters could be “ways in which quite fantastic images of the nation as female are rendered quite ordinary” (Probyn, 1999: 50) as Kizzy effortlessly and playfully gendered the various nations by drawing on the prevailing views of Caribbean femininity and then positioning herself and her poverty in relation to them. When I would question her about this kind of personification of, for example, Jamaica through the presence of Bonya, she would find it difficult to comprehend that I would not understand that, of course, “Jamaica be a drugged up jaggabat. That be just how it is.” And in her assertion that she be referred to as “Never-a-Bonya,” Kizzy aligns herself with what she sees as the preferential national and feminine referent.

Ashley-Mika similarly intertwines conceptualizations of gender and gender-based girlhood throughout the self-making processes in which she engaged in the course of this research. As a trafficked prostitute, Ashley-Mika is continually called on daily, even hourly, to perform her gender sexually. As part of these performances of passivity and exoticism, her body is posed, marketed, penetrated and violated. Indeed, Judith Butler (1993) would argue that her body is in fact constituted by these performances and although some scholars of prostitution who represent very divergent views (e.g., Barry, 1995; Queen, 1997) argue that women and girls engaging in these performances can dissociate from them in order to minimize and perhaps even negate any potential effect on the crafting of selves, all of the now 58 prostituted girls (that is, under the age of 18 years) with whom I have conducted research have been intimately affected, to varying degrees, by these performances (see Downe, 1998). Certainly, Ashley-Mika’s pejorative references to herself as a “half-breed whore” strongly suggest that the exoticized performances of “Indianness” and the gendered power dynamics that mark her encounters with managers and clients affect not only how she sees herself but also how she understands and experiences childhood. Her Aboriginality is constructed as being antonymous to a “regular” childhood, but it is in part through her sexualized and gendered performances in global and local contexts that she experiences this Aboriginality. Thus, in constructing and claiming a Metis identity, she negotiates gender and what it means to be a “regular” girl.

There is, of course, much more that could have been done in examining the nuances, complexities and contin-

gencies in the research identities crafted by Kizzy and Ashley-Mika. For example, I would have relished the opportunity (that never arose) to observe how Kizzy negotiated international identities with other Barbadian children who might have different experiences with or understandings of the countries she chose to represent through her play. How might a young boy have crafted a research identity that would have been set against different family and community dynamics? Similarly, because Ashley-Mika negotiated her Metis identity largely in the context of her current working conditions in a local context that most approximates a stereotypical view of “home,” I would be very interested in knowing how she crafted similar identities for herself in other national contexts where the dominant social discourses of cultural heritage and racial identity are quite different. Would she, for example, find the imagery of “wise little racoon” as appealing and relevant were she attempting to represent herself in research that was based in those areas of Southeast Asia where she has worked? If so, how would she reproduce that image in these various contexts, and if not what other imagery might she embrace in order to craft such a meaningful metaphor for being in the world? Despite these unanswered questions, the participation of these two girls, like the many others whose involvement in my research has been equally enthusiastic and telling, has demonstrated to me the tremendous value in attending to and seeing children as active agents of culture, wielders of knowledge, and creators of play.

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