Girlhood and the Politics of Place

YOU GO GIRL XX

Edited by

Claudia Mitchell and Carrie Rentschler

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Dedication

In memory of the fourteen women who died in
the Polytechnique Massacre, Montreal, 6 December 1989

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Claudia Mitchell and Carrie Rentschler

INTRODUCTION

The Significance of Place in Girlhood Studies

Carrie Rentschler and Claudia Mitchell

What's Place Got to Do with It?

From the bouncy pop songs of Taylor Swift to recent activist videos that make visible sexual and racial harassment against girls, and social media networks that reveal girl activists in action, girls loudly proclaim their needs and rights to places for and as girls. Place is a stage and practice of power; it is also the site of great pleasures and possibilities for girls. As Timothy Cresswell argues, we do not just experience something, we experience things "in place" (2014: 38). Experience, then, is also at the heart of what place means and does; it is something that is practiced and enacted in girls' daily lives, in their localities. As geographers Doreen Massey and Nigel Thrift argue, "place has become one of the key means by which the social sciences and humanities are attempting to lever open old ways of proceeding and telling new stories about the world" (2009: 276–277), a world that is deeply marked and territorialized around lived experiences of gender, race, sexuality, class, age, citizenship, and other social differences, privileges, and oppressions. Just as place as a concept is of great significance to geography, so, too, is it crucial to the study of girlhood.

The chapters of this book approach place as an especially productive and enabling concept in the field of girlhood studies, one that provides needed specificity to the very meaning of *girl.* Reflecting on her study of country girlhood in Australia, Catherine Driscoll argues that local specificity "produces and evaluates styles of girlhood and distinctions between types of girl" (2008: 78) in ways that, without explicit attention to space and place, tend to be grouped under the less-diversified term girl culture. From special journal issues in the field on the place-based and regional specificity of different girlhood studies, such as the 2013 special issue of *Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* on Nordic research, to the international character and reach of scholarship on girls, girlhood studies is increasingly a multi-sited and transnational

field that pays more and more attention to place, in terms of locale not only as literal sites of research, but as what is itself being researched. The contributors to this volume approach place not as a static container for girls and their practices but, instead, as an active, material production of power and social relationships as feminist geographers such as Doreen Massey (1994) and Linda McDowell (1999) demonstrate.

Following media historian Susan Douglas's (1995) call to go where the girls are, girlhood scholars locate the contested geographies of girlhood in places as distinct as the school washroom and toilet, the playing field, the school bus, the public park, the offices of policy makers, the river bank, and, of course, as McRobbie and Garber (1976, 1991) clearly established almost four decades ago, the bedroom. "Children's identities," feminist geographers Sarah Holloway and Gill Valentine argue, "are constituted in and through particular spaces" (2000: 765) that, as girlhood studies scholars argue, is further modified by gender (see James 1990). Alongside Sharon Mazzarella's assertion that "there is no longer a *single* girl in Girls' Studies" (2008: 76) this book aims to demonstrate that there is also no single *place* for studies of girlhood either (see, for example, Bettis and Adams 2005).

Place, and geography more specifically, is also a contentious reality that shapes girls' lives; girls and young women struggle to assert their rights to territory and autonomous spaces, to represent their experiences of belonging to and relating with others in key spaces of learning, working, playing, consuming, and, as Mary Thomas (2005) argues, hanging out in the city. They may do so in ways that resist or oppose adult forms of spatial control and also in ways that conflict directly with institutionalized forms of adult power with dire results, such as, for example, the targeting of racialized girls for lockup by the local police. However, Thomas (2005) argues against a model that sees girls' spatiality as primarily a reactive response to adult control of social space. For Doreen Massey, the issue of control over, and of, spatiality "is part of the process of defining the social category of 'youth' itself" (1998: 127; quoted in Thomas 2005: 588), in particular by adults invested in containing youth through, for example, practices of racialized and sexualized surveillance and control. Much of that social control seeks to contain girls by removing them from public space. Against constructs that see the street as a space of (often sexualized and gendered) danger and threat, for Hugh Matthews, Melanie Limb, and Mark Taylor, "the street is [also] a key communal location where girls meet to socialize" (1999; cited in Thomas 2005: 588). To create spaces of their own, girls must struggle to assert their rights to place-making practices that often put them into conflict with institutionalized power structures.

Where *Are* the Girls?

Girlhood and the Politics of Place is part of an effort to develop more responsive methods and tools of analysis for examining the different context-specific conditions in which girls live, learn, play, and organize. It aims to deepen understanding of the place-making practices of girls and young women through multi-national studies, taking up work with and about girls in Canada, Australia, the UK, the United States, Rwanda, and South Africa. The work published here is necessarily cross-disciplinary in character, drawing on research across fields of study such as health, literary and historical studies, art history, communications, media studies, sociology, and education, while addressing a range of social and historical factors that shape the lives and social spaces of girls.

The focus on place allows for in-depth investigation of how girlhood is positioned in relation to interdisciplinary and transnational research methodologies, media environments, geographic locations, and historical and social spaces; it is also an important area of study in and of itself. In looking at methods of analysis in the field, we consider how girlhood scholars construct and deploy research frameworks that directly engage girls in the research process. Several chapters draw on visually inflected and media-based methods of inquiry, using strategies and tools such as Photovoice as developed by Caroline Wang (1999) in her work with Chinese women, and as developed further with girls and young women (see Mitchell 201la, 2011b). For example, Lysanne Rivard uses Photovoice with girls in Rwanda and the claims they make about the significance of physical education in their lives, while Katie MacEntee explores digital storytelling in her work on sex education and HIV advocacy with youth in rural South Africa.

In this volume Marnina Gonick uses experimental multi-channel documentary video to refract the issues girls face through a different kind of lens, one that, as Krista Genevieve Lynes argues, is a political and aesthetic strategy of prismatic media, "a semiotic and aesthetic disruption of figuration in social practice…firmly located within a complex politics of location" (2012: 20). Multi-channel video in particular "break[s] apart an image into a series of visions or a site, an event or a subject" (68) that, in the case of Gonick's work, refuses any easy connections between girls, their identities, and the landscapes they inhabit, and instead provides a place-based visual testament to the affinities, commonalities, and differences that shape their lives. Drawing on visual analysis, Jacqueline Reid-Walsh's work on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century homemade flap books demonstrates the ways in which

the visual and material culture of girlhood-in-history offers a rich landscape. The visual can also be a tool for critical reflexive engagement and memory-work as we see in Loren Lerner's chapter on young women's engagement with visual art in the university classroom, and in Teresa Strong-Wilson's chapter on memory-work that uses family photographs. In more broad-reaching analyses of the practice of method, both Caroline Caron's and Claudia Mitchell's chapters examine feminist modes of critical reflexive engagement as both phenomenon and method.

Girlhood and the Politics of Place also sets out to deepen understanding of the difference that from-the-ground-up analytic approaches can make in policy and advocacy that is aimed at and developed by girls. Tatiana Fraser, Alyssa Louw, Njani Sajnani, and Stephanie Austin explore the workings of the Montreal-based Girls Action Foundation while Lena Palacios focuses on girls' transformative justice activism and the community-based contexts in which they organize.

The chapters in *Girlhood and the Politics of Place* discuss not only the places in which girls can be found but they also bring together scholars—some established and some new—from Canada, Australia, the UK, and the United States as well as members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who are uniquely positioned to address a range of place-based, cross-national perspectives on the study of girlhoods. By bringing together academics, community-based researchers, and policy makers, we aim to offer a cross-section of conversations about girlhood so as to consider how we might improve research and knowledge dissemination with, for, and about girls. It is our hope that the chapters here will assist researchers, students, teachers, advocates, and policy makers alike to create, and respond to, girl-focused research that emerges from grounded perspectives on girls' lives.

We recognize that girlhood studies researchers in the academy and advocates working in the not-for-profit and policy sectors face particular challenges when it comes to translating knowledge about girls' lives into policy action and community support initiatives. For academic researchers, these challenges include creating opportunities for difficult cross-disciplinary exchanges between and among scholars in the social sciences, humanities, and professional fields such as education. Academic and non-profit sector agents struggle to mobilize knowledge about girls that can inform policy. Additionally, the international and cross-sector scale of girlhood studies demands collaboration and then requires maintenance of those collaborative relationships. We recognize both the exciting possibilities of transnational research in the increasingly globalizing contexts of policy making and media making

that have a direct impact on girls' lives, and the great difficulty of doing so in long-term sustainable ways. Several chapters in the book result from the forms of long-standing collaborations we are talking about, while others are the result of newly emergent ones; both enable crucial forms of cross-sector exchange and offer possibilities of social transformation that this book seeks to foster.

As several chapters illustrate, contemporary work in girlhood studies is situated in a global context shaped by major media industries that too often "love to sensationalize, victimize, and create panic about girls and young women" (Girls Action Foundation 2010: n.p.). Global economies and shifting patterns of immigration and migration also powerfully shape the contexts in which girls live and learn. Researchers studying girls must, in turn, account for these intersecting realities and develop a critical set of methodological tools that enable them to deploy intersectional ways of thinking across national and international contexts and multiple intersecting lines of oppression and privilege. Indigenous and racialized girls, for example, are still routinely portrayed as "exploitable and expendable" (Downe 2005: 3), appearing far less frequently in media and policy discourse as significant girl citizens than do girls identified with and within white settler colonialism (see Marnina Gonick 2010). Against frameworks that overemphasize what Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) and other scholars refer to as the damage-centered and deficit-oriented approaches to racialized and Indigenized girlhoods (see Sandrina de Finney, Marnina Gonick, and Lena Palacios, this volume), girlhood studies scholars are developing frameworks that see girlhood less as an identity and more as "a situated, collective, relational event" implicated in relations of power (de Finney, this volume). As Sandrina de Finney argues, unless we decolonize not only the frameworks of research that are associated with white-settler-identified feminism but also the very practices of territorial displacement and colonial segregation in which they participate, studies of racialized and Indigenous girlhoods will continue to replicate this misrepresentation and the disenfranchisement of Indigenous girls. In this way, decolonization is not a metaphor or an empty signifier, as Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) argue; it is a practice of repatriation. If we approach girls not as problems-to-be-solved or subjects-to-be-rescued but as potential agents who face systemic barriers to their own agency and autonomy, we can stop linking them to research constructions that recolonize their subjectivities and experiences (Mazzarella and Pecora 2007).

This is not the first book on girlhood to study the lives of girls within the frameworks of place and geography. Indeed, it builds on other texts on girlhood and place, such as *Geographies of Girlhood* (Bettis and Adams

2005), and Mitchell and Reid-Walsh's *Researching Children's Popular Culture: Cultural Spaces of Childhood* (2002), which explores the many spaces for research on (and with) girls and childhood, including virtual spaces, memory spaces, girls' bedroom spaces, and historical spaces. The different places and spaces of schooling, in particular, have been explored by various authors across different spatialized contexts: from school toilets (Mitchell 2008; Sajan Virgi and Mitchell 2011), playgrounds (Bhana 2005), and the school media lab (Doyon 2009) to the school concert (Walkerdine, 1991) and the pre-school play room (Thorne 1993).

But it also builds on work that distinguishes between the private and public spaces in girls' lives (see Lincoln 2012), raising the issues of safety and security, gender violence, and sexual harassment as is discussed at length in Moletsane, Mitchell, Smith and Chisholm's 2008 book, *Methodologies for Mapping a Southern African Girlhood in the Age of AIDS.* Such concerns are not limited to the Global South as Leach and Mitchell (2006) highlight in their edited book *Combating Gender Violence in and around Schools*, but are a systemic structural feature of the worlds in which girls live and learn.

Placing the Chapters of Girlhood and the Politics of Place

In *Girlhood and the Politics of Place* contributors conceptualize place to include a variety of sites in which girlhood is made and remade. As a feature of contemporary girlhood studies, place and space for girls transverses online and offline worlds, as we see in Connie Morrison's chapter on girls and their avatars, and in Jessalyn Keller's chapter on girls and feminist blogging. Several of the contributors take into consideration the non-urban context of girlhood by looking explicitly at rural, remote, and country locations (see Catherine Driscoll and Marnina Gonick). As many of the contributions illustrate, schools still remain key locations in which notions of feminist girlhood are being actively produced and negotiated but also limited and circumscribed. The specific sites of girlhood that our contributors address include secondary school classrooms (Rebecca Raby and Shauna Pomerantz, and Jessica Ringrose and Emma Renold), university classrooms (Loren Lerner, Claudia Mitchell), the extracurricular school space (Katie MacEntee), and the sports field (Lysanne Rivard). Place, as they demonstrate, is a practice and a way of imagining girls' realities in the social spaces of schooling and education.

The book is divided into four sections: each is framed around a particular conceptualization of place. While there is some overlap between

and among the focuses of the chapters, the four sections offer readers a map of the differing features of place in relation to girls' lives. These include "Girls in Latitude and Longitude" (section 1), a term borrowed from Marnina Gonick's chapter, which serves to examine the relationship between physical and historical location and identity construction for girls living and studying in different parts of the world. "Situated Knowledge, Self-Reflexive Practice" (section 2) brings together chapters that critically examine the location and positionality of girlhood studies scholars and their own place-making research practices. "Girls and Media Spaces" (section 3), drawing on Divya McMillin's urging that, in order "to extend critical inquiry on girls globally … the point of entry has to shift to context rather than medium" (2008: 84), unpacks the relationship between social space and mass and mobile mediation that shapes girls' experiences. Rather than presume the significance of media in girls' lives, McMillin suggests instead that media ought to matter in studies of girlhood insofar as its analysis can reveal important features and critical vantage points on the contexts of girls' lives. Section 3 starts a crucial dialogue about activism and media justice that continues in the chapters that make up section 4 of the book, "Studying the Spaces of Girls' Activism." Here the focus is on the cross-sector forms of communication, practice, and media-making that occurs between and among community organizations, policy-making bodies, schools, and girls' autonomous activism, thus modeling different possibilities for doing this significant work.

Girls in Latitude and Longitude

"Girls in Latitude and Longitude" starts with a chapter by Indigenous scholar Sandrina de Finney, who proposes new ways of approaching Indigenous girlhood within the context of settler colonialisms. Interrogating the concepts of trauma and place through which the lives of Indigenous girls are often framed, de Finney offers presencing as a transformative research practice "to enact a different praxis of girlhood" that is politicized and truly decolonizing. In her chapter she draws on her ethnographic work with girls in Victoria and other parts of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada.

Marnina Gonick's chapter asks what question the visual opens up in studying Inuk and Indigenous girls' lives. Building on the experience of coproducing a video art installation, *Voices in Longitude and Latitude*, the chapter considers "what new ideas about girls and girlhood may emerge in the intra-action of bodies, landscapes, places, and other matter and what new concepts of place materialize with the insertion of a

multiplicity of girled bodies." Drawing on ten years of ethnographic research with girls living in rural Australia, Catherine Driscoll then examines in her chapter, "Nowhere to Go, Nothing to Do: Place, Desire, and Country Girlhood" how rural Australian girls interpret and challenge policy and popular discourse of the anti-modern country girl, articulating their agency in terms that challenge the portrayal of the rural as little more than a space of economic and educational crisis.

Turning to the physical and social space of the classroom, Rebecca Raby and Shauna Pomerantz explore what girls have to say about such factors as school climate, the ways in which girls dumb themselves down in the interests of being more popular, the reputation of the school, and the pressures on girls in relation to school success in their chapter, "Landscapes of Academic Success: Smart Girls and School Culture." Their research produces "a powerful portrait of the impact of school culture on academic success [in having] a diversity of girls' in-depth analyses of what it means to be smart both in their own schools and across a variety of schools."

Situated Knowledge, Self-Reflexive Practice

Self-reflexive practice is one of the defining features of feminist research. The four chapters in this section draw on a variety of narrative forms in order to highlight in different ways what this might mean to girlhood studies.

Claudia Mitchell's chapter, "Charting Girlhood Studies," starts the section with a reflection on the combined institutional and personal production of research in girlhood studies, and the place and contextual specificities of where the motivations for doing research on girls can come from, however differently for each of us. Mitchell begins her feminist study of girlhood in an auto-ethnographic account of the Montreal Massacre of 6 December 1989, an event that powerfully resonates for many girlhood studies scholars in Canada and elsewhere. She reminds us that the project of girlhood continually reinvents itself, in part (but not only) based on our own girlhood histories and the contexts of political education as individuals and scholars.

The chapter, "Teen Feminist Killjoys? Mapping Girls' Affective Encounters with Femininity, Sexuality, and Feminism at School," is based on qualitative research Jessica Ringrose and Emma Renold conducted with a group of girls between the ages of fourteen and sixteen in a Welsh secondary school. Focusing their analysis on how adolescent girls take on what they see to be a feminist identity, Ringrose and Renold's inter-

views illustrate how girls come to understand what it means to engage in feminist practices inside the contested institutional, physical, and social spaces of the school.

Drawing on her research with girls in Quebec, Canada, and in the context of high-profile media and policy debates about girls and hypersexualization, Caroline Caron's "Placing the Girlhood Scholar into the Politics of Change: A Reflexive Account" offers a reflexive and critical account of feminist research practices and politics in the field of girlhood. Caron challenges other girlhood scholars to be more critical of what it means to "listen to girls' voices" without engaging a constant practice of self-reflexive questioning that requires us to evaluate the actual uses to which we put our representations of girls. If one of the key objectives of girlhood studies is to represent and deploy girls' own ideas about social and political change toward those who can help make this change, we need to incorporate more self-reflexive modes of evaluation about what kind of political work our research does, or does not do. Caron reminds us of the constitutive links between situated knowledge and feminist methodologies in the field. As a francophone scholar, Caron also reminds us of the need to remember that "[t]he hegemony of English in Canada and elsewhere in the world … denotes power structures that remain imperceptible [so] English becomes the only audible language."

Teresa Strong-Wilson's chapter, "Returns and Departures through Girlhood: Memory-Work as an Approach to the Politics of Place in Mother-Daughter Narratives," offers a different model of self-reflexive research practice through the creation of a series of narratives drawn from memory-work. In this mother-daughter inquiry, Strong-Wilson, the daughter, uses photographs and various experimental writing techniques to suggest different entry points for imagining girlhood and womanhood that "reimagin[e] the politics of place in girls coming of age to be women." The final chapter in this section, by Tatiana Fraser, Nisha Sajnani, Alyssa Louw, and Stephanie Austin, "Girls Action Network: Reflecting on Systems Change through the Politics of Place," situates the growth and expansion of girls' action networks in North America. Using a case study of the Girls Action Foundation, a pan-Canadian advocacy network that involves over 300 groups and organizations working with girls, the chapter analyzes the unique forms of knowledge production that emerge from these networks, providing a model for how to create on-the-ground organizing capacity that fosters creativity and new modes of self-representation for racialized and immigrant girls.

Girls and Media Spaces

Informed by the contributions on self-reflexivity and girls and researchers' situated knowledge, the contributors to section 3 model ways of doing context-specific media analysis in the social spaces of media production and critique. Based on her experiences of teaching art history, Loren Lerner's chapter, "'What This Picture of a Girl Means to Me': The Place of Girlhood Images in the Art History University Classroom," examines how female university students reflexively engage with visual images of girlhood by analyzing what the gaze on girlhood looks like in the recent history of art. Lerner and her students created a web-based project that uses photographs and paintings created by Canadian artists of girls and girlhood to reveal how the seemingly non-placed nature of the university class is transformed in the process of students' own media production.

In "Modding as Making: Religious Flap Books Created by Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Girls," Jacqueline Reid-Walsh makes apparent the critical need to look beyond what often appears to be the present-mindedness of contemporary popular culture to find the roots of do-it-yourself (DIY) girls' culture. Her chapter examines three homemade religious flap books produced by girls in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in England and America as early examples of DIY culture. Examining the artifacts in relation to contemporaneously published flap books indicates how literacy in earlier centuries of Anglo-American culture was understood as a multi-media process that encompassed both writing and drawing. Interestingly, in their subtle modifications of the published flap books, the girls engaged in a type of twenty-first century remix by combining copying and creation to produce new artifacts.

Susan Cahill's chapter, "Where Are the Irish Girls?: Girlhood, Irishness, and LT Meade," explores girls' fiction written by Irish women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as LT Meade, Rosa Mulholland, and Flora Shaw. Despite its contemporaneous popularity, this body of literature is largely neglected today because of its target audience of middle-class young females, its associations with popular culture, and its Victorian outlook, all of which are at odds with the Irish Literary Revival project, which, with its focus on "what Irishmen could do for Irish literature," provided little recognition of girls as readers or as the subjects of texts. The chapter explores the resonances of the literary depictions of the Irish girl, and investigates the complex ways in which these writers negotiate between colonial constructions of the so-called wild Irish girl and the colonial and nationalist repre-

sentations of Ireland in feminine form in their constructions of Irish girlhood.

Geraldine Bloustien's chapter, "'God Is a DJ': Girls, Music, Performance, and Negotiating Space," focuses on the ways in which teenage girl DJs learn to acquire and perfect their musical skills through learning to negotiate spaces that, traditionally, are less accessible to women. To be a DJ means having the right networks; having gained enough cultural and social capital to be recognized as somebody important in one's universe; having gained enough self-respect and respect from one's peers; and being considered authentic and not a loser. As Bloustien says, "DJing has increasingly enabled girls to negotiate a variety of previously problematic spaces successfully so it is valuable to understand how girls learn to manage their experiential environments creatively and confidently." Far more powerful than any physical containment of space, the self-perception and self-surveillance of what is or is not considered appropriate or acceptable, what is or is not questioned and questionable in one's world, limits and constrains the ability to explore the possibilities of this world, as her ethnography demonstrates.

Connie Morrison's chapter, "Creating and Regulating Identity in Online Spaces: Girlhood, Social Networking, and Avatars," closes the section by examining the significance of developing new definitions of what counts as place in explorations of identity in girlhood studies. In her analysis of a project involving adolescent girls' creation of online avatars, Morrison analyzes how girls both take up and refuse popular discourses about idealized femininity, reminding readers that "how girls negotiate identity in online places is as diverse and varied as the individuals themselves, their economic and material locations, and their shifting purpose for engaging with technology."

Studying the Spaces of Girls' Activism

Section 4 examines the spaces in which girls take action. Jessalyn Keller's opening chapter, "Making Activism Accessible: Exploring Girls' Blogs as Sites of Contemporary Feminist Activism," examines how blogs constitute concrete spaces for doing feminism, especially for young women whose interlocutors live at great distances from them. While girls are often marginalized in traditional spaces of activism, Keller highlights the significant role that alternative spaces—feminist blogs—play for girls to perform their activist identities. In this way blogs are a mediated space for girls' cultural production, and, as Keller observes in her

careful analysis, blogs are a critical space for studying, and locating, contemporary feminism.

Lena Palacios's chapter, "'Ain't No Justice… It's Just Us': Girls Organizing against Sexual and Carceral Violence," highlights how the organizing of racialized, disabled, queer, and immigrant girls who represent the communities most affected by interlocking forms of interpersonal and state violence are at the forefront of developing transformative justice models. Palacios examines the models of collective action on which girls' transformative justice activism is based, demonstrating how girls are trained and train each other to become radical bridge builders engaging in intersectional and inter-movement praxis. The girl-centered organizations she analyzes target their activism at criminal punishment systems, schools, media, other activist formations, neighborhoods, groups of friends, and families, thus building models for how to deal with the harm produced in these targeted institutions that do not rely on exile, expulsion, or imprisonment, but instead address the root causes of harm in ways that seek to transform the roles of both victim and perpetrator. In the process, many girls learn how to maneuver strategically between and among a number of social movements that challenge sexual assault, zero tolerance policies, and media racism.

The last two chapters in this section offer case studies of specific girl-focused action-oriented projects, one from Rwanda and one from South Africa. Lysanne Rivard's chapter, "From the Playing Field to the Policy Table: Stakeholders' Responses to Rwandan Schoolgirls' Photographs on Physical Activity and Sport in Secondary Schools," demonstrates how Photovoice practices can be used to bring about policy change in relation to girls and physical activity. Over the past fifteen years, Rwandan authorities have developed and implemented a physical activity and sports culture as part of the country's postconflict peace and reconciliation efforts. Since girls are traditionally marginalized from taking part in these activities, government policy, NGO community programs, and physical education curricula are now seeking to provide girls with access to the benefits of physical activity. Using the visual participatory methodology of Photovoice, this study gathers girls' perspectives on their lived experiences of physical activity and sports in secondary schools that are then used to make the case for girls' physical education with key educators and policy makers. This chapter reflects on these stakeholders' and policy makers' reactions to girls participating at the policy table through their images and captions.

Katie MacEntee's chapter, "Girls, Condoms, Tradition, and Abstinence: Making Sense of HIV Prevention Discourses in Rural South Af-

rica," presents a case study of a group of grade eight girls who used digital cameras and visual storyboarding to talk about what it is like to be girls growing up in a rural community where HIV and AIDS disproportionately affect girls and young women. MacEntee discusses the "participants' construction of adolescent female sexual desire and the complexities of how [they] interpret and make sense of HIV prevention practices in their rural context."

As we highlight in the Epilogue, it is our hope that the chapters in this volume contribute to a more nuanced discussion of the place of girlhood studies in feminist scholarship as well as the significance (or place) of place in the study of girls' lives. Making place explicit in emerging girlhood discourse is vital. We need to address place, in the different and distributed material locations and situations of girlhood, as well as in the reflexive sensibility of the consciousness of place and its importance. These chapters provide particularly generative models for imagining, and learning how to do so.

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SECTION 1

GIRLS IN LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE

1

UNDER THE SHADOW OF EMPIRE

Indigenous Girls' Presencing as Decolonizing Force

Sandrina de Finney

Like other Western liberal democracies, Canada—despite its global reputation as a progressive, multicultural country—owes its existence to centuries of colonial dominion over places and societies. As a result of the insatiable drive of European nations to expand their empires into new places, incalculable physical, spiritual, political, economic, and sociocultural traumas have been, and continue to be, enacted on Indigenous[1] peoples, with women and girls as prime targets. Over the course of my work with Indigenous girls as a front-line worker, community-based researcher, educator, and advocate, many encounters have profoundly affected me. In this chapter,[2] I revisit conversations that spurred radical shifts in both my girlhood praxis and my evolving understanding of how girlhood is produced and lived in the context of a colonial state. In the following dialogue, part of a participatory research study with young people in care,[3] four First Nations girls unpack persistent stereotypes of Indigenous girlhood.[4]

> There's not any Natives on media and stuff, Native girls in magazines or TV, video games, you know … we're not really shown in a real way. (Kristin-Lee, fourteen, Cree/Métis/Irish)
>
> We're kind of left out. (Danielle, seventeen, Tsimshian/Haisla)
>
> Yeah, the beauty of our culture gets left out. (Kristin-Lee)
>
> I feel like people just think Native women complain and complain and complain all the time, we just want something for nothing. (Cindy, sixteen, First Nations)
>
> Uh-huh, and yeah, why is nobody paying attention to the actual history? (Kristin-Lee)
>
> It's true, 'cause it's not getting better through the ages. (Danielle)
>
> For sure, it's like, how loud do we have to yell? Hello, there's a problem here, there's a lot of violence against us First Nations girls and women. A

lot. It's a problem, hello. We're NOT shown to be strong, or beautiful, or even worth much. (Cindy)

Oh my god, that's so true! They do think, at school they think Native women are working girls or we're just so—we can't do anything for ourselves. (Kristin-Lee)

This one guy one time told me that First Nations girls are all like raped since they're young so they're just, um, that's it for them, like they're ruined for life, so that's all they know, and I was like "wait a minute, take another look." (Cindy)

I return in this chapter to Cindy's question: "How loud do we have to yell?" I want to heed her call to "wait a minute, take another look." In taking another look, I hold up ways that Indigenous girls bravely and creatively negotiate colonial traumas that seep into bodies, spirits, relations, structures, systems, and places. I aim to explore how girls enact a different kind of presence (see Simpson 2011), galvanized through humor, contestation, and proud resurgence that exceeds exclusionary neocolonial notions of white, liberal girlhood. To do so, it is important to situate Indigenous girls' everyday processes of resurgence and presencing as they take shape amid intersecting forms of traumatic violence that colonial states and societies produce: epistemic and ontological violence; territorial, geographic, and spatial violence; embodied/material, affective, cognitive, and spiritual violence; and political, economic, and sociocultural violence. As Downe argues, "[T]he abuses experienced by Aboriginal girls over the past 130 years are not isolated occurrences; they are connected through a pervasive colonial ideology that sees these young women as exploitable and often dispensable" (2006: 3).

In trying to reconceptualize Indigenous girlhood in the midst of overlapping forms of colonial violence, I consider the following guiding questions: How do we challenge the persistent construction of Indigenous girl bodies as insignificant, dispensable, and irrevocably broken? What other conceptualizations of trauma, place, and girlhood can we engage with to enact a different praxis of girlhood? How might such stories inform creative approaches that support resurgence and presencing as cumulative decolonizing forces?

I approach these questions by interrogating the notions of trauma and place as they relate to Indigenous girlhoods and to the field of girlhood studies. I begin by providing some context for presencing as girlhood praxis to unpack the pervasive image of Indigenous girls as exploitable and dispensable. Given the increasingly diverse and stratified societies in which we work with girls, we need expanded defini-

tions of Indigenous girlhood that foreground the political, historical, economic, and sociocultural forces that structure girls' encounters with trauma as it is shaped by, and in, colonized places.

To this end, I conceptualize the girls' local and contextualized experiences of dominant coloniality and whiteness that are emblematic of Canadian places—the predominantly Euro-Western cities, towns, and rural communities in which the girls live. I do so by thinking through how place is produced by state formations, mutating colonial forces, connections with ecosystems and all relations (Simpson 2011), and relationships among European settlers, racialized migrants, and First Peoples that are mediated through intersecting formations of nationality, citizenship, age, gender, race, class, and sexuality, among other systems.

Just as I take place out of dominant colonial discourses of terra nullius and European dominion (Anderson 2011), I take trauma out of its bio-psychologized boundaries to conceptualize it instead as a deliberate, ongoing, pervasive tool of historical and contemporary colonialism. Mobile forms of colonial trauma make girls into particular kinds of "ungrievable bodies" (Butler 2009: 14)—bodies without hope and without capacity, victim bodies, disenfranchised bodies. Such conceptualizations place the burden for healing on Indigenous girls while facilitating a state agenda of economic and political control over place via the extinguishment of Indigenous self-determination. At the same time, hundreds of missing or murdered Indigenous girls and women across Canada are revictimized by systemic failures on the part of the state to ensure appropriate policy, legal, and community-based interventions to address racialized, gendered, sexualized violence (Anderson 2011). This violence is too often obscured by individualized, medicalized conceptions of trauma that portray Indigenous girls as faceless and broken, as illustrated by the conversation among Danielle, Kristin-Lee, and Cindy with which I began this chapter.

Presencing as Girlhood Praxis

As a disruptive practice, I look for counternormative conceptual frameworks that offer openings to rethink trauma in our work with Indigenous girls. One such framework is Leanne Simpson's notion that acts of presence are integral to Indigenous resurgence. Simpson emphasizes that decolonization involves understanding and generating meaning "through engagement, presence and process." She asserts that "Indigenous societies were societies of presence. Our processes—be they political, spiritual, education or healing—required a higher degree of

presence than modern colonial existence" (2011: 92–93). Simpson explains that presencing is nurtured by collective advocacy and mobilization, rooted in spiritual and cultural resurgence. In the following passage, she shares the importance of participating with her family and community in a political manifestation as a way of enacting a sense of political and spiritual engagement and visibility. For her, presencing is a grounding process, a transformative decolonizing force: "That day, we were not seeking recognition or asking for rights. We were not trying to fit into Canada. … This was not a protest. This was not a demonstration. This was a quiet, collective act of resurgence. It was a mobilization and it was political because it was a reminder that although we are collectively unseen … when we come together with one mind and one heart we can transform our land and our city into a decolonized space and a place of resurgence, even if it is only for a brief amount of time." (11) Like the "com[ing] together" in a "quiet, collective act of resurgence" that Simpson describes, girls' everyday acts of presence—avoiding, protecting, contesting, laughing, hoping, dreaming, connecting, documenting, imagining, challenging—are not singular, simplistic examples of rational agency; they are messy, contradictory, and inherently diverse. This diversity brings to light other conceptualizations of trauma and place with which we can engage to enact a praxis of girlhood that challenges feminist analyses of structural barriers that leave little room for honoring girls' everyday engagements with hope, desire, humor, and possibility.

Instead of seeking to meticulously define resurgence and presencing, I hope to expand understandings of their diverse effects as decolonizing forces so as to provide a more nuanced account of what a politics of decolonization may mean for a girlhood studies future. I punctuate my discussion with other conversations with Indigenous girls.[5] I draw on participatory research and community projects conducted over several years with girls and young women aged between twelve and nineteen years in Victoria and surrounding communities on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. The studies were diverse in scope, topic, and methods. They included Indigenous methodologies and other participatory methods: discussion circles; cultural camps; ceremony; individual and group interviews; action and advocacy projects; and arts-based methods such as photography, theater, mask making, and drumming. Each project included a range of participation options, from one-time-only participants to girls who deepened their involvement with each other and the research over several years. I have written about these studies elsewhere (see de Finney 2010; de Finney et al. 2011; Loiselle et al. 2012; de Finney and Saraceno 2015). In this chapter, I bring together themes

and currents in and across the studies as they relate to trauma, place, and Indigenous girlhood. The examples are not meant to serve as tokenized accounts taken out of context or superficially universalized. They reflect girls' everyday entanglements with complex questions and highlight the possibilities in girlhood studies for supporting Indigenous girls' presencing strategies as an active, politicized, decolonizing process.

The Politics of Place and Trauma: Canada as Neocolonial State

When trauma is presented as a biomedical-psychological effect, we fail to theorize its strategic uses as a colonial relation of power. Canada, as "a settler society with a history of genocide and colonization" (Razack 2002: 89), has maintained its colonial authority through policies that use trauma to break down sovereign Indigenous nations. Cradle-to-grave colonial policies like the Indian Act have aimed to manage "the Indian problem" from birth to death by targeting Native bodies, social and economic organizations, political structures, spirits, memories, and cultural fabric. Such policies targeted Indigenous children as a deliberate strategy to "kill the Indian in the child" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada n.d.: 4), to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of cultural values and claims to land. Children were forcibly removed from their families and placed in residential schools where they were severed from connections to their siblings, families, communities, and lands; beaten for practicing their spiritual and cultural traditions; and often systematically abused sexually, physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

The residential school system has become the iconic representation of intergenerational colonial trauma in Canada, and it is often represented as a horror of a colonial past from which the country has now recovered. In this representation, its effects are seen to be residual at best, carried across generations that have failed to heal from residential schools' traumatic effects. Far from being resolved, however, colonial practices of cultural disenfranchisement and economic and political exclusion are compounding over time. Several newer waves of residential internment, each worse than the previous one, have targeted Indigenous children. More Indigenous children are in government care today than during the height of the residential school era. While Indigenous children represent less than 4 percent of Canada's population, they currently constitute over 50 percent of children in foster care (First Nations Education Council 2009). Most Indigenous children in

care live with non-Aboriginal families, a trend that exacerbates the cycle of forced disconnection from culture, language, and communities. On-reserve First Nations children and youth have the highest rates of poverty yet receive the least funding—up to 22 percent less for social services and between 25 percent and 40 percent less for education than for non-Aboriginal children (First Nations Education Council 2009). In 2011, Auditor General Sheila Fraser released an evaluation of ten years of federal policies dealing with First Nations. Her report states that the basics of life—clean drinking water, adequate housing, education, and child welfare—are persistently and dramatically substandard for First Nations, and in some cases the situation is deteriorating. In speaking to these findings, Fraser said: "I am profoundly disappointed to note … [that] a disproportionate number of First Nations people still lack the most basic services that other Canadians take for granted … in a country as rich as Canada, this disparity is unacceptable" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada 2011: 1–2).

Through a fully active governmentality of colonial traumatization involving necropolitics, death by bureaucracy, spatial containment, and political, cultural, and economic disenfranchisement, Canadian society continues to rely on the subjugation of Indigenous people. Canada's colonial state practices sustain a system of chronic poverty, social exclusion, and political and cultural disenfranchisement, with particularly dire effects on Indigenous women and girls. In Canada, Indigenous girls and women suffer the highest rates of sexual exploitation, racialized violence, incarceration, murder, poverty, underhousing and homelessness, and underservicing in health and education sectors (Anderson and Lawrence 2003; Sikka 2009; Suzack et al. 2010).

Presencing against Colonial Traumatization

The conversation among Danielle, Kristin-Lee, and Cindy presented at the beginning of this chapter speaks to the power and difficulty of developing a critical analysis of racialized, gendered, sexualized violence as a form of presence. The girls voiced their invisibility in dominant sociocultural contexts such as popular media and public discourse and linked this invisibility to the erasure of their cultures' beauty, diversity, and significance. They used humor to contest the notion of Indigenous girls as damaged, dependent, and broken. Their collective questioning, analysis, and satire are compelling engagements of presence. In a context of pervasive denial, developing an analysis of active coloniality

constitutes powerful, courageous acts of presencing: this is knowledge that cannot be taken for granted as being easily accessible to girls. A prevalent theme in the girls' struggles to make sense of this erasure is that of "not quite know[ing] why or how to explain it different, even though you know it's wrong and it keeps happening all around." When Kristin-Lee asks, "Why is nobody paying attention to the actual history?" Danielle responds that, "it's true, 'cause it's not getting better through the ages." Supporting girls' efforts to presence themselves by disrupting dominant narratives of Indigenous girlhood, by building connections with each other and with communities, entails making this history visible and contestable, producing other possibilities for transformative girlhood praxis.

These possibilities collide with an alarming new trend in fields that inform girlhood studies (such as education and gender, sexuality, and cultural studies) regarding the appropriation of decolonization discourses. In this convenient reimagining, settler colonialism is recast as just another so-called special interest issue. We are now invited to decolonize our programs, methodologies, and institutions (Tuck and Yang 2012). Tuck and Yang deplore the "casual ease" with which decolonization language has been adopted, "with little recognition given to the immediate context of settler colonialism on North American lands." They add that "when metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future" (3).

To trouble a settler future and avoid metaphorical evasions, I pay particular attention to the specificity of girls' contestations of settler colonialism. One connection that girls highlight is that colonial relations have produced both Indigenous girls/women *and* land/place as colonial property. Extending our analysis beyond a human-centered focus enables us to understand colonial trauma as highly spatialized and ecological in scope. The colonial state has for centuries engaged destructive and highly adaptable methods to secure its supremacy over land by extracting both resources and people from their ecosystems. Colonial hegemony involves segregating First Peoples, not only from culture and community, but from land and water (for example, burial grounds; traditional harvesting, fishing, and hunting grounds; shores and forests) that were essential to Indigenous economies, cultural traditions, wellness, and self-sustainability (Tuck and Yang 2012). As Seeka and TJ explain in the following conversation, Indigenous peoples were simultaneously mined for their knowledge of ecosystems and forcefully removed from them.

> When they settled … here, the whites who came early, they used what we knew about nature, how to use animals and all that, fishing, the tree bark, how we used … our berry patches and everything. (Seeka, sixteen, First Nation living on reserve)
>
> Yeah, it saved their life. (TJ, fourteen, Métis and Irish)
>
> Or, like even when it's a Native name, like they change it to make it more English-sounding … like they're never saying, "This is actually a Native river that we took without paying for it" but guess what, now it's called like England River or whatever, "Isn't that great? Let's celebrate ourselves." (Seeka)

Sherene Razack links colonial appropriation to a mindset that "not only enabled White settlers to secure the land but to come to know themselves as entitled to it" (2002: 129). In this colonial reimagining, Indigenous lands and societies are erased through markers of imperial hegemony (expropriated and renamed berry patches, rivers, fields, and mountains; colonial province, town, and street names; monuments celebrating explorers, pioneers, monarchs, and empires). TJ and Seeka describe the colonizers' spatial claims that established European dominion while they appropriated and negated Indigenous traditional scientific knowledge. The girls' naming of these dynamics contests the construction of Indigenous people as static relics of the past, as peripheral to contemporary Canadian society and to appropriated places.

The girls explain that counternarratives have been passed down to them through intergenerational stories of resurgence and presence: "My mom explained this to me growing up, like all the women kept the language alive and they even went to jail for it" (TJ). Intergenerational connections feature prominently in girls' conversations. Their stories emphasize the creative ways in which Indigenous women and girls have, for hundreds of years, mobilized as activists, teachers, healers, leaders, and advocates, pushed for legislative and policy change, initiated grassroots movements and organized international advocacy, created community-based services and alternative economies, and acted as spiritual and cultural leaders (see Anderson and Lawrence 2003; Martin-Hill 2003; Andrea Smith 2005; Suzack et al. 2010). Many of the girls I work with are aware of this legacy of tremendous strength and resilience, and many participate in individual and collective resistances of all kinds that connect them with other girls, sisters, women, aunties, and grandmothers.

At the same time, many girls have spoken at length about missing a woman role model and not having a strong woman to look up to. Martin-Hill stresses that colonial patriarchy is continuously reconfig-

ured in Indigenous communities by horizontal oppression. She writes: "The emergence of an Indigenous "traditional" woman who is silent and obedient to male authority contributes to the image of a voiceless woman whom I call She No Speaks, born from the tapestry of our colonial landscape … defeated, hunched over, head down and with no future" (2003: 108). In this context, colonial trauma must be understood as intimately gendered. Indeed, many girls I have worked with struggle against narrow gender binaries that produce the constitutive categories of girl and woman, leaving little room for other gender identities. It is to the intersecting gendered, sexualized, racialized dimensions of colonial trauma that I now turn my attention.

Colonial Gender Formations: Rethinking Trauma and the Ungrievable Girl

Lugones (2007) argues that colonialism produced the male/female gender binary that permeates normative Western subjecthood under neoliberalism. Smith (2005) expands on this idea, emphasizing that the gender binary is part of a colonial matrix that also includes the dichotomy of hegemonic whiteness/racialized other, compulsory heteronormativity, and capitalist exploitation. In this regard, transnational analyses of global imperialism and its implication in global capitalism and Indigenous women and girls' sexual and labor exploitation inform the girls' localized analysis. Indigenous girls and women have been treated very differently than boys and men by colonial institutions, in part because they were essential to the intergenerational transmission of culture and thus to First Peoples' sovereignty and continuity. Over centuries, colonial policies have sought to disenfranchise women from their Aboriginal status, their leadership in Indigenous societies, and their access to housing and employment in their communities (Anderson 2011; Tuck and Yang 2012). Indigenous girls and women have been seen as property while being degraded and sexualized to justify colonial violence (Sikka 2009). Government agents would often "withhold rations unless Aboriginal women were made available to them" (Razack 2002: 131). This violence persists, as indicated by the disproportionately high rates of sexualized violence, criminalization, trafficking, and murder of Indigenous girls and women. It is continually (re)produced and normalized through its systemic denial across public, legal, and state discursive constructions of Indigenous girl bodies as exploitable, and their trauma as ungrievable and thus acceptable. For Judith Butler, grievability presupposes that life matters: "without grievability, there is no life,

or, rather, there is something living that is other than life. Instead, 'there is a life that will never have been lived,' sustained by no regard, no testimony, and ungrieved when lost" (2009: 14–15).

Ungrievability, as Cindy explained in the opening dialogue, engenders Indigenous girl bodies as "ruined for life, not strong, beautiful, or even worth much." Elsewhere, fifteen-year-old Rianna described the racial slurs and stereotypes she heard growing up: "Let's see … there's the drunk, the ho, like all Native girls are on the street. There's the dirty Indian, broke. There's the whole Indian woman in a blanket thing, with the braids, like two hundred years ago. The whole Pocahontas thing. That's what we have to choose from." Seeka jumped in: "No wonder … Native girls disappear and stuff and it never makes it to the news." As Cindy, Rianna, and Seeka offer in their precise, grief-filled accounts, these narratives cast Indigenous girls as voiceless, broken, colonial caricatures; they obscure girls' complex experiences, knowledges, strengths, and desires. The girls speak to the paradoxical invisibility/hypervisibility of Indigenous girls who, under the Canadian colonial state, are both objects of social and political anxieties and constructed as less valuable and grievable than other girls. Simultaneously pathologized and criminalized for colonial violence, their exploitation is seen as less deserving of public empathy, government resources, and comprehensive social, economic, and political interventions (see de Finney and Saraceno 2015). Indigenous girls do not fit the victim image that has been negotiated and sustained by societal discourses that inform funding policies for education and intervention services for women and girls (Sikka 2009). And, despite their personal knowledge of these dynamics, they are rarely included in programing debates that affect them (de Finney and Saraceno 2015).

It is clear that we need to move away from generalized, narrow psychological understandings of trauma toward historicized, politicized conceptions. Pathology-driven lenses "seek [only] to document pain, loss, brokenness or damage" (Tuck 2010: 638). Within such a model, Indigenous girls remain marginalized, relegated to proving their worth and entitlement through the mutually constituting discourses of risk/ trauma and deservedness/thankfulness. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues, a damage-centered approach reduces Indigenous people to "making claims" about their "rights and dues" (2012: 143). This approach reasserts settlers' authority to legitimize Indigenous contestations, to give up the resources they now control—a restructuring of power that is unlikely under an active colonial state, and one that mutes invaluable accounts of resurgence and presencing. We urgently need to take another look and search for other accounts.

Toward a Politics of Spirited Presencing

> When I step into the Big House, being there, it's when I feel most powerful. (Raven, fifteen, Coast Salish)

As an alternative to pathologizing frameworks that depict "entire schools, tribes, and communities as flattened, ruined, devastated" (Tuck 2010: 638), Tuck proposes a framework of productive possibility that is equally "intent on convoking loss and oppression" and invested in nurturing "wisdom, hope, and survivance." She cites Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor, who explains that what he calls "survivance" constitutes an "active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" that strengthens sovereignty and resurgence (639). Sovereignty, Damien Lee reminds us, involves implicating ourselves fully, since colonialism occupies not only our lands, but "our minds, bodies and narratives, and re-occupying these spaces is a form of resurgence" (2011: 4).

Girls enact presence when they contest their positioning as invisible by physically, spiritually, and symbolically (re)occupying the places that hold their ancestral connections as First Peoples. Some girls describe seeking out relationships to places that recenter the power of dream work, spiritual healing, and ancestral relations. In the following conversation, two girls, Raven and Tamrah, discuss their relationship to a creek near their home and the powerful healing energy they encounter there.

> There's this place, it's a creek. I always have a vision there. Lots of people have seen the ancestors there. It's the old people that, they come and check, check in on us, and the other living things, like they check in on the trees and the water and they kinda come there to replenish themselves too, 'cause the water is healing that way. (Tamrah, eighteen, Coast Salish)

> That's a real power, powerful energy or something there that's beyond anything we here could do in a workshop, website, or whatever. It's not something government funders would understand (laughter). It's more for us, for just us, that it feeds that, our spirits. (Raven)

Presencing with what Tamrah describes as "all relations" of ancestors, living things, trees, water, and other powerful energies draws on generations of communal knowledge. Importantly, presencing exceeds the interpersonal notions of relational practice that dominate analyses of how to work with girls. Here, girlhood is a situated, collective, relational event, intimately connected to place, to other forces, and to beyond-human relations; it involves intensities of place, affect, spirit, healing, embodied contestation, political struggle for sovereignty, and commu-

nity building. As such, presencing is part of a decolonizing "relationship framework" (Amadahy, cited in Walia 2012: 4) that moves us beyond psychological understandings of relational practice to a more politicized accountability and grounding in an ethic of mutual responsibility.

Of course, it is difficult to enact mutual, politicized accountability under an active colonial state. Presencing clearly cannot be extricated from ongoing colonial effects and other power relations, and I seek to honor the girls' acts of presence without romanticizing and exceptionalizing them. Girls live with multiple, diffuse formations of patriarchy, sexism, racism, heteronormativity, class relations, migration, and overlapping nationalisms that always operate at multiple levels and in unpredictable ways. Girls' identity formation and presencing cannot be disentangled from these shifting forces. Celebratory back-to-the-land statements are fraught with tension about access, feasibility, and the trappings of identity politics; the phrase can evoke essentialized notions of the noble savage and an unrecoverable past; and it also tends to erase heterogeneity among girls, communities, nations, and locations when, in fact, girls' relationships with land and place are entangled with the politics of skin color, gender, social class, family background, personal histories, contested claims to Indigeneity, and so on. I have met many girls who know nothing about their Indigenous backgrounds, who are not interested in further exploration, who express deep shame or a deliberate lack of interest, who do not feel entitled to claim an Indigenous identity, and/or who say they do not want to be pigeonholed as Native girls. These are valid and important facets of the diverse stories of Indigenous girls. But to simply accept these expressions as normal, inevitable outcomes of multiculturalism, globalization, and growing cultural hybridity erases the colonial forces that produce disconnection, shame, and lateral and internalized racisms. It also reconstitutes Indigenous girls as perpetually passive, culturally disconnected victims of colonization. This is an important topic and one I have explored elsewhere (see de Finney and Saraceno 2015). Here, I want to focus on the many girls for whom ancestral and community connections matter. For so many girls, particularly those of mixed backgrounds who may not identify as Indigenous or who grew up disconnected from their territories, cultures, and communities, stories that model presencing are salient even if tenuous and partial. As Krestin and Sarah outline, such connections, however difficult, are meaningful:

> It's hard, because for me, I personally don't have that cultural knowledge. I … didn't grow up knowing my culture. But it still matters to me. I mean,

I do want that choice … I wouldn't just give that up. (Krestin, seventeen, Métis/Scottish/English)

I grew up in care, and it's so important. It's just knowing 'OK, I'm not that drunk Indian' or also, on the flip side, I don't have to give it up as a white girl. (Sarah, nineteen, Cree/Haida)

Krestin's assertion that her history matters even if she is not connected to her community, that she would not "just give that up," offers a powerful antidote to Sarah's description of the binary of being either "a white girl or that drunk Indian." Laenui (2000) suggests that decolonization involves mourning as much it does recovery, action, and dreaming. And so, even when girls' perspectives are impossibly disconnected, even when their actions are small, painful, contradictory, or haphazard, their presencing nonetheless accumulates intensities that erode the overwhelming force of gendered, racialized, sexualized colonial narratives, and creates new possibilities for well-being, belonging, and everyday solidarities. "You can't give up. It's kind of all the little things. It's a daily struggle. I mean, most of the time, I don't think about sexism, racism, but it's more just a daily thing, saying 'I'm here, I'm here.' I try to just keep my head up and do what I can, you know? The little things add up, just talking with Elders, community events. I try to role model to my little sisters that we can do things differently. It does add up— that's what I believe. In my heart I believe that" (Anonymous). These varied strategies are precisely what speak to many girls who do not see their realities represented in normative Euro-Western perspectives on girlhood. Their stories of participating in community events and ceremonies, working with elders, role-modeling with siblings, engaging with places, building relationships with others do still matter and they add up. They say, "I'm here" despite "the daily struggle." This notion depicts presencing as imperfect yet productive of related and accessible webs of connection and engagement. Girls negotiate resurgence and resist sustained assaults on Indigenous bodies, lands, and sovereign Nations through everyday practices of ceremony, hope, creativity, subversion, storytelling, outrage, dream work, political action, critical analysis, and centering community knowledges. These are not individualized, self-determined acts of the empowered so-called postfeminist liberal girl subject that is prevalent in Euro-Western girlhood studies. The girls' reflections on gender, race, ecology, and social change speak to knowledge and ways of being that flow outside the overwhelmingly Euro-Western perspectives that define girlhood, girl agency, and girl bodies.

Arguing for a Trans-theoretical Girlhood Praxis

What, then, might a framework of resurgence and presencing teach us about coming together differently, critically, productively to subvert exclusionary notions of girlhood and girlhood praxis? What critical theories and practices can contribute to a more politicized, inclusive girlhood studies?

I am concerned about the limited interdisciplinarity among Indigenous and feminist theories, the undertheorizing of girlhood in feminist, gender, and sexuality studies, and the absence of Indigenous analyses in girlhood studies. First, the erasure of Indigenous girlhood that the girls in this chapter discuss is replicated in the undertheorizing of Indigenous issues in girlhood studies. Given that Indigenous girls are the fastest-growing girl population in Canada (Statistics Canada 2008), such an analysis is increasingly important. Yet, despite girls' potential to inform such debates, the intersecting effects of gendering, sexualization, racialization, and colonization are not substantially examined in studies of Aboriginal youth, which tend to subsume girls under the boy-centered youth category (Jiwani, Steenbergen, and Mitchell 2006; de Finney 2010). A gender/sexuality analysis is also lacking in much Indigenous rights and Indigenous nationhood literature and advocacy work—an issue addressed by a small but growing number of Indigenous feminists (for example, Kim Anderson, Leanne Simpson, Rebecca Tsosie, and Eve Tuck). And, while girlhood studies centers girls as a category in feminist inquiry, Griffin (2004) emphasizes that some girls are more visible than others in this process.

Also at stake is the very notion of the girl; girlhood studies generally fails to unpack the colonial legacies that make the term *girl* possible or question its role in producing normative girlhood (and, by default, normative gender and sexuality binaries and related concepts of woman, teen, tween, girls as women-in-progress, and so on). Taft implores us to address girls' complex relationship to girlhood as a way to "redefine what it means to be a girl" (2011: 18). Certainly, as argued in this volume on the politics of place and girlhood studies, the girl remains an important, constitutive category of lived experience and of inquiry and practice that warrants dedicated focus. At the same time, a small but growing body of literature is bringing much-needed queer theorizing to girlhood and Indigenous studies that highlights not only how Indigenous girls but young people of all genders and sexual orientations relate to these categories. I unpack these ideas elsewhere (de Finney et al. 2010; Loiselle et al. 2012), and I am aware that my inquiries provide

a useful site of contestation while simultaneously reifying the notion of girl as reproductive of the colonial matrix.

Given these gaps, a trans-theoretical framework would explore potential coalitions among theoretical histories to provide a more nuanced account of what a politics of decolonization might mean for the future of girlhood studies. I am stirred by Cindy's request for an analysis of place and trauma that contests a pervasive understanding that "all girls have issues" and Indigenous girls "just want something for nothing." The excerpts I have shared here disturb the mainstream positioning of Indigenous girls outside of normative ideas of what it means to be adjusted, healthy, successful, beautiful, worthy and, even, girl itself.

Conclusion: Tensions and Possibilities

Taft stresses that girls' activisms are "located in their own struggles against and within the global flows of power," that they entail "radical political practices that aim to counter the scattered hegemonies that affect their lives" (2011: 18), and that they include intensive and theoretical political conversations, the building of activist communities, and horizontalist political engagements, fueled by girls' desire for transformation.

As Taft advocates, the girls I work with want information and critical language to explain the persistent violence targeting Indigenous girls and women. Some wonder why the Canadian government refuses to call a national inquiry into hundreds of cases of missing Indigenous girls and women. Many want strategies for transformation and radical reimaginings that involve not only looking forward, but also looking back, to old knowledges and ancestral connections that remain vibrant and important. They want to represent themselves against and outside of limiting bio-psychological descriptions like low self-esteem and high-risk, and cultural disconnection that pathologize and victimize them. They describe a trivializing and a denial of their perspectives, an assumption that they do not already know about or engage with issues that have shaped generations of their families. Many reject superficial, essentialized notions of empowerment and diversity that are prevalent in girlhood practice. They are equally critical of apolitical, color-blind approaches that are disconnected from what is going on in their lives and communities.

In holding up examples of presencing as a productive direction in girlhood studies, we cannot ignore the power of ongoing colonial effects to constrain possibilities for resurgence. The Canadian state is not

a static, homogenous entity, and its fluidity is the very thing that ensures the reproduction of colonial relations over time. How and why girls presence is never one-dimensional; diffuse and multiple forces both produce and constrain possibilities for transformation.

Still, paying attention to girls' presencing strategies opens pathways into much-needed alternative stories of Indigenous girlhood. They highlight the need in girlhood studies for courageous, expansive conversations that disclaim the superficial appropriation of decolonization discourses. It is critical that analyses of (de)colonization not reproduce metaphorical erasures that entrench a settler future, but instead center issues of land, sovereignty, and resurgence. The presencing possibilities presented here are emergent, situated, and context-specific. They come out of critical relational praxis with the histories, communities, places, and issues at hand, and as such they cannot be neatly reapplied in other settings. Vital to this approach is struggling and collaborating in the specific places where we work as community members, girlhood scholars, practitioners, advocates, and allies. It takes time to produce critical girlhood praxis in each new context, to live with the tensions and productive possibilities, and this approach brings to light the incommensurability of the many deep-seated structural traumas girls repeatedly name. However, taking up alternatives to dominant frameworks in and as girlhood praxis produces urgently needed openings for presencing amid Indigenous girls' complex socio-material conditions and against and beyond colonial formations of place and girlhood.

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Notes

1. I avoid using the state-produced term "Aboriginal" denoted in the Indian Act and imposed on Indigenous people to highlight their constitution as colonial subjects. Where possible, I use a Nation's self-determined name. I use the terms *Indigenous* and *First Peoples* to refer to original societies, not only in a Canadian context, but worldwide.
2. This chapter first appeared as an article in *Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 7, no. 1 (2014): 8–26.
3. This conversation took place during community-based research with Indigenous youth in foster care funded by the Victoria Foundation and the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development. Other excerpts are drawn from these studies or from a SSHRC-funded study, under the direction of Dr. Jo-Anne Lee (University of Victoria), that led to the creation of antidote (antidotenetwork.org), an award-winning grassroots network for and by racialized and Indigenous girls, young women, and women. All studies were conducted exclusively by research teams of Indigenous and racialized girls and women.
4. These verbatim accounts have not been edited.
5. I identify the girls in the ways they requested, including whether or not they wanted their real name or a code name (including Anonymous) used, their age and other descriptors, and how they self-identified their ethnic backgrounds and Indigenous ancestry (for example, Native, First Nation, Indigenous, Indian, Métis, Aboriginal, mixed race, status/nonstatus, on/off reserve). In my work, I use such terms provisionally to engage girls in unpacking their meanings and effects.

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Voices in Longitude and Latitude

Girlhood at the Intersection of Art and Ethnography

Marnina Gonick

In a "discipline mainly of words" (Mead 1995: 79), how might the visual open other possibilities, questions, and ways of knowing for girlhood studies?[1] In this chapter I explore this question through a discussion of a video art installation project entitled *Voices in Longitude and Latitude.* While in some of my previous work I have also been interested in using video as a visual methodology in exploring girlhood subjectivities (Gonick 2003), with *Voices in Longitude and Latitude* I worked with a professional filmmaker to create this video installation.[2] We videotaped eighty hours of documentary vérité[3] footage, landscapes and cityscapes, domestic and public settings, and a series of interviews with girls aged thirteen to twenty-three. The footage was then edited into a eighteen-minute piece to be shown in art gallery settings.

Shot in four Canadian locations and regions with girls from different communities—Inuit in Kugluktuk, Nunavut; transgender in Halifax, Nova Scotia; Jewish in Toronto, Ontario; and immigrants from different African countries (Congo, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Sudan) in Winnipeg, Manitoba—*Voices in Longitude and Latitude* is centrally interested in thinking about the concept of girlhood subjectivities and their relationships with the Canadian landscape and its urban and rural environments. In experimenting with the use of the visual, I am also exploring the hybrid space between ethnography and art—a methodological space that suggests or invites routes through embodied multisensory ways of knowing that may create new openings for how girls and girlhood are conceived. The rich description of ethnography is fused with the visual, the aesthetic, kinesthetic, and other sensory/felt dimensions of arts production, resulting in a form of epistemological entanglement. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam suggest, "the visual is one point of entry … into a multi dimensional world of intertextual dialogism" (2002: 22). In recent literatures across a variety of academic disciplines, the visual is being situated alongside other corporeal experiences as elements of the multisensoriality of everyday contexts and as mutually constituting

our perceptions (for example, Pink et al. 2010; Mitchell 2011). The interface between ethnography and arts practice invites a perspective that situates knowledge-making practices as always contextualized through the multisensoriality that characterizes thinking, seeing, feeling, hearing, moving, perceiving, and sensing relations.

The question of the relation of girled bodies to place and space, as feminist geographer Linda McDowell (1999) notes, is that the hierarchies and divisions of gender, race, and class are infused in how place and the environment are lived, understood, and used. These divisions are also "deeply implicated in the social production of space, in assumptions about the 'natural' and built environments and in the sets of regulations which influence who should occupy such spaces and who should be excluded" (11). For Ivinson and Renold (2013), the focus is on how being emerges through ongoing practices that are entangled with place, history, and landscape. Using a Deleuzeo-Guattarian notion of assemblage, Ivinson and Renold note that assemblages can be made of all manner of matter: corporeal, technological, mechanical, virtual, discursive, and imaginary that carry affective charges. Agency, what they call becomings, emerge(s) in the intra-action of elements in assemblages. *Voices in Longitude and Latitude* explores the multisensory and affective relations of place and girled becomings through assemblages of landscape, infrastructure, objects, and voice. In the hybrid space of ethnography and art, *Voices in Longitude and Latitude* explores how talk in ethnographic interviews intra-acts with images of landscape, place, and other manner of matter (images of animals, interior and exterior spaces of houses, soccer balls, etc.) to produce assemblages that open new epistemologies for making sense of girls' experiences. Like Invinson and Renold, I am interested in how these assemblages can provide insights into resources and barriers that girls encounter in their daily lives, their dreams, and their aspirations for the future. In this way, *Voices* was initially conceived of as a response to postfeminist discourses that espouse gender equality as a fait accompli, with girls outscoring boys in achievement tests, high school graduation, and university entrances (Ringrose 2013). These discourses are a regular feature of media stories and have infiltrated education discourse and practice where boys, rather than girls, are now considered to be in need of special programs and resources. I am wondering how a hybrid ethnographic-art project might participate in the production of a counterdiscourse to these postfeminist claims about successful girls and failing boys, at a time when it is becoming harder and harder to talk about inequality as an ongoing issue in a neoliberal North American context. How might a visual, sensory material environment produced through video installation create

such an opening? How might new conceptions of the relationship be-
tween girlhood and place also be opened in such an environment?

Voices in Longitude and Latitude: **Place**

In each location I worked with local schools or organizations to iden-
tify youth who might be interested in being part of the project. The
number of youth varied in each community. For example, in Winnipeg
there were about twelve participants, while in Halifax there were only
two. The concept for the piece evolved as we worked in each of the
communities, such that the locations were not shot in identical ways.
With the exception of the Nunavut material, the interviews were con-
ducted in-studio with sets that were conceptualized by my collaborator
and created by a professional designer, with each participant having
one that was unique.[4] For example, the Toronto set was a palette of
pinks, purples, and blues, with cushions and throw rugs that might be
found in the bedrooms of middle-class girls (see Figure 2.1). Twirling
sparkles and crystals hung in the foreground. We asked the girls to tell
us something about their interests so that these could be part of the set
designs. One was into sports, and her set integrated a basketball hoop,
a ball, and other sports paraphernalia. Another told us that one way she
identifies is as being good at math. Her set was built with a background
screen with math equations on it.

Figure 2.1. Toronto set. Courtesy: Noam Gonick.

In contrast, the Halifax sets have a marine theme, with fishing nets, buoys, barrels, and boats. In the background are screen projections of the rocks and ocean scenes from Peggy's Cove, a widely recognized Nova Scotian landscape. We wanted the imagery to subtly mirror the idea of transitions, sea to land, sea to sky, land to sky, rocks to water, with the sexually transitioning youth in the foreground. That is, the images of the transitions of nature from one matter to another link the coexistent relationship between the material environment and trans-youth bodies. In Winnipeg, the palette is oranges and reds with swaths of rich and textured cloth draped in various configurations. There are different kinds of cloth, stained maps, wooden carvings, and hanging beads that frame each of the unique interview spaces. For the Nunavut interviews the backdrop is the same in each of the interviews and consists of a simple bearskin.

On one level the sets act as a shorthand visual cue as to the different regional origins of the participants. Toward that end, each location is introduced with an opening segment that highlights an assemblage of local landscape features. For example, Toronto is introduced by images and sounds around Dundas Square, a busy downtown intersection of neon signs, pedestrians, and streetcars; Winnipeg is signaled by prairie grasses blowing in the wind; and Nunavut with scenes of Arctic ice and snow. However, the iconic images of Canada also bump up against the ambient sounds, individual stories, and the juxtaposition of moving images, such that what is also signaled is something about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, and how we might conceptualize the temporary convergences of people, things, discourses, and place (Pink 2011) as participating in the production of subjectivities. The iconic images of Canadian landscapes are juxtaposed with the moving images work like Bollas's (1993) imaginings that as people walk around in their everyday lives, they are *called out* by the places they walk through and the objects they encounter (Ivinson and Renold 2013). Foucault reminds us that we do not imagine space as empty; instead we recognize that spaces are "laden with qualities," that they are "haunted by fantasies" (1978: 176; see Ivinson and Renold 2013). Foucault imagined that sometimes space can feel like "running water" and at other times, "fixed, solidified like stone or crystal" (177). According to Ivinson and Renold, these textured images provide an embryonic vocabulary for what we might call the affects of space. While the sets of *Voices* may conjure up certain kinds of spaces, the moving images invoke other kinds. With the girled bodies in the foreground, together these assemblages signal the idea that places can call us into being.

Figure 2.2. Halifax set. Courtesy: Noam Gonick.

As a four-screen projection, *Voices* is an assemblage of the girls, the sets, the local landscapes, cityscapes, and the documentary vérité footage of the girls going about their daily lives. In Winnipeg, for example, when we asked the girls to let us know the kinds of things they would like to be filmed doing, they invited us to watch them playing soccer, and participating in sessions of radio camp, broadcasting, and drama club. In Nunavut the girls invited us to film them ice fishing, playing hockey, and painting their nails, among other activities. This collection of activities and images plays across the four screens in constant non-syncopated movement, in a consideration of how the temporary convergences of people, things, discourses, and place constitute specific phenomenological realities that are constantly shifting as the very elements that compose them are themselves in movement. Neither voice, place, nor girl is understood as a fixed source, locality, or identity but, rather, as events created through interactive movement and viewed in movement as part of a world that is itself always in motion.

In this way, *Voices* is a convergence of Deleuzian thinking on becoming and space with the notion of place from feminist critical geography (Massey 2005). In a Deleuzian framework, identity/difference emerges as an effect of connections and relations within and between different bodies, affecting and being affected by each other. It is a continuum and a multiplicity in a constant state of becoming or differentiation in relation to each singular body as it affects other bodies and is itself affected

(Deleuze 1994). For Deleuze, becoming entails the interconnectedness of things in the world (Deleuze and Guattari 1987); things are always-already in relations with multiple and different others, and, most importantly, these things become through these dynamic relations. Becoming is a constant state of movement and transformation through the interconnectedness of things. Space in a Deluzian sense is fragmented, rhizomatic, fluid, ambiguous, vulnerable, and open to constant change. It is linked with how one encounters, constructs, and performs the body, thereby mapping the relationship of space to subjectivity and ways of knowing (Springgay 2008).

Elizabeth Grosz (1995) contends that an understanding of the ways in which subjects occupy, materialize, and disrupt space is predicated on an exploration of how bodies and spaces define and shape one another. Space becomes both the production of culture and the making and circulation of intersubjective experiences. This notion of space is what Rosi Braidotti calls enfleshed materialism. Materiality in this sense does not refer to the body's natural or biological structure, but to the "complex interplay of highly constructed social and symbolic forces" (2006: 21). Enfleshed materialism envisages the body through intensities, flows, and affects. Thus, the embodied subject becomes a process of intersecting forces and spatial connections—a becoming body.

Similarly, for feminist geographer Doreen Massey, the "event of place" (2005: 140), or the making of places, is contingent on movement. She defines place as "the coming together of the previously inter-related—a constellation of processes rather than a thing." It is temporary: "the elements of this 'place' will be, at different times and speeds again dispersed" (141). In this perspective, there is an ongoing reciprocal relationship between people and the places they inhabit. People produce places and also derive identities from them. People are constituted through place (Osbourne 2001). In this way, landscape, according to Osbourne, is a verb not a noun; we should think of landscape not as an object to be seen or a text to be read, but as a process. Landscape is never inert; people engage with it, rework it. Osbourne suggests that the question to be asked is not just what landscape is or means but what it does, how it works as a cultural practice. The suggestion is that landscape constitutes a discourse through which identifiable social groups historically have framed themselves and their relations with both the land and with other human beings and that this discourse is related epistemologically to ways of seeing (Cosgrove 1998).

As a video installation, *Voices in Longitude and Latitude* represents the notion of landscape as an active actor in the creation of girlhoods as the images emerge, merge, fade, disappear, and reemerge in ever-chang-

ing mutually constituting relations. The four screens are positioned in such a way that viewers must walk through the exhibition space and thus no single position allows for taking in the full range of images. The audio track invites the movement of the viewer through the space. However, there are myriad possible combinations of images, sound, and movement, depending on how the viewer moves or does not move through the space. In this way, viewers may experience the landscapes as enfleshed and girled through a process of connective relations where flows, intensities, and forces between these relations produce generative possibilities. As moving images, the rocks at Peggy's Cove, the Manitoba grasses, the lights on Dundas Square, and the snow-covered hills of the Arctic are not inert, fixed backgrounds against which things occur; rather, they become active and participative, complex bodies creating new ways of organizing thoughts, events, and meaning. Each is busy with its own kind of activity. For example, Dundas Street hums with the sound of streetcars and a disembodied voice directing pedestrians to cross the road; objects and people enter and exit the frame; streetcars pass each other; lights change color; bodies pass through a crosswalk. The CN Tower at nightfall almost imperceptibly transitions the Toronto setting to Nunavut with its own telecommunications tower lit up at dusk. A snowmobile buzzes through the shot; an oil delivery truck turns the corner; people walk along the snowy road—it is an active landscape. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to this as haptic space,

Figure 2.3. Gendering the Nunavut landscape. Courtesy: Noam Gonick.

which generates new becomings through connections, deterritorializations, intensities, and a succession of always-shifting linkages. Like the CN Tower shot, the scenes are interlinked. Each transition is accomplished through the movements within the landscape shots, moving between the four screens.

However, I do not want to suggest that the relations of bodies, things, and landscape are merely random. On the contrary, there is a politics to the interactions of forces, agents, objects, sites, and locations of subjectivity (Braidotti 2005/2006). In a central sequence of *Voices*, the shifting images are of houses and neighborhoods in each of the four locations—trailer parks, suburban bungalows, and modernist mansions. In some instances, the girls are seen standing outside their homes. The images shift and change to the breath of one girl who is seen on various screens doing a martial arts sequence on her front lawn—she kicks, yells, bows, and breathes deeply in and out, and the images of houses move and shift. Some dwellings have antlers on the roof while others sport manicured lawns or views of smokestacks from a window. While attention is given to visual symmetries of color, shape, styles, and textures between and among the various houses and in the vegetation, attention is also drawn to the asymmetries of resources, capital, and possessions.

This segment of the piece conveys how the relations between landscape, girls, gender, and objects signifies power relations but is also an instrument of cultural power since particular places can be read as constituting exclusions(s) and inclusion(s) and thus embodying thresholds of certain kinds of (un)belonging (Fortier 1999). Furthermore, with the inclusion of images of infrastructure such as highways, communication towers, and electrical wires, place is seen to operate at the intersection of both global and local processes, and these processes include social, economic, political, and technological inputs (Massey 1994). Thus, the piece aims to disrupt the idea of landscape as simply given and inevitable and makes the case for seeing it as a cultural and social construction that features in the reproduction of social inequalities. This asymmetry is also a feature of the audio track, which, as the piece's title suggests, is of particular importance.

Voices in Longitude and Latitude: Voices

The audio track consists of ambient sounds—the whir of a snowmobile, the lapping of waves against rock, the crunching of feet on a gravel path, and the voices of the girls. Their stories are heard as short snippets rather than full narratives, and most often the voices are heard

without a corresponding visual image of the speaking girl. The idea of traditional documentary, with stories that are often crafted as unitary, fully conscious, complete, and non-contradictory, is thus disrupted. The visual-sound event becomes one of discontinuities and rupture. The Toronto girls enthusiastically list the numerous vacation destinations they have visited, while one of the Inuit girls speaks wistfully of her desire to go to Paris. The Winnipeg girls speak of the national traumas of their countries of origin (the genocide of Rwanda, the civil war of Congo), while one of the Halifax participants talks about experiences of abuse and homelessness. While some of the girls speak of their imagined future families, others speak of the children they already have or that their families have lost. Aspirations of becoming doctors, lawyers, and celebrities are juxtaposed to those of others who hope to be able to graduate from high school. The voices, together with the images previously discussed, are organized in such a way as to intervene and disrupt the postfeminist neoliberal discourse of *successful* girls (Gonick 2006; Pomerantz et al. 2013; Ringrose 2013), which positions girls as the inheritors of new structures of power and advantage. Some girls' stories do reveal a skillful negotiation of the education system and an anticipation of a smooth entry into the job market and/or family life, while other stories suggest a struggle with just being able to meet basic needs. The latter are without exception girls who have been marginalized because of race, sexuality, immigration status, regionality, or class.

The stories are personal but also speak more generally to the complexities of becoming a girl in the twenty-first century, including the question of who is a girl. From Shameen,[5] an Ethiopian immigrant living in Winnipeg who tells a story about wanting to become famous and to meet the pop star Justin Bieber to Amber, a transgendered working-class youth in Halifax who fantasizes about wearing a purple bustier to her high school prom, and Sedana, an Inuit girl who speaks tearfully of wanting to leave her boyfriend and the father of her child, the narratives are treated like a form of textile threaded in a non-linear pattern and interwoven into a textured, subtle soundscape. The voices are ephemeral, in transition, opening and unfolding such that meaning emerges not through the individual voice, but in the relations between voices, bodies, and images. Their meaning never finds a final resting place but is constantly being reconfigured in new and unpredictable ways. What is created is an interstitial space of *other thans* that point toward other possible emergent stories, complicating understandings instead of reducing them to universal points or markers.

For example, in juxtaposing the narratives from the different regions and communities, each is encountered as always in relation to

another's story, rather than as an individualized account of a singular story. The indeterminacy of meaning-making is suggested. Not only are notions of girlhood and what it means to be a girl challenged, but so are neoliberal conceptions of the isolated, rational, self-inventing subject (Gonick 2006; Davies and Bansel 2007). What slowly emerges in between the gaps and interstices of voice and image, body, and landscape is the flow of potentiality, the subtle and open processes that link subjects and their social, physical, and structural milieus together in ways that may help young people negotiate the constraints of the place/space/gendered/sexed expectations of their everyday lives. This is not, therefore, some free-flowing potentiality that is unconstrained by power or power relations, but, as Ivinson and Renold suggest (2013), it is a potentiality in assemblages that are always located in their socio-historical places, and that sometimes produce moments of deterritorialization, when girls, places, and other manner of matter come together in dynamic ways to create, if only temporarily, something new, something Other.

Conclusion

In recent literatures across a variety of academic disciplines the visual is being resituated as one element of the multisensorialty of everyday contexts (Pink et al. 2010). As different facets of living in the world, attending to the senses requires us to engage with the question of how to produce research from within an ontology and epistemology where affect, the pre-discursive, and the discursive are mutually articulated (Taguchi 2012). For Taguchi and others using a postconstructionist framework that encourages social scientists to think of the intra-action of more than human worlds (landscapes, places, spaces), attending to these dynamics is crucial for "transgressing what we already know and for extending knowing into other potential realities" (267). In creating *Voices in Longitude and Latitude*, we are exploring the in-between-ness, or hybrid space, between ethnography and art. In combining contemporary art practice with sociological questions, *Voices* produces what Springgay (2008) has called an entanglement—a space where seemingly disconnected ideas and affective relations come together: girls, landscapes, urban-scapes, objects, snippets of words and stories. These disconnected ideas and images are not necessarily ever resolved into coherence. They produce surprising and unpredictable forms of relationality where knowledge is created, mediated, and ruptured, and where meaning may be unfamiliar.

As a visual and audio experience, *Voices in Longitude and Latitude* opens up the possibility of multisensory ways of knowing in which images, sounds, affects, and spatial delineations are read onto and through one another. The visual, sensory, material environment of the piece situates knowing and meaning in movement and in the in-between where language hesitates and falters, where uncertainty cannot be represented and where knowledge may remain unspoken. We aimed to create an encounter that is not a visual/auditory objectification of experiential realities but is instead performative. It is one that opens bodies to other bodies and encounters, where the meanings, understandings, theories, and research methodologies generated become multiple and entangled. In creating *Voices in Longitude and Latitude,* I am interested in producing a research, aesthetic, and affective encounter that can begin to engage the complex, dynamic assemblages that Deleuze and Guattari theorize about. It is one that explores what new ideas about girls and girlhood may emerge in the intra-action of bodies, landscapes, places, and other matter and what new concepts of place materialize with the insertion of a multiplicity of girled bodies.

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Notes

1. Mead here is, of course, speaking of the field of anthropology. However, the description is equally true for other disciplines within the social sciences.
2. The filmmaker is my brother, Noam Gonick.
3. Documentary vérité is a style of documentary filmmaking and is sometimes called observational cinema. It often takes an ethnographic stance, documenting film subjects in the contexts of their daily lives. Some forms of the genre are also concerned with disrupting notions of truth and reality in film.

4. The Halifax sets were designed by Ian Grieg; the Toronto and Winnipeg sets were designed by Taavo Sedoor.
5. These names are all pseudonyms.

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3

Nowhere to Go, Nothing to Do

Place, Desire, and Country Girlhood

Catherine Driscoll

On a bright, clear winter Saturday I'm walking back from the river to the main street in Small Central Town[1] in inland New South Wales (NSW) with three girls I'm trying to get to talk to me.[2] Jenny, Nerida, and Kaylah[3] have become less wary than most here, probably because I don't hassle them about hanging out at the river. Instead I'm interested in what they do there, and why there. They're dubious, of course, and incredulous that anyone pays me for talking to them, but curious too. We stop at the newsagents, talking about magazines, and Jenny laughs at a cover featuring an after-school soap star she particularly dislikes. The café is next door. Kaylah says, "I bet cafés in Melbourne are nothing like that one on *Neighbours.* But I bet they're better than ours." The others laugh, agreeing. What they don't say is that they hate *this* café, where the woman mostly behind the counter won't serve them. They think her refusal is straightforwardly racist—because she hates Aboriginal girls. She suspects them of shoplifting and has reported them for truancy. The café is only one among many spaces where stories about Small Central Town's decline focus on white-Aboriginal tensions and the crime rate as much as agricultural decline, but today we're not talking about any of that. Instead they ask me about Sydney, where they've all been, but only once, and about Sydney cafés, which must also be better than theirs.

This situation represents the significant popular assumption in Australia that country life is lived at a distance from active engagement with the contemporary world, one with considerable influence over the tendency for country youth to drift to the city. But this is also a specifically *girl* situation and suggests, for me, the important contribution girlhood studies might make to understanding what it involves. Exploring what the field might say about this situation confronts two problematic tendencies in contemporary girlhood studies. The first is a tendency for girlhood studies to bifurcate into, on the one hand, stud-

ies of cultural production-consumption to which communication and representation are central and, on the other, policy studies based on a deficit model of what girls need. Addressing this situation requires considering girl-media relations alongside the town's provision of facilities for girls and also considering the relation between these. The second tendency is for girlhood studies to focus on metropolitan girls, except when representing girls understood to be outside of modernity and its privileges—girls discussed with reference to the third world, the global south, or a related category. I want to intersect girlhood studies and rural studies here through a motif fascinating for both and widely represented in popular culture—the idea that country girls have nowhere to go and nothing to do. This is a claim with which most country girls would agree; indeed it describes something empirically unquestionable and culturally vital. But there's much to be gained in looking more closely at this problem and its articulation in girls' lives.

Jenny, Kaylah, and Nerida are country girls. This is not about how old they are exactly, though they are all fifteen; it is about how they are perceived by authorities, institutions, and various malleable or stiff social networks. When people talked to me about the Small Central Town girls they thought spent too much time hanging out at the river, regardless of age or how long they had been in town (there were many mobile families there), what brought those observed together was their visible detachment from stable roles in homes and workplaces and their evasion of the monitoring that should accompany that detachment. This made them seem like a particular kind of problem that the town understood as a *girl problem.* In practice, it matters less what these girls do in the managed and unmanaged spaces along the riverbanks than that they are occupying a space historically identified with girls at risk and in trouble.

In Australia, the cultural significance of ideas about the country means that even towns quite close to a metropolis can experience their countryness very pointedly. Girls' lives are directly affected by what are deemed to be policy problems arising from the special needs of country Australia, and yet reducing the experience of country girls to a policy object is an easy failure of attention. The problems policy faces in addressing country girlhood in Australia are tightly integrated into a popular cultural field. As Michelle Gabriel put it, a decade ago now, but nothing has changed, "media images of Australian regional life are overwhelmingly bleak: regional communities are dying; regional services are withdrawing; an underclass is forming; youth are disappearing; the bush has been forgotten" (2002: 209). This deficit image of

the country is integral to Australian politics, ingrained since debates around Federation about the endangered "national character" (Murphy 2010: 9), but in discourse on rural youth it takes little account of what girls want to access. My interest here is in the relations between country girls' desires and this disappearance.

It's Tuesday, more than an hour after school, and I've been working in the Northern Beach-Town library. I'm glad of the air conditioning and I like the people; it's my favorite part-time work here. It's almost closing time and slow, so I'm writing field notes towards the back near the free computers. At this time they are mostly used by schoolkids waiting where it's deemed safe and out of trouble or where they can escape the heat. One girl, Candace, who's had her maximum time on the computer, comes up to talk. I've met her at school and remember her name, although she doesn't remember mine. She asks, so I tell her what I'm doing. This place is "the pits," she says with relish. "Who'd live here if they had a choice?" Candace moved here a few months ago with her mother, who thinks this is a better place to live a safe and affordable life with her daughter. Candace feels she is miserable beyond belief. "There's nothing to do." "People like the beaches," I comment. She scoffs. On the weekends quite a lot of girls, in small groups, some supplemented by boys and some not, congregate on the beaches. She thinks they're idiots. And the school is "shit." She's doing fine academically, in fact almost at the top of most of her classes, but as far as Candace is concerned that's because "everyone's retarded here." I ask about the apparently satisfied and certainly much-praised girls who had recently starred in a school talent show we'd both attended. *They* seem to be getting something out of the school. Her contempt is vicious. They're "sad" and "desperate." Everything about Sydney was so much better, so much *more*, than this. A lot of older people move here, I finally suggest, to retire. "They might as well just die," she replies.

At the level of a country town as imagined community, local girls work as both symbols of town success and as management problems. Reading rural studies both encourages me to think this is also widely true outside Australia and yet rarely examined in these terms. As Chris Philo puts it, rural geography, his part of the field, has tended to operate on the terrain of "the Other of the Same" (1997: 24), keeping its subject matters firmly anchored in familiar empirical and conceptual moorings. "In so doing it has effectively simplified the countryside— whether by being hung up on agriculture … by a fascination with the neat morphological unit of the nucleated village; by an obsession with *Gemeinschaft* social relations; by a persistent questioning of the

local-newcomer schism as a key division" (22). In fact, no element of this moment with Candace, from the reasons she is in the town or the library to her lack of interest in talent shows and beaches, is actually defined by her recent arrival. Many girls who have never lived anywhere else say similar things.

If girlhood is not defined by age it remains organized around ongoing and compulsory social training that needs to be geographically located. Rural communities are pervasively represented as isolated, tightly closed networks of observation, and the observation both imagined and experienced as typical of country town life makes country girlhood look and feel like a highly disciplined space, period, or category (Tucker and Matthews 2001; Leyshon 2008). Since the 1990s, not at all coincidentally since girlhood studies has expanded, "studies in rural gender identity have started to benefit from a move away from representation in focusing on performance and on the material practices through which gender and sexual identities are produced and sustained" (Little 2006: 375). Yet in 2008 Michael Leyshon could still argue that "[n]ot much is understood about how, why, or where young women 'roam' within a community, how they become ingratiated within communities, what purpose or value these spaces present for young people or whether the concept of gendered space can be applied to adolescent life" (270). Country towns as experienced by any girl operate on multiple scales, shaped by exigencies of population management at the most abstract scale: by highly flexible local meanings—including who your parents are and, probably related, whether Jean at the café will sell you anything—by geographical limitations and opportunities that are hard to ameliorate at either of those scales; and also by a desiring production of meaningful connections to their own and other places.

The now long-standing impression that country towns are dominated by conservative social formations, including conservative discourses on gender, must be brought into this conjunction and also questioned, considering how diverse the influences on country girls' sense of the world are in practice. Signs of urbanity are crucial for girls negotiating their lives relative to such influences. Hugh Matthews et al. describe English village kids in terms that are clearly relevant to those Small Central Town girls, and to Candace: "it is almost as if these children were trying to occupy, even create for themselves, mini-urban spaces where they could perform a sociability akin to that which they see depicted regularly in television 'soaps,' films and magazines" (2000: 145).

I think it is useful to bring some theoretical tools to this situation to avoid relying on common sense accounts of what girls need and desire.

As Margaret Alston puts some common assumptions, it might be said that while Australian rural youth desire out-migration, "the greater loss of young women, is driven by a lack of employment options, and the need to access tertiary education, it is also driven by a need to escape the small town milieu" (2004: 300). But is this a matter of what the rural lacks? I want to turn here to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Habitus is a personal orientation in the world carried through later experiences and produced in the experience of particular conditions by which, according to Bourdieu, we "anticipate the necessity immanent in the way of the world" ([1987] 1990: 11). This demands a sense of location, which Bourdieu often suggests is unconscious—not just of a space you move through but a space you manifest. Though it may align with strategic calculations or the following of rules, habitus "puts itself forward with an urgency and a claim to existence that excludes all deliberation" (Bourdieu 1990: 53). Although some geographers have taken up this concept (Holt 2008), it has not been widely employed in either rural studies or girlhood studies, which is surprising given that habitus makes readily available tense stories of origin and ideology that are attractive to both fields.

Habitus is a term for how limits and tendencies are defined by our social context before we can even be made conscious of them. Education, this suggests, although significant, reinforces and gives additional meaning to differences already learned, while offering minute variations on them. But there is room within this idea for wanting something other than what one has been offered. Education serves to legitimize what will count as desirable aspirations (or pretensions) at a level imagined beyond the local. Although this is often thought to be an overly rigid account of how people relate to hegemony, Bourdieu insists on the openness of habitus to modification, suggesting that "in all cases where dispositions encounter conditions (including fields) different from those in which they were constructed and assembled, there is a *dialectical confrontation*" (2005: 46). Habitus is thus quite personal, despite Bourdieu's overall account of determining social fields.

The conceptual terrain Bourdieu is tracing here also underpins Jonathan Murdoch and Andy Pratt's (1997) debate with Chris Philo over how rural studies should proceed. Murdoch and Pratt reject any assumption that the rural is a stable object but also refuse Philo's claim that rural studies is unable to be "sensitive to diverse experiences and histories" (1997: 54). Like Bourdieu, these critics are asking what happens to our capacity to understand structures of power if we embrace the full irreducible multiplicity of experience. If, as Murdoch and Pratt claim, "we can know the rural only from and through particular socio-spatial

positions" (58), such positions are unfixed by any scale of power. They may be broad—from "country girls" to "Indigenous girls in X region"—or seriously specific. An unemployed disenchanted daughter of a middle-class family who couldn't make it work at university and has reluctantly come back home, sleeping in her old room and hardly ever leaving the reassuring other-space of the internet, unwilling to socialize with those of her high school peers who didn't leave town is also a social position, although for me it means a particular girl met during my research. It could actually be thousands of girls because so many institutions, policies, and discourses shaping her experience have also affected others in comparable situations. I think habitus offers a way of engaging with the changeable interweaving of structure and experience involved in an Australian country girl orientation in the world.

Rural studies and rural policy in Australia are preoccupied not only with deficit narratives but also with a long-standing opposition between discourses on the rural dull and the rural idyll that presume a generational formation in which the young are the bored. City girls may often be bored and contemptuous of the familiar. But they can believe in the myths of opportunity and change within their present-tense everyday lives, a belief that country girls find hard to sustain. As one study puts it, "What particularly distinguishes a rural upbringing … is the sharp disjunction between the symbolism and expectation of the Good Life … and the realities and experiences of growing-up" (Matthews et al. 2000: 141). Both dull and idyll are nevertheless living country ideals in Australia. It is not that the idyll operates as a fantasy that the dull exposes but rather that the two work together, generating migration flows as well as local social practices.

Amid the demographic transformation of coastal NSW and its hinterland network of river valleys in the late 1970s and 1980s, the River-Town council reconstructed Town Park. It had been there in some form for a century, built in memory of one of the town's colonial benefactors. But in the early 1980s the council landscaped a new park space, adding a wooden climbing frame and a landscaped grassy bluff. One point of this renovation was that Town Park had become a trouble spot. Making it safer meant opening it up for use by families, seniors, and recognized community groups, and excluding people, particularly young men and Aborigines, deemed to be a problem. Established next to the now-defunct council chambers and bounded by churches, schools, a rotary hall, and the main street, Town Park is a public space about public space.

These renovations allowed girls more opportunities to use Town Park, but not in the way envisioned for open and safe public space. The

climbing frame, concealed conveniently by the bluff designed to disrupt use of the open grass by bikes and cars, became a place for girls to gather and talk but also to smoke and drink. If many were caught it was a nicer semi-clandestine space than some others and a change from the river. There was complaint in public forums, and at school some girls were scolded and warned. Eventually another renovation in the 1990s lowered the now worn bluff (bike riders had used it as a ramp anyway), added public toilets, and replaced the frame with a memorial. A new climbing frame more obviously directed at small children was built near the entrance. Many girls still came, but this phase of renovation had opened up a more discreet part of the riverbank, less monitored because less connected to the town as a public institution, and often they went there instead. On my last visit to Town Park a stand of gum trees had been added, interspersed with large spotlights embedded in the ground behind a sign advising that they improved "the ambience and safety" of the park. Crafting this space is an ongoing public drama.

Surrounded by far less managed spaces, Town Park is not needed for outdoor leisure or as a meeting place, and the fact that girls continue to use it is as much statement as convenience. Like many country town parks, its use is more restricted than city park spaces might be, and young people experience these restrictions as age-specific (Leyshon 2011; see also Kenway et al. 2006). The park is managed as a shifting statement about the town's identity. We might understand this with reference to the geographer Doreen Massey, whose work has been primarily concerned with cities and with globalization. Massey is highly critical of the "tendency to equate the terms local: grounded: everyday: meaningful" which any focus on country towns seems to risk, but her discussion of power-geometry is relevant here. To avoid "valorizing place," Massey recommends abandoning "territorial thinking" and working instead "through paths, connections, inter-relations" (2002: 24). This power-geometry leads Massey to questions about what a sense of place costs that are useful here because country towns have been so closely aligned with the territorializing claims she warns against. Characterizing a town by "enclosure" is integral to setting up exaggerated oppositions between it and a "threatening" (1993: 67) outside. Thinking through power-geometry, however, it becomes apparent that place can be characterized this way by those excluded from, as well as those privileged by, a place. Country town girls also attribute permanence and singularity to their towns, often in order to name a departure point for change or for desire.

As Meaghan Morris suggests, boundaries around place are constructed in order to be rejected as well as embraced, recalling for her-

self the particular place that "divided the joy of leaving town from the ambivalence of coming home" (1998: 82–83). This ambivalence cannot be dissociated from her account of problems facing "small towns in eastern Australia" at the end of the 1960s: "population drift, shrinking local employment prospects, declining or anachronistic community facilities, 'nothing to do' syndrome" (67). But Morris would rightly warn me to be careful of statements about how country town girls live, which easily become the work of "the cruising grammarian reading similarity from place to place." We also need "a more complex and localized *affective* relation" (67) attentive to differences between places. Ethnography is crucial here because, to quote Morris again, "Like a lot of cultural activity in … country towns, you have to know where it is to find it" (81).

Town Park's quietness during the day, with most people just passing through, is a fair representation of River-Town's public space overall. And at night this is also representative, mostly empty but occasionally punctuated by dramatic group activities. Young people are the dominant users at night. The other regular visitor is the police. Many nights after closing time at the pubs a police car pulls up on the high street and an officer walks through and back with a torch, moving any lingerers along. Although policing relies on legal limits, unlegislated distinctions based on age, gender, race, domicile, and social networks are also enforced by local policing (see Hogg and Carrington 2006), and the use of Town Park at night is discouraged and all but effectively prohibited for girls.

Strategies designed to support the specific needs of communities often articulate distinctions between types of girls, sometimes even insisting on them where they otherwise might not matter. In all three towns I am discussing here, the distinction between being a white or an Aboriginal girl allocates girls easier or more difficult access to certain town spaces, or even parts of a schoolyard, park, beach, or pub. It is not that all girls in Australian country towns are either white or Aboriginal—far from it—although the majority of the non-metropolitan population identify themselves as white and the proportion identified as Aboriginal is higher than in the city. Rather, this distinction is a dominant imagination of country Australia as space and as culture. As Kate Murphy puts it, "rurality has been racialised in Australia, where country people are assumed to be white" (2010: 26), and the white/Aboriginal encounter in the bush is not only a matter of mythic national history. It is a focusing figure for a cultural landscape encountered by all kinds of country girls every day.

It nevertheless remains too easy to presume the continual significance of the white/Aboriginal distinction. Taking one step back from

its fraught history allows us to acknowledge that there are more commonalities than distinctions between the supervision and disciplines pervading the lives of country town girls. Faith Tucker and Hugh Matthews, analyzing village life in England, suggest that "[o]ne of the consequences of a lack of public space in rural areas, particularly play space such as recreation grounds, is that children, both girls and boys, can become highly visible and subject to adult scrutiny. Contrary to the rural childhood myth and the notion of freedom from surveillance, a number of girls in our study reported that they were often victims of the adult gaze" (2001: 163).

Permitted spaces for girl sociality, like parks, sporting venues, halls, or schoolyards, are available at highly regulated times and through supervisory networks. Leyshon describes youthful response to this surveillance as "deploying tactics of invisibility" (2011: 313), escaping on bikes (and, later, cars in my fieldwork sites), or hiding in houses. But as Tucker and Matthews (2001) suggest, this surveillance is intensified for girls. A "'natural' surveillance that is applauded as part of the maintenance of the caring rural community acts as a powerful disciplinary tactic in relation to sexual behaviour and relationships" (Little 2007: 853), and this surveillance is particularly directed to the protection and training of girls.

A sense of nothing-*else*-to-do incites what Kenway et al. (2006) discuss as anti-idyllic behavior. It also makes this behavior more visible. The visibility of nothing-else-to-do not only inspires out-migration but emphasizes alternative pathways to adulthood and its occupations. One of the most popularly voiced concerns about unsupervised girls in these contexts is that they use outdoor spaces for underage drinking (of alcohol), which is assumed to lead to a range of other dangerous behaviors, including sex. These concerns do not disappear when girls are old enough to buy and consume alcohol legally (at majority, eighteen across Australia).[4] Drinking is associated with a freedom to pursue pleasure and a strong sense that there are fewer available pleasures in the country helps establishes pubs and other formal drinking spaces as "aspirational" (Leyshon 2008: 274) sites for youth. Certainly some girls, as Leyshon suggests, associate local licensed venues with male behavior they dislike. They might aspire instead to more youth-oriented city venues, but many continue to engage in alternative local drinking cultures, including in parks.

Brian McGrath, writing about Ireland, suggests that boredom is especially common among rural girls, with few feeling "there were good places to go (… parks, shops, leisure centres)" (2009: 259). Many Australian studies link the prominence of drinking cultures and other forms

of early drug use in country locations to boredom, an absence of alternative venues for sociality, and poor access to transport to viable spaces. These drinking cultures are often described as masculine (see Alston 2004; Kenway et al. 2006), although in the towns I am discussing underage and of-age drinking is part of many girls' lives. It was not understood as drug use, however, but as a mature form of socialization that had more in common with sex than marijuana. Drinking and sex as tactically chosen leisure options seem additionally exciting because they are both prohibited and adult. Recognizing as much means acknowledging that desire for this kind of pleasure will not be met by a new youth center. Such facilities are often praised in rural youth studies (see Skelton 2000; Leyshon 2008), but girls who desire identification with an imagined youth culture urbanity are effectively seeking ways to differentiate themselves from standards within an adult world. They are certainly not seeking more supervised space.

The increased supervision of children in recent decades is widely reported (see Pooley 2011), but in the country this shift runs counter to narratives about the safety, support, and openness of country life (McGrath 2009). This contradiction is not lost on girls, especially subject to such observation, thus intensifying a sense that what they are being protected from is themselves. When studies like Tracey Skelton's (2000) describe the value of formal youth centers, they are describing an alternative parent-approved space. These may be preferable to home spaces, which are not more private for most girls than the spaces they make in public. As McGrath (2009) and others have noted, in the context of expectations that girls remain in supervised spaces domestic media use becomes additionally important for country girls. This sometimes allows girls to feel they have access to an urbane youth culture, although media use is also often heavily supervised.

The girl with time and space at her own disposal is presumed to be a danger to herself, and for country girls this is exacerbated by a sense that country time and space is less regulated, and by rhetoric on the dangers of boredom. This produces a powerful imperative to provide things for country girls to do outside of school hours. If some of these sanctioned activities—like Girl Guides and surf or pony clubs—obtain special facilities from a rural location the relative importance of the whole array—from ballet classes and police-run discos to sports of all types—indicate that something more than physical geography is involved. Such activities provide a map of girl sociality in any town, but like any map it is an interpretation that needs to be examined for what it omits.

From the back of a River-Town Home Ec. class (officially called Food Technology), I am listening to four girls who have been grouped for a practical assignment, as they always are unless they have been talking too much. Shelley, Jessica, Liz, and Angela have been assigned to one of four mini-kitchens in this room, each arranged like the kitchen-dining area of a small flat. I am working here as a volunteer (helping set up and clean up for practical classes) and observing girls' use of this space to represent what they expect and want from life. Today, they are making stir-fry beef. Shelley—blonde, tall, tanned, thoroughly a sporting girl but with a penchant for piled-on bracelets and earrings—says she hates Chinese food. For all of them, Asian is food for eating out or taking away. "As if you'd bother at home," Jessica says. Although she is quieter than the others, her personal style has her often in trouble for breaking uniform rules (non-regulation hoodies in winter or, this week, dyeing her hair a spectacular red) and extends to wanting to travel to Asia and saying she loves the food. The girls' enjoyment of cooking a meal that is not what they would think of as a home meal is made more interesting by Liz. While she looks and dresses much like Shelley, Liz is more focused in this class. She wants to be a chef. She and her mother love cooking shows on television, buy food magazines, and test recipes out at home. Her specific plan for an apprenticeship is new, but Liz has long intended to leave town at the end of Year Ten for the regional city where her older sister lives. She was disappointed to find that, with changes to industrial training conditions, she is now advised to stay at school next year and do the new trades training program in Hospitality. It hasn't affected her interest here, however, because this class may be about cooking but it is engaged with through discourse on homes rather than work. Both Shelley and Jessica also expect to leave home over the next few years. Shelley hopes for university (and to study Physical Education) and Jessica expects to look for work. There are few jobs for late teenage or twenty-something girls in River-Town but whether the ongoing education girls imagine after school is formal or informal, staying in town seems like a narrowed life.

Only Angela plans to stay in town. Slender and pretty in micro-short uniforms, Angela's popularity and her serious local boyfriend combine to increase her satisfaction here. Although she is clever and manages above-average marks with little effort, Angela has no interest in studying. Her future is planned. She and Jason might travel after school, but just for holidays. Nothing about the wider world equals the value of Jason in Angela's eyes, and he is also satisfied in River-Town. Her father, a local businessman, is furious. Like anyone I could ask here he

thinks the drift of kids to the city is bad for the town, but he wants every possible opportunity for his own children. At the end of the year, Angela plans to convert her part-time job in the local supermarket to a full-time one so that she and Jason, a bricklayer, can move in together. The other girls think that maybe if they had a Jason they'd feel similarly. But they're not searching for that kind of relationship, and nor would their parents want them to, even though serious relationships with local boys are the principal reason girls choose not to leave town.

Habitus is a more useful concept for discussing what underlies Angela's desires than heteronormativity or any equivalent term for an ideological certainty. Lia Bryant and Barbara Pini (2011) draw very effectively on Stevi Jackson's rethinking of heteronormativity to analyze the reproduction of gendered dynamics in farming families. But while Angela's family and friends anticipate the natural importance of heterosexual pairing in her future they do not endorse her choice to prioritize a romantic heterosexual relationship over further training. Angela, along with many other girls, sees new possibilities in defining their life around boyfriends, but calling this heteronormativity ignores the important facts that few girls are making Angela's choice and that her teachers and parents actively disapprove of it. Habitus names taken-|for-granted expectations, but these do not have to be internally harmonious. What is taken for granted around Angela is that sixteen is too young for adult commitments and that leaving school after Year Ten is appropriate only for girls who have no skills to develop, and suggests poor parenting. Without a contradictory habitus we could hardly explain Angela's prioritization of other values than those produced by an accord between socioeconomic interest and school and family pressures. She is not just slotting into an expected heterosexual role too early. School and family pressures are an argument against themselves for Angela, and it is partly her *country* girlhood that means that Angela sees a radical self-assertion in staying at home.

Johan Rye (2006) has argued that rural youth from families with high incomes who have high cultural capital tend to have a positive perception of rurality, having more resources to create and represent their local social life. Further, he claims that young people from families with low incomes and low cultural capital feel similarly, because city life offers them little and devalues the resources (like pub and sporting cultures) that work for them. For Rye, young people from families with high income and low cultural capital or low income and high cultural capital have a more negative perception of rurality. I agree with all of this to some degree. But having a positive image does not mean that girls choose to stay. In fact, girls from families with higher cultural cap-

ital are more certain that they must leave, probably for education but otherwise in order to gain a world experience that is required for cultural capital.

The year after I met these girls their Home Ec. classrooms, and the building and grounds where Agricultural Science was taught, were upgraded to a state-funded Vocational Education and Training (VET) Center. This was marked by the arrival of chef's whites and caps for the students and by new professionalized kitchens. If such girls have different conversations in those clothes and spaces they will still, I am sure, be directed towards gendered futures in which out-migration is central. As in Northern Beach-Town, where the major VET options are Metalwork and Hospitality, these gender-focused options reflect policies for keeping non-academically inclined seventeen-year-olds in school. Such curriculum patterns and the associated extension of compulsory schooling in NSW are no more neutral than the renovations of Town Park. All are rural youth policy in action, and all have led to an increased tendency for girls to continue in school as yet another approved and supervised space for their social training. But staying in school also increases incentives to leave town, opening easier and socially sanctioned access to the wider world through further education, which, in turn, further limits the pool of jobs that seem appropriate.

If policy-oriented research mentions gender quite often and yet tends to recommend gender-neutral action, as if there were a gender-neutral youth, the lived difference of the country disappears even more quickly. A presumed good like school retention, however, is differently enacted in a country school and meets different desires there. In a report on rural youth needs Carol Croce (1994) represents their key concerns as public transport, service delivery, and income and income support. Despite criticizing policy developed without reference to rural conditions, this account also begins and ends with general goods. I (or the girls above) might well ask, for example, transport *to what*? In Northern Beach-Town, girls would certainly like more regular and cheaper buses to the city's cornucopia of entertainment venues. They also care about access to jobs. But few of them would want those venues or jobs to be in their hometown. Leaving, at least temporarily, is part of what they desire.

Effective policy, such as that crafted in the 1970s to address the problem of girls not investing in or completing school and that shaped the situation in which Australian country girls now grow up, actually begins from an engagement with transforming desires. Peter Kraftl et al. suggest that "analyses of youth policy must be interdisciplinary" and must acknowledge that no concept, from society to space, "operate[s] in

a vacuum. Rather, they are constructed and operationalised and *done*"
(2012: 265). The same is true of age, gender, and rurality. But no individual can opt out of these concepts either, and girls are particularly subject
to other people's authority over the terms in relation to which they *do*
their lives. Their desires are formed relative to both broad brushstroke
pictures and precise situations. Country girlhood itself is an imagined
category in relation to which girls live lives influenced by myriad small
and large intersecting forces. Their desires are crafted from the contradictions encompassed by that situation. Even girls who prefer the idea
of a country life vitally feel the imperative to move on as part of living
in that place. What is most crucial to these Australian country girls'
sense of where they come from is its distance from somewhere else,
where their own lives are already going on.

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Notes

1. I am referring to three small NSW towns in this chapter, all with populations
   of under 6,000. Small Central Town is a remote inland town at an intersection of rivers and highways. Once a transport and economic hub for primary industries, it retains some local government and commercial services
   because the nearest regional city is three hours' drive away. On the coast,
   Northern Beach-Town's attractive beaches have helped make it a small-scale

tourist center. Located on a once economically significant river mouth, its primary industries are now only residual, and it is dominated by a population of retirees and economically driven by tourism and support facilities for aged care. River-Town is located in the inland hinterland within half an hour of the coast. Once it provided river access to pastoral lands and timber resources, and the town still depends on some economic activity of these kinds. It is now closely linked for all commercial and government services to a much larger town on the coast. This chapter belongs to a broader research project conducted in ten towns and spanning more than ten years. See Driscoll, *The Australian Country Girl: History, Image, Experience* (2014).

2. This chapter first appeared as an article in *Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 7, no. 1 (2014): 121–137.

3. Part of my ethical commitment to all the girls I mention is that I conceal their identities, both in order to have them talk more openly to me and because there is no reason they should be attached by publication to their opinions and situations at this time. Both girls and towns have pseudonyms here and I have shifted and blended details to make them less locally identifiable.

4. A strong equation between maturity, freedom, and drinking and a culture of socially acceptable drinking and drunkenness is one of the reasons rural studies from the U.K. and Ireland are more easily applicable to Australia than are studies from other countries. The other key reasons are a shared Anglophone history of imagining the countryside and the expectation and practice of public funding for all education and other youth services.

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4

LANDSCAPES OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Smart Girls and School Culture

Rebecca Raby and Shauna Pomerantz

A powerful and popular argument has dominated discussions of young people's academic success for the last fifteen years: girls are thriving in school, while boys are trailing behind (see, for example, Pollack 1998; Kindlon and Thompson 2002; DiPrete and Buchmann 2013). This pattern is, in turn, interpreted as a sign that girls now live in a world in which gender inequality has disappeared or perhaps even been reversed. This narrative is part of a postfeminist, neoliberal context that denies structural gender inequalities that hinder girls. Instead, commensurate with a postfeminist, neoliberal sensibility, we see an overwhelming celebration of girls' individualized accomplishments alongside a failure to recognize any links between girls and gender oppression in the school and beyond (see Harris 2004; Gill and Scharff 2011; Pomerantz et al. 2013). Yet many studies have pointed to the ongoing difficulties that girls continue to face as they negotiate gender inequality (see Renold and Allan 2006; Pomerantz and Raby 2011; Francis, Skelton, and Read 2012; Pomerantz et al. 2013), particularly the intersections in girls' lives that hinder an exclusive concentration on gender (Harris 2004; Ringrose 2013).

Drawing on data collected from a three-year study, "Smart Girls: Negotiating Academic Success in a Post-feminist Era," our work enters into this critical conversation through interviews with girls about their experiences of academic success. The point of these conversations was to contextualize smart girlhood as a shifting and mediated subject position, and to challenge the postfeminist context in which girls are situated within some popular and academic accounts of gender and education. In talking with girls who self-identify as academically successful, we have learned that smart girlhood is not the individualized, depoliticized state suggested by postfeminist narratives, but is, rather, a complex, multifaceted subject position that is fraught with sexist interactions, stress management, and elaborate interplays between and among girls, peers, teachers, and the school (see Pomerantz and Raby

2011; Pomerantz et al. 2013; Ringrose 2013). This chapter focuses on how the school, as a discursive space, contributes to these negotiations as the landscape against which girls perform academic success. We argue that girls' engagement with their academic identities is complicated and/or enhanced by their school cultures. In keeping with our desire to contextualize the experiences of smart girls, this chapter thus specifically highlights academically successful girls' negotiation of the discursive space of the school, asking whether the climate of certain schools provides broader and better possibilities for the performance of gender, in turn allowing smart girls to thrive.

Discursive Space of Schooling

Many ethnographic studies have provided in-depth analyses of the intricacies of school spaces and how these are navigated by different students. For example, Dickar (2008) looks at the spatial organization of an inner-city school in New York with attention to how students from diverse backgrounds manage this space; Pomerantz (2008) examines diverse girls' performances of style within the multiple spaces of a Vancouver high school; Proweller (1998) considers the school as a dynamic space where girls negotiate classed, gendered, and racialized identities within their upper-middle-class girls' private school in New York State; and Yon's (2000) ethnographic exploration of a Toronto school illustrates how the school's historical and current cultural and racialized context reflects and shapes how culture and race unfold in students' lives. We know from such studies that schools, as geographically located institutions, have distinct cultures linked to their neighborhoods, size, history, academic and extracurricular programming, and so forth, all of which come together into particular stories about those schools. We also know that students within each school, while sharing in these school reputations and identities, experience their school in distinct ways, underscoring the shifting, unstable, discursive nature of culture.

We talked to girls across a number of schools within the same geographical area. In these conversations it became clear that there were some consistent and relevant narratives about the importance of certain school cultures, but that there were also multiple perspectives on each school's culture depending on where a girl was located socially, culturally, and academically. In short, school culture was never static. As Deborah Britzman notes, every telling of the school "is constrained, partial, and determined by the discourses and histories that prefigure, even as they might promise, representation" (2000: 32). In calling the

school a discursive space, we draw attention to the fact that school cultures are not trans-historical, existing external to the constituting effects of power, but are created by the contextualized stories that girls (and others) tell about what their school is like. As a result, schools are changing, discursive spaces wherein common stories come to be told, thus producing school culture, but that different girls also experience their schools—and thus academic success—in diverse ways. As Dan Yon notes, these multiple readings of schools encompass "various fragments of discourses" that must be juxtaposed rather than smoothed over in order to consider "how they might act upon the actor's view of what is going on" (2000: 32).

Following Britzman, we thus set out to "acknowledge the differences within and among [girls'] stories of experiences" (2000: 32), rather than producing a seamless account of how the school affects girls' negotiations of academic success. Methodologically, this means that we have focused on the similarities *and* differences within and among girls' stories of smart girlhood in specific schools in order to continually remind ourselves and others that there is no one way for a girl to experience academic success, but also to identify some loose patterns that seem to either thwart or support smart girls in the school. Taking into account these multiple and intersecting landscapes of academic success, this chapter thus addresses the question: How is smart girlhood mediated by girls' understanding of the discursive space of their schooling? Our analysis of girls' interviews has produced four lenses through which to view the landscapes of academic success that girls traversed and negotiated daily: the limits of reputation, the impact of school culture, consistent challenges, and intersectionality. These lenses made up the backdrop of girls' academic engagement, but how they played out was always contingent upon which girls we talked to.

Talking to Smart Girls

Our data arises from interviews conducted with fifty-one self-identified smart girls,[1] aged twelve to eighteen, living in the Niagara Region of Ontario, Canada. This part of Canada is located between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie and borders the United States. It has a high manufacturing base, although over the past twenty years this base has been shifting towards the service industry for employment, particularly through casinos, call centers, and associated tourism. It is also an agricultural region, showcasing viniculture. The Niagara Region is one of significant income disparity but limited racial diversity. People's backgrounds are predominantly Italian-, French-, German-, and Anglo-Canadian. As

is the case across Ontario, this region supports two publicly funded school boards, one of which is Catholic.

We located research participants through local advertising and word-of-mouth. Smartness was primarily defined based on academics, in that we advertised that we were seeking "girls who do well in school, or could if they tried."[2] In order to mitigate somewhat the hierarchy of the interviewer/interviewee dynamic, the participants could choose to be interviewed individually or paired with another smart girl. Twenty-three participants were interviewed individually, twelve accepted our invitation to be interviewed in pairs, and three girls were interviewed as a trio. All of our research participants were given the opportunity to participate in a follow-up interview and forty-four participants did so. Follow-up interviews provided us with an opportunity to probe more deeply into areas that were touched upon in the first interview, to ask whether the participants had any new reflections on their experiences after the initial interview, and to ask a new set of questions related to the media, role models, and identity.

Overall, the girls we spoke to came from sixteen different schools, including elementary, middle, and high schools, public and Catholic schools, and several private schools. This chapter focuses on four key high schools, all located within a small city in the Niagara Region. Academy House is an expensive private school with an international population and reputation for academics and athletics; Central Secondary is an inner-city school that one girl described as having a "ghetto" reputation; Blue Ridge is a public school with a French Immersion program and a strong reputation for academic excellence; and St. Mary's High is a Catholic high school known for sports that has strong rivalry with Blue Ridge (see Table 4.1). These schools were chosen for discussion in this chapter because of their proximity to each other, distinct reputations, and the number of participants in our study who attended them.

Table 4.1. Focus Schools

School	Reputation	Participants
Academy House (AH)	Expensive co-educational private school internationally known for academics and athletics	4
Central Secondary (CS)	Inner-city school with a negative reputation, populated by diverse students	4
Blue Ridge High (BRH)	Public school with French Immersion, and a strong reputation for academic excellence	18
St. Mary's High (SMH)	Catholic school rival to BRH with a reputation for academics and sports	6

Source: authors

For this chapter, we isolated data from girls who went to the above four schools and analyzed codes related to school reputation, school climate, dumbing down, popularity, pressures on girls, and intersecting identifications to isolate the themes that are developed below. Our data offers a powerful portrait of the impact of school culture on academic success; we have a diversity of girls' in-depth analyses of what it means to be smart both in their own schools and across a variety of schools. Our research is unique to the specific schools in this region of Southern Ontario, Canada, but it also resonates with prominent U.K. research on school cultures and academic achievement (for example, Renold and Allan 2006; Francis et al. 2012). Finally, since we do not draw on other information about these schools, such as how the schools promote or represent themselves or how they are defined by their administrations, our analysis is based solely on how the girls themselves understood and participated in creating the discursive spaces of their schools.

The Limits of Reputation

Schools have reputations based on their neighborhoods, histories, programming, and demographics (Yon 2000; Dickar 2008; Pomerantz 2008). In our interviews, the reputation of a school was powerful in that it often drew a student to that school (or did not)[3] and affected how girls felt about themselves as students in a particular place. For example, for some girls, the positive reputation of their school was a key component in their overall satisfaction with their school. But reputation could also be used to rally against outsider interpretations, as was the case with Central Secondary. Seen as rough and situated in a "bad" neighborhood, Central had a reputation for poor teaching and students who were mediocre. For instance, Joanne (fifteen), who attended Blue Ridge High, suggested that Central is "the bottom" of the barrel in terms of supporting smart girls. Yet to the girls we talked to who were at Central, their school was accepting, nonconformist, and caring—an environment, they explained, that fostered a culture of trying hard and seeking out help when it was needed. They lauded their teachers and said that you could just be yourself rather than having to fit in with the popular girls, like at other schools. The underdog status of Central helped these smart girls to rally around their school's academic culture.[4]

Across the city, Academy House (AH) was known for granting its students an excellent education; as a private school, it was considered to offer an elite opportunity. Indeed, the school's website claims that 90 percent of students are university/college bound. Sarah (fifteen), who

had transferred to Academy from Blue Ridge, sacrificing French Immersion in order to pursue science, particularly appreciated her new school and felt that there was greater acceptance for being smart there than at Blue Ridge. Yet some other girls we spoke with contended that Academy was no better than public school, despite the cost. As Lisa (fifteen, AH) told us, "internally, they don't support being smart as much as you would think. They advertise that they will prepare kids for college and get you in anywhere, but I think public schools do more." Jordan (thirteen, AH), whose working-class family made economic sacrifices so that she could switch to Academy during the course of our research, also suggested that at Academy it was wise not to broadcast your academic success because popular girls teased others about being too smart and not pretty enough. The result of these mixed reports was that girls at Academy House sometimes felt a little bit cheated by the discrepancy between what others thought about their school and their own personal experiences. We will return to this point when we discuss class-based intersections.

Reputation clearly does not ensure an ideal setting for smart girls nor does it inherently prevent one. Rather, reputation seems firmly linked to class: the wealthy private school has a strong reputation, but not everyone is comfortable there and the effects of various hierarchies may be exacerbated. In contrast, the inner-city school, in a poorer catchment area of the city, has a weaker and potentially undeserved reputation.

School Culture Matters

While girls' uneasiness with some school reputations indicate the multiple narrative fragments that define school spaces in terms of their hospitality to smart girls, in other schools there was a dominant, consistent narrative. This consistency was most notable when they talked about Blue Ridge High, which proved to be a very prominent school in our study, in marked contrast to how students talked about the rival Catholic school, St. Mary's. The majority of our participants went to Blue Ridge—a school with special academic programming including French Immersion and a focus on sports that drew a middle- to upper-middle-class population. The number of our participants from Blue Ridge underscores that the school draws strong students, but it also supports the argument that the culture of the school supports, fosters, and validates girls' smart identities, for it was primarily girls from Blue Ridge who had the necessary academic confidence and smart self-identity to be drawn to our study.

Participants mentioned the school's reputation in the city for being academic; they also talked about how its size, diverse population, wide selection of clubs, and sheer number of strong students made it a hospitable peer environment for smart girls. As Elizabeth (fourteen, BRH) noted about Blue Ridge, "I think [at] my school, [girls dumbing down] is not as much as the case as maybe somewhere else. It is a very academic school, so it's not a bad thing to be smart." Girls at Blue Ridge were less likely than those at other schools to discuss the importance of girls' good looks in relation to popularity, less likely to mention girls pretending to be unintelligent for the sake of getting boys to like them, and more likely to say that being smart is all good. As McLovin (fifteen, BRH) summarized, "[I]f you're smart, you're in. If you aren't as smart you are in the middle … group because being smart represents your status in school. … The guys always want the smart girls and looks are a bonus." Overall, for a number of girls, Blue Ridge was a very positive, supportive place to be.

In contrast to this encouraging culture, despite the reputation of Catholic schools in the region offering more rigorous education than non-Catholic schools, Blue Ridge's neighboring Catholic school, St. Mary's High (SMH) presented quite a different environment, and, likely as a result, far fewer students from this school participated in our research. Participating St. Mary's girls described their school as similarly academic, athletic, and drawing middle- to upper middle-class students, but they also talked about it as a party school. As Emma (fourteen, SMH) explained, "[G]irls, like, think it's better to blow it off and be popular and party and kick back and not do anything." The girls who went to this school were more likely to emphasize the importance of girls' looks over their academic talents, more likely to mention sexism in the school, and more likely to observe other girls "dumbing down," a pattern outlined in this exchange between friends Haley (fourteen) and Luna (fourteen), both at St. Mary's.

> Haley: The girls that hang out with the hockey guys act dumb and I know they are smarter than that.
>
> Luna: You can tell, sometimes they say their answers and it's really good. You know they are capable, but they are acting stupid.
>
> Shauna: Why?
>
> Haley: I think guys find it attractive.

While one respondent felt that St. Mary's was a "smart school," no one talked about how it was a refuge or haven for girls who are academically strong.

The pattern of Blue Ridge's being a more welcoming environment for smart girls brings us to the question of whether a broader capacity for gendered possibilities in a school allows for girls' smartness to thrive. In her study of masculinity in three distinct middle schools in the U.K., Emma Renold found that while hegemonic masculinity prevailed in all the schools, at one that emphasized academics over football, "the institutional production of discourses which made available 'softer' non-macho masculinities were more readily available" (2004: 257). Renold thus concludes that schools need to consider what kinds of masculinities and femininities are made available to students and to increase possibilities for non-hegemonic gender performance. Renold's argument is further supported by Francis et al. (2012), who agree that dominant forms of masculinity and femininity can conflict with academic achievement; schools with less dichotomized gender performances may allow students to more fully embrace academics. At Blue Ridge, it seemed that possibilities for performing smart girlhood were similarly more available to girls than they were at the more hierarchically gendered St. Mary's.

The girls we talked to also said that they valued the diversity of the school, the extent of its programming, and its size, feeling that each of these characteristics created an advantage. Research into school size has found that students in smaller schools have a greater sense of belonging, better attendance, fewer behavior problems, and are more involved in extracurricular activities, on average, than students in larger schools (Cotton 1996). Small school advocates thus argue that it is important for schools to remain small, yet our data suggests that a larger school, with the right programming options and a supportive culture, can provide a positive environment for academic success.

No Perfect Refuge

By contrasting these two neighboring schools we see that the discursive space of schooling is important to girls' academic self-identity and their ability to negotiate this identity successfully among peers. Some contexts are clearly more supportive than others. That said, in marked contrast to the celebratory narratives of girls' academic success that have dominated popular media, we did not find any perfect place for girls to perform academically successful identities. As we discuss elsewhere, postfeminist narratives of easy and uncomplicated smart girlhood are off the mark since they do not acknowledge the gendered culture of schooling and thus miss the powerful intersections between gender

and academic success (Raby and Pomerantz 2015). Girls had to be careful not to be considered too smart, for example. The girls who smoothly balanced their capacities in school with a social life had an easier time than those who were considered overly cocky with their academic success. As Darlene (fourteen, BRH), an athletic girl with a taste for more alternative clothing styles, observed, "I think if you are social and smart it helps a little more, rather than being a smart outcast." Bella (fourteen, AH) also argued, "I don't think the boys would consider you popular if you are so single-minded and focused on work. … I think some guys would consider them undateable because they are boring." Generally, it was good for a girl to play down her academic drive. Indeed, girls even pretended not to be smart. Some participants talked of dumbing themselves down, and many lamented that their peers were also doing so. While it was more common in some schools than others, respondents from every one of these four schools talked about girls dumbing down in order to be popular or to attract boys. This pattern suggests that sexism continues to thrive, despite many girls' assertions of gender equality (Pomerantz et al. 2013).

Girls also needed the right look and dress. For instance, Bella reflected a strong pattern among respondents from Academy House when she said, "[P]eople are mean, like if [a girl] is not as pretty or is overweight or too thin … it's something to judge them on and make them not as popular." Similarly, Agnes (fifteen, BRH) said, "[A] boy can get away with looking any way if he is funny or has a good personality whereas girls can't." As others have illustrated through similar studies, and reflective of current popular culture representations of smart girls, it is much easier to be a socially successful smart girl for those who are considered pretty and/or hot (Renold and Allan 2006; Skelton et al. 2010; Francis et al. 2012; Pomerantz and Raby 2015). Certainly some school climates seemed better for smart girls, but many girls across all four schools faced challenges if they were being overly studious and so were careful not to be too overt about their smartness, noticed girls dumbing down, and worried that looks were valued over intelligence.

Intersectionality

Critics of the successful girls versus failing boys discourse contend that these narratives fail to recognize how gender is importantly intersected by numerous other identifications linked to race, culture, class, religion, sexuality, and so forth (Harris 2004; Ringrose 2013). While there was some agreement among our participants as to how certain school

spaces supported or thwarted girls' academic success and patterns across many girls in terms of their need to downplay their smartness, there were still vast differences in how girls experienced their academic success based on their positioning as raced, classed, and social subjects in the school. While these intersections were not always experienced negatively, they deepen the story of smart girlhood by exemplifying the complicated landscapes of school environments for academic success. To illustrate such complicating intersections, the remaining discussion draws primarily on interviews with participants at Blue Ridge High.

Reflecting the geographical setting of this research, most of our participants were white, although nine had a cultural background that can be broadly categorized as South or East Asian,[5] and one participant was black. A stereotype of the *smart Asian* prevails in the Niagara Region, as it does in much of North America, so we asked our participants whether there were stereotypes related to smart students and race/ethnicity at their school. These answers led to a centering of whiteness, which was in part accomplished through the reproduction of the stereotype of the *smart Asian.* For example, Jenny Po (fifteen, Chinese, BRH) told us, "[W]e are called 'the Asians,' because Asians are always smart." When we asked Lisa (sixteen, white, AH) to explain how race and academic success are connected, she confirmed this stereotype, saying, "I guess jokes, and categorizing people. Like saying 'the Asians are smart.' It's odd comments that are stupid and very generalized." Similarly, Chuchos Valdez (fifteen, white, BRH) noted, "I mean like Asians are seen as being more smart than others and it's not really true."

Like some of our participants, others have argued that this ongoing characterization of Asian students problematically homogenizes students of diverse backgrounds and abilities (Lee 2009). For example, teachers may neglect to help students from Asian backgrounds who need support because they are assumed to be thriving (Conchas and Pérez 2003). Lee (2009) similarly found that some less academically successful Asian students in her study were silenced by the stereotype of the *smart Asian* and less likely to ask for or gain the assistance they needed. For more successful students, teachers' high expectations can generate a great deal of stress (Conchas and Pérez 2003).

Lee (2009) also contends that the associated link between Asian smarts and the categorization of Asian people as the model minority in North America implicitly denies experiences of racism. Matthews more directly identifies the *smart Asian* stereotype with new racism or culturalism, which attributes homogeneous cultural features to a group: "[these stereotypes] are not just lies or false representations of reality, but signs, images and meanings that seek to fix or arrest representa-

tion" (2002: 194). Matthews, like Lee, cautions against the breadth of categorizing embedded in the word *Asian*. Further, Matthews reminds us that a pro-school stereotype does not mean that students no longer experience discrimination associated with academic success and notes Anglo-American students taunting Asian students, as, for example, dorky or teacher's pets.

While a discourse of multiculturalism and a belief that there was no racism permeated our interviews, the *smart Asian* stereotype clearly emerged as salient, adding a complicating intersection to gendered academic success. This was particularly the case for the East and South Asian girls we interviewed. Joanne (fourteen, BRH) identified herself as second-generation Korean-Canadian. She told us that she was known for being smart because she is Asian, even though she struggled in math: "they think I'm a genius and ask me for help and to give them answers and whatnot." Her white friend and co-interviewee, Sully (fourteen, BRH), added, "[I]n math class, everyone is like, oh, just ask the Asian!" A fewer number of East and South Asian girls talked about how such assumptions could support them in their smart identities, despite their homogenizing effects and culturalism. Jenny Po, for instance, felt that her hard work in school was in part linked to her Chinese background. She felt that she was stereotyped because of her Chinese background, but when asked whether this bothered her she said, "[N]o, because it's usually good, like, [being] smart. Or I can play a lot of music. This one time I did a chin-up in gym class this girl was like '[W]hoah she's smart and strong!' One of those."

Race and culture complicated smart students' experiences of Blue Ridge High in other ways. In another example, Ella (twelve, white, BRH), who skipped a year and was extremely involved in extracurricular activities, sympathetically talked about how her brother prefers to hang out with students from Central Secondary, even though he goes to Blue Ridge: "He hangs out with, like, a group of immigrants, like he says that he wants to go to Central Secondary and stuff sometimes, because [at Blue Ridge] there is just only white people and they are all rich and they like they gossip and stuff. … Yeah, and everyone is like rich and well off and at Central everyone has a harder life and like they all have been through the stuff." Ella's discussion of culture, immigration, and class was unusually frank and illustrates how, for academically successful boys as well as girls, other intersecting identifications are not necessarily nurtured in a school reputed to have academic excellence, which commonly overlaps with schools serving predominantly middle- to upper-middle class students. We see this also in examples from girls regarding their experiences of class difference.

Jordan's mixed experiences of her class-based location in Academic House indicate that academic success is not enough to feel that one belongs. In Proweller's ethnography of a private girls' school in New York state, she draws on the postcolonial concept of borderland to discuss middle-class academic girls who are negotiating an upper-middle-class elite school. Proweller is interested in "understanding the complexities of identity formation for those historically located at the cultural center who are also actively repositioning themselves in relation to others inside and outside cultural privilege" (1998: 237). Jordan's working-middle-class and popular girl background shaped her negotiation of Academy and its peer culture, suggesting that she was developing her school-based identity through a borderland position. While in her previous school she had been one of the top girls in terms of popularity, with her move to Academy she lost her previous friends and now had "a more secluded," smaller group with the members of which she really talked. Many of the students had a preppier look, but she preferred jeans and a T-shirt. When people in the community asked what school she went to, she was uncomfortable with their assumptions that she came from wealth and emphasized that she was helped by having been awarded a scholarship. She was also finding that while some students at Academy were very focused academically like her, others were "forced to be there by their parents" and seemed spoiled; this complicated her high expectations about Academy students.

Other girls problematically naturalized links between school success and class, as we saw in this exchange in the follow-up interview with Sara and Basil (BRH):

I: So are rich kids also known as smart kids?

Sara: Maybe when parents are higher educated they expect more.

Basil: Usually higher class parents, it's like if you don't get a high mark it's not acceptable. They expect a lot. There's a possibility it's genetic too.

Girls sometimes associated their own ease in negotiating school with parental support well grounded in class-based privilege. When we were talking with Carmel and McLovin (BRH), for example, McLovin similarly linked her parents' support with class, privilege, and school success: "I want to go to university but they are paying for it so that's my support … Moral support, yeah my parents are good, they always told us homework first and we grew up with that. When it comes to math my dad just kind of teaches me because he used to be a professor so I don't know, that's good." McLovin also signaled class through reference to brand names, a pattern Proweller (1998) notes in her ethnog-

raphy. Proweller found that brand names acted as a sorting mechanism for class, although for her, discussions of brand names involved an indirect critique of upper-middle-class girls' privilege, entitlement, and exclusions. In contrast, McLovin noted how buying power is linked to the social success of certain smart girls: "[I]f people walk around in school clothing that sets them apart, it's definitely the cool people. If you see people walking around with school sweaters and track pants and bandanas it's like that person's cool because they can afford to wear our clothes." These kinds of patterns were difficult for Flowerpower (seventeen, BRH). When asked if the high achieving girls in her school worked at part-time jobs, she responded, not without anger, "I would say that the majority of them—not all—are privileged. They are the ones that have their own car that they drive to school everyday … There are people who have never worked before." For Flowerpower, being smart was much easier for girls with money. While she lived on her own, battled depression, and tried to engage in an activist life, her counterparts appeared to be gliding through high school without much sweat, effort, or even notice.

Through the above interview fragments we thus see how class differences contribute to some girls' difficult negotiation of schools that are intended to provide a rigorous education, but also how other girls draw on dominant discourses of support, reputation, and aspiration to normalize class differences and inequalities.

Finally, there was a related connection between smart girls' social status and their experiences of academic success. It has been contended that popular, normative girlhood does not smoothly resonate with academic achievement. Skelton et al.'s review of various related studies found that passivity and accommodation linked to femininity clash with academic demands of "hard-nosed determination, singularity and concern with mental/intellectual (rather than social) pursuits" (2010: 187). Their own research supported this tension since twelve- to thirteen-year-old "clever" girls found it difficult to balance normative girlhood with school success. Renold and Allan (2006) and Francis (2009) also found that smart girls continue to face challenges in the social world of the school.

Some girls are better able than others to balance out their smartness through attention to social engagements, style, and good looks (Skelton et al. 2010; Francis et al. 2012; Raby and Pomerantz 2015). At Blue Ridge High, where McLovin, who was athletic, dating, and popular, had said that "it is cool to be smart," Virginia (sixteen) defined herself as not very popular and provided a starkly different assessment of the school's social climate. Virginia was from an upper-middle-class family

that stressed educational success, and she also has an exceptionally smart older sister. Of the two sisters, Virginia was considered the outgoing one, and, for her, popularity was a valuable but elusive goal, particularly at the time of her first interview. She lamented that her experience was that being smart and popular are mutually exclusive, even at BRH: "I have friends who only text me about what's for homework and stuff. … If I try to go hang out with these blondes that are super popular, they won't accept me because they know I'm smart." While McLovin easily combined her smartness with social success, for Virginia—of the same age and at the same school—this was much more difficult. Her reference to the super popular "blondes" remind us of the continuing importance of emphasized femininity for girls, and her dichotomizing of smart and popular resonates with the abovementioned pattern of girls dumbing down in order to be popular.

These three illustrations indicate how intersectionality complicates smart girlhood and shows that school culture continually shifts depending on the girls with whom one talks. While Blue Ridge was seen as accepting and fostering of smart girlhood, some of the girls we have quoted above certainly experienced their smart girlhood very differently. Intersections of race, class, and sociality mattered in powerful ways.

Conclusion

The discursive culture of a school can shape girls' experiences of what it means to be a smart girl, although there is no perfect refuge for smart girls, and girls' negotiation of school is importantly intersected by such factors as race, class, and popular femininity. There are a number of conclusions that we can draw from this complexity of smart girls' experiences of the discursive space of schooling. First, as other researchers such as Ringrose (2013), Francis et al. (2012), and Renold and Allan (2006) have also contended, our findings belie the postfeminist narrative of girls' academic achievement that have been reproduced both popularly (see, for example, Sommers 2000; Abraham 2010) and academically (Pollack 1998; Kindlon and Thompson 2002; see also Ringrose 2007). Our findings illustrate that smart girls are not thriving everywhere, and even in the more ideal spaces, some smart girls thrive more than others. The ubiquitous stories of girls dumbing down most powerfully indicate ongoing gender inequalities that smart girls navigate. Second, school reputations are largely grounded in class assumptions and do not necessarily define a school culture or suggest what smart girls' experiences will be. Blue Ridge had a reputation for

academic success and many girls were thriving there, but for the other three schools in our study, the reputation of the school did not directly echo girls' experiences. Third, and related to the first two points, difference, inequality, and stigma linked to identifications around race, class, and gender continue to complicate smart girls' experiences in ways that have been established elsewhere (Harris 2004; Ringrose 2013), that we are exploring in the local context of our own research, and that are obfuscated by popular postfeminist narratives of girls' academic success. Finally, despite ongoing inequalities and the complications of intersecting identities, landscapes of academic success matter. To most of the girls at Blue Ridge High, for instance, they really mattered, offering possibilities to thrive both academically and socially that did not seem available elsewhere. But even for these girls, there is no easy recipe for a smooth, smart girlhood.

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Notes

1. We refer to all participants by their self-selected pseudonyms.

2. A section of the interviews also included discussion of many kinds of smartness, but the primary focus was on academic achievement.

3. Public school students in this region are expected to go to the school within their catchment area, but there are various ways in which students still have choice. For example, they can choose between Catholic and non-Catholic boards, and can apply for special programming like music or French.

4. It is noteworthy that in pilot focus groups three years earlier one respondent reported the opposite: at Central Secondary she felt she was "hated on" for being smart, and eventually she changed schools. This points to how experiences of schools can vary significantly among individuals and across time (Pomerantz and Raby 2011).

5. The background of two girls was Sri Lankan, three Chinese, one East Indian, one Filipina, one Korean, and one Cambodian/Laotian.

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SITUATED KNOWLEDGE, SELF-REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

♫ 5

CHARTING GIRLHOOD STUDIES

Claudia Mitchell

Chart/charting:
noun
- a sheet of information in the form of a table, graph, or diagram: *the doctor recorded her blood pressure on a chart*
- (usually **the charts**) a weekly listing of the current bestselling pop records: *she topped the charts for eight weeks*
- a geographical map or plan, especially one used for navigation by sea or air: *a chart of the English coast*
- (also **birth chart** or **natal chart**) *Astrology* a circular map showing the positions of the planets in the twelve houses at the time of someone's birth, from which astrologers are said to be able to deduce their character or potential.

verb
- 1 *[with object]* make a map of (an area): *Cook charted the coasts and waters of New Zealand*
- plot (a course) on a chart: *the pilot found his craft taking a route he had not charted*
- record the progress or development of: *the poems chart his descent into madness a major series charting the history of country music*
- *[no object]* (of a record) sell enough copies to enter the music charts at a particular position: *the record will probably chart at about No. 74*

(OED)

Introduction

Charting, as the definitions above suggest, can be highly technical. But if one takes a more figurative approach that sees that terms such as "geographical map or plan," and "circular map," and "route," and "plot" can be both denotative and connotative, charting may be the perfect term to describe the interdisciplinary area of girlhood studies and the ways in which it involves navigating the terrain of an academic and activist area. Several questions direct this route-clearing, which, from the outside, may seem to be rough and rocky, with few discernible

trails, and no clear sense of where the trails start or where they lead. Is girlhood studies really just part of women's studies or gender studies? Where does it fit in relation to boyhood studies or child studies or youth studies? Is it possible already to do a history of girlhood studies, a field that is still relatively young? How can one *place* girlhood studies in time, in space, or in relation to age?

While it would be a worthy project to try to answer all of the above questions, I navigate through girlhood studies via the auto-ethnographic practices of charting girlhood studies, practices that other scholars and activists in the area of girlhood studies might also employ.[1] The approach I lay out here makes the idiosyncratic the entry point, and makes no apology for this. From these practices we can work back (following various trails) or work forward (following others) with the goal of deepening an understanding of the broader project of girlhood studies. The chapter is divided into two main sections. It begins with an example of charting—my own— that has a starting point, a backing up and working further back process, a circling, then a section that I describe as "expanding the terrain," and, finally, a section called working forward. The second section makes explicit the various practices that might be used in the process of charting. These practices might include memory-work and the use of visual and other texts, along with auto-ethnographic writing in the service of starting somewhere in the study of girlhood, albeit at different places and at different times.

Subjectively Speaking: My History of Girlhood Studies

Starting Point

Let me start at the beginning, one beginning, a beginning for me at least. …

It is in the late afternoon of 6 December 1989 in Montreal, and as I write this twenty-five years later I have no difficulty putting myself there in time and place. The 80 bus I am riding is jam-packed as it crawls up Avenue du Parc toward Mille End and beyond. I have one hand on the railing and one hand on my four-year-old daughter, trying to keep us upright, both of us in the crowded bus with our faces pressed into the heavy dark coats of our fellow bus passengers. I have just picked up my daughter from day care and I am heading home from McGill University where I teach. The trip, normally twenty minutes or so from Sherbrooke Street up to Saint Viateur, seems to be taking forever. I have never seen traffic quite like it but with the snow and the late afternoon rush hour perhaps it is just what is to be expected. I am vaguely aware of the sound

of sirens and the flashing red lights in the early winter darknesss, but in a busy city like Montreal and in a snowstorm and at this time of the day, the sirens, too, are not that unusual. By the time we get off the bus at Saint Viateur Street, and Dorian and I make our way through the snow, and get into the house, explanations for the sirens become clearer. I immediately turn the radio on when I get into the house, and as I listen I call out the words to my two teenage daughters who have arrived home a little earlier. "Polytechnique … Universite du Montreal … gun man on the rampage … shootings." As the evening progresses and as we stay glued to the radio, we learn much more. Fourteen young women, most of them engineering students, were shot and killed. Marc Lepine, the killer, calls them "a bunch of feminists." For days, weeks, and years afterward, media analysts, gun-control lobbyists, and feminists will argue about whether it was an isolated incident, the work of a mad man, something totally misogynistic, or part of a larger "connecting the dots" of patriarchy. The phase "bunch of feminists" is conveniently left out of much of the discussion, but twenty years later Denis Villeneuve's film Polytechnique (2009) deals directly with Lepine's murderous violence against the female engineers and the gendered realities of education in Engineering. A female character in the film, a young mechanical engineering student, goes for an interview for a position as an intern on the very day of the shooting and is asked by the male interviewer why she isn't taking up civil engineering, which is considered an easier option. In real life, when the late Andrea Dworkin, arguably the best known feminist in the world in relation to addressing violence against women, gives the keynote talk at the one-year anniversary of the Massacre, I think I hear her say something to the effect that "if you are going to be killed as a feminist, make sure you deserve to die as one." Years later I listen to the transcript of her talk: "It is incumbent upon each of us to be the woman that Marc Lepine wanted to kill."[2] I am sitting in a huge lecture theater at the Universite de Montreal as she utters these words that remain as chilling and haunting today as they did all those years ago.

Perhaps to fully appreciate my starting point, you had to have three daughters, two of whom were on the receiving end of a curriculum in secondary schools in Canada at the time of the Montreal Masssacre that was telling girls to go into science and engineering. If I think of Dworkin's speech, what was I really saying to my daughters and nieces? Go out and get yourself killed? At the risk of overdetermining the significance of one event on 6 December, as an advocate and champion in the 1980s of the getting girls into mathematics and science movement, I do not think I would ever look at this particular "project of girlhood" in quite the same way again. I am especially struck by women in their thirties and forties who trained as engineers and who as feminist scholars remember the commemorative days of 6 December in their schools or communities, years after 1989, as having significance to their own pathways.

Andrea Dworkin clearly saw the Massacre as just one more set of actions along a continuum in relation to violence against women, while Julianne Pidduck (1995) wonders if perhaps we have made too much of the huge and horrific events at the expense of all the everyday acts of violence against women. I do not want to say that 6 December 1989 was "the" birth of girlhood studies as though there was one definitive moment that could be captured for all time and all regions of the world, even for an imagined Wikipedia entry. I do, however, want to make a claim that 6 December 1989 marks the beginning of a particular political project in relation to girls' lives that resonates from this place and time in Montreal. Maybe you had to be in Montreal, or maybe you had to be on the 80 bus heading north on Avenue du Parc late on the afternoon of 6 December, and maybe it had to be snowing and maybe you had to hear the sirens. And maybe this now seems like a miscasting of the fourteen victims of the shooting. After all, they were young women, ranging in age between twenty and thirty-one, and not girls at all, and not all of them were engineering students. But the interpretation of the event needs to back up, so to speak, and begin even before the beginning. …

Backing Up

I want us to back up just a little from the events of 6 December 1989. It is earlier in the 1980s and a decade of a broad discourse of getting more girls into science, mathematics, and technology in schools, ostensibly so that there can be more women scientists (and engineers) in the workplace.[3] Post-Massacre, I realize that it was not quite the feminist project that many of us thought it was. My own questions in 1989 started with an agenda that was framed by what I now want to call *interrogating naïveté.* Why did I (we) think that getting more girls into science and technology was about numbers and role models? Why did we think that there was only one project, or that the project of "more girls in science and technology" could ever just sit so neatly by itself? It is not that I now want to say that this explains why Marc Lepine killed those fourteen women, but I do want to highlight that the agenda was naïve.

The 1980s in North America were framed by various studies and reports across a wide range of areas, from science and technology through to education and the curriculum of schools that attempted to address the issue of more women scientists. These included the Science Council of Canada's *Who Turns the Wheel?* (1982), the report of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) (1992) *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America* Study, and, at the other end of the spectrum, Talk Teen Barbie's assertion that "math class is tough" (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 1995: 145). In between, and across the United States, the UK,

Australia, and Canada, there are such studies as Valerie Walkerdine's *Counting Girls Out*, and the Girls into Science and Technology (GIST) projects in Britain. In Canada there were the *A Capella* studies organized by the Canadian Teachers' Federation and the *We're Here, Listen to Us* study carried out by the Status of Women, Canada. Indeed, right around this time, there was also a range of articles such as *Bias against Girls is Found Rife in Schools, with Lasting Damage* (Chira 1992: A1). Rebecca Hains's book Gro*wing Up with Girl Power* (2012) cites the Chira article, and notes that the American Association of University Women's Executive Director, Anne Bryant, called the study "a wake-up call to the nation's education and policy leaders, parents, administrators and guidance counselors." Bryant argues that "unless we pay attention to girls' needs today, we will find out 15 years from now that there is still a glass ceiling" (quoted in Chira 1992: A1).[4] While the report has now largely been discredited in relation to its use of selective evidence, its status as a wake-up call was symbolic of a situation of girls-in-crisis heralding the so called rescuing girls literature that included the extensive studies on girls' self-esteem (see for example Kenway and Willis 1990) and the popular *Reviving Ophelia* work of Pipher (1994) and others.

But Before That … Working Further Back

Although I have started with 1989, for me and for Montreal as a site of collective memory, it is, of course, far from the beginning, and some of the most generative and ground-breaking work in the study of girls' lives was already well underway. McRobbie and Garber ([1981]1991), for example, responded to Paul Willis's notion of lads on the street corner *in Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids get Working Class Jobs* (1977), by putting on the map the idea of adolescent girls and bedroom culture, and the commoditized world of romance as consumed in magazines like *Jackie* and *Just Seventeen.* So it was a world about spatiality; long before people were talking about girls' geographies, McRobbie and Garber's work also put girls' agency on the map in a practical way. Parallel work can be found on the reading and viewing practices of girls and women, from Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance* ([1984]1991) to Gemma Moss's *Un/ Popular Fictions* (1989). These works led to Linda Christian-Smith's *Becoming a Woman through Romance* (1990) as well as her edited book *Texts of Desire* (1993), and Pamela Gilbert and Sandra Taylor's *Fashioning the Feminine: Girls, Popular Culture and Schooling* (1991). The study of reading and viewing practices was not necessarily about the invisibility of girls so much as a devaluing of girls' culture. Radway's work, for example, was key to drawing attention to the pos-

sibility of agency and choice in how girls and women read romance fiction and how they were far from simply being unthinking and indiscriminate consumers. In a study I published in 1982, "I Only Read Novels and that Sort of Thing" I draw on the status of the reading habits of girls and women in Jane Austen's world of the eighteenth century to frame the comments that women made in my study centuries later. They were still apologizing for reading fiction. In essence, when girls and women were visible, the worth of their practices was invisible.

The scholarship that examined how girls were being shortchanged in the educational system complemented the body of work within media studies about the (mis)representations of girls and the frequent overrepresentation of boys in television programming. As Hains (2012) observes, journalist Bill Carter (1991) in "Children's TV, Where Boys Are King," exposed, in *The New York Times*, the matter-of-fact, cavalier way in which industry executives privileged boys' viewing interests as they vied for top ratings. Carter's article spelled out the connections between this form of media industry sexism and the various studies carried out on girls and their academic achievement. ABC television had just announced their fall lineup for 1991, deciding to cut the shows that most appealed to girl audiences. Their rationale was that boys constituted a 53 percent majority in the Saturday morning viewing audience—a difference that, slight as it was, ABC executives feared could make or break their odds of success in the so-called ratings war.

Circling

But there are other ways in which girls are absent. To circle back to the early 1980s, for example, Carol Gilligan published what became a highly controversial but significant work, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982; reprinted in 1993). The book, based on interviews with over 100 girls, argued that psychology had long misunderstood women. Gilligan used *In a Different Voice* to critique the work of Kohlberg (1971), the developmental theorist with whom she herself had studied. In his work on the stages of moral development he had found that women's moral development was weaker than men's. Gilligan argued that the issue was with his definition: he viewed moral reasoning as being about following the rules, but the girls and women she studied often viewed morality as making decisions in people's best interest—caring, not rule-following. She argued that society had been privileging the thinking and moral approaches of men when it needed to value both men's and women's perspectives as having equal validity.

Then in 1992, Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan published *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development,* which interrogated the silence of girls in adolescence and their fear of damaging their relationships with others. The study highlighted what the researchers named as the "I don't know" phenomenon. Looking back at this work now, Lyn Mikel Brown offers:

> Our goal then was to interrupt the prevailing academic and public conventions that placed boyhood at the center of child and adolescent development, and provide the means for girls to give voice to their thoughts and feelings. We did so in the mid-80s when "girl" was synonymous with unimportant, and, except for those few private girls' schools which funded our early work, listening to girls was considered a waste of time and money. We did so through the early- and mid-nineties when popular books misconstrued our findings and took up the "girls in crisis" call; and grant money was more available, both for research and for empowerment programs designed to "save" girls from a tsunami of all things bad (2008: 2).

As Hains highlights in her work, this *saving girls* discourse was indeed a tsunami in terms of the overproduction of books on the topic.[5]

However, I want to make sure that this history is not bound by the borders of North America. Australian authors Jane Kenway and Sue Willis's edited book *Hearts and Minds: Self-Esteem and the Schooling of Girls* (1990) offered critiques on the potential holes in this s*ave the girls* work. And one would need only to look at Valerie Walkerdine's *Schoolgirl Fictions* (1990), which analyzed a complex set of issues around patriarchy and power, to see why self-esteem might have been limiting.

Expanding the Terrain

The exclusion of girls in so much scholarship and in popular culture was (and still is) not just about the absence of girls in relation to the Global North, of course. In 1988 The Zimbabwean (then Rhodesian) novelist and filmmaker Tsitsi Dangarembga published *Nervous Conditions,* a novel that has come to be a feminist classic in postcolonial literature on presence and absence in relation to girls' lives and especially girls' education. Taking on the issue, common throughout Africa, of the privileging of sending boys to school and keeping girls home to work, this novel is regarded by many feminist scholars as making a definitive statement about girls' education in the Global South. The opening paragraph of the novel, written in the voice of Tambu, looking back on her girlhood, says it all: "I was not sorry when my brother died. Nor am I apologizing for my callousness, as you may define it, my lack of

feeling. For it is not that at all. I feel many things these days, much more than I was able to feel in the days when I was young and my brother died, and there are reasons for this more than the mere consequence of age. Therefore I shall not apologize but begin by recalling the facts as I remember them that led up to my brother's death, the events that put me in a position [to be educated] to write this account" (Dangarembga 1988: 1). Tambu's brother had been sent to a mission school, run by their uncle, Babamakuru, where high quality secondary education was provided, while his sister Tambu had to stay behind to attend the village school because there was not enough money to send her away to the mission school, too. Education in the novel is not simply about schooling, although it is Tambu's opportunity to go to school that starts the story in the first place and that then also allows us to compare the schooling of Tambu as a village girl with the education she receives at the mission school where, as mentioned earlier, her well-educated uncle is the headmaster. Tambu's cousin, Nyasha, Babamakuru's daughter, caught up in the conflict between wanting to succeed academically, on the one hand, and resisting the results of the colonial (British) education of her father and mother, on the other, develops a severe eating disorder, one of the nervous conditions apparent in the novel.

Interestingly, the development world caught up with the literary several years later with the convening of the first World Conference on Education for All (EFA) held in Jomtien in 1990. It was at that conference that official recognition was given to the need for a girl-focus in education. As UNESCO put it: "More than 100 million children, including at least 60 million girls, have no access to primary schooling."[6] I cannot help but recall here my own introduction to the discourse of the 60 million out-of-school girls in 1994 when I worked on a girls' education project in Zambia. More than anything it highlighted the need to see the experiences of girls in a global context.

Working Forward—Girls into Doing

But to take up one of the definitions of charting offered at the beginning of this chapter, "record the progress or development of…," I want to highlight what I regard as important movements away from the crisis of girlhood and into girls' engagement and participation—from the DIY movement of digital media through to the use of video making, photography, and digital storytelling as seen in Gerry Bloustien's *Girl-making* (2003) or Mary Celeste Kearney's *Girls Make Media* (2013). There is also a connection between seeing girls as doers and as cultural producers, which other scholars have examined historically in Girl Scouting

movements, the feisty characters in series like Nancy Drew and Anne of Green Gables, or, as we see in this volume, the work of Jacqueline Reid-Walsh, who has been looking at seventeenth- and eighteenth-century girls as DIY producers of flap books.

Indeed, building on participatory culture, we can track or chart the project of girlhood studies as seen through the eyes of girls themselves. While there are many examples of participatory and DIY projects from which to choose, I want to highlight a participatory video project in rural KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, in which a small group of adolescent girls produced a short video called *Vikea Abantwana* (or *Protect the Children: A Story about Incest*). It was produced in a one-day workshop using an approach to video making that does not require editing (NER–No Editing Required) (Mitchell and De Lange 2011). Their three-minute video highlights a number of critical issues about sexual abuse in their rural setting. Through the video, the filmmakers tell the story of Philendelini, who is found crying in the classroom by her best friend. As she recounts the story, we learn that Philendelini has been raped by her father. She tries to tell various women around her but no one will pass the information on to her mother. Eventually, she is taken to a doctor who confirms that the girl has been raped and also that she is pregnant. The mother, learning this, bursts into tears. The story ends with Philendilini's father behind bars in jail.

While I have written about this video in several other contexts (see for example Moletsane, Mitchell, Smith, and Chisholm 2008; Mitchell 2011), the particular relevance of the film to this chapter is in the way in which it offers an analysis of the feminist dilemma in the relationship between girls and women in that it highlights the ways in which adult women can be part of the problem in the lives of girls and young women. In 1992, Brown and Gilligan noted that the adolescent girls in their study identified the ways in which the adult women teachers and mothers in their lives betrayed them by encouraging girls to speak up and then not speaking up themselves. Similarly, *Vikea Abantwana* shows how the adult women in the lives of girls can be part of the problem. Philendelini, for example, confides in the housekeeper, who in turns feels that she cannot directly confront her boss (Philendelini's mother), and so she passes the information on to a neighbor who, she hopes, will be the one to tell Philendelini's mother. When the mother does finally hear about the rape, she immediately denies that it could have happened. But there is also something alarming about the ways in which the various women in Philendelini's life wonder who else she has told, implying that should have kept it to herself. The father, too, even though he really has no right to an opinion on this, also comments that

it should be kept in the family. But in addition to hoping that she keeps this to herself, there is also the idea that Philendelini is just making this up (or that others are). The truth, it seems, is unbelievable, and one of the clear messages of the story the young filmmakers tell through their video is that adult women do not listen to girls when they report rape and sexual abuse.

Charting Girlhood Studies as Practice

It seems to me that any of the definitions of charting found at the beginning of this chapter could be applied to the work I am describing here: a sheet of information in the form of a table, graph, or diagram; a geographic map or plan; a birth chart (at least figuratively); to make a map of an area, to plot a course, or to record progress or development. At first glance the definition referring to current best sellers in music may not work quite so well, but then I think of all the competing agendas within girlhood studies—girls, science, and technology; girls and self-esteem; girl power; girls as victims; girls as agents; mean girls—and think that perhaps this meaning, too, could work in terms of what is most salable in the field.

As I have sought to demonstrate in my auto-ethnographic writing about 6 December 1989, charting requires us to start somewhere, to place ourselves in a field and then to work back and work forward. Ideally suited to groups of feminist scholars working together, it is a strategy or approach for getting at the complexity of the study of girlhood, and especially its interdisciplinarity. At one and the same time it is also a strategy for getting at imagined pasts and imagined futures. The Massacre itself set an agenda for political education for so many young women in universities, but it also set an agenda for female academics and activists more broadly. In this way it is a touchstone event, not unlike the shooting of JFK or of John Lennon, or 9/11 and then, "Where were you when…?"

But which charting methods or tools can best be used to do this work most effectively? Starting somewhere may not be so straightforward for everyone, and one might look to some of the feminist tools that have been written about elsewhere as useful approaches to starting somewhere. For example, those working in the area of feminist memory-work such as Frigga Haug (1987) offer systematic approaches to retrieving the past through the use of common prompts for collective or individual remembering, and these might be adapted to charting in a protocol such as the following: "*Think of the first time [or a time] you be-*

came moved about something that you read/heard/saw/experienced either as a girl/ young woman or about a girl/young woman." While it may be premature to prejudge which events will be significant for a new generation of girls and girlhood scholars, it is hard to imagine that the shooting by the Taliban of Malala Yousafzai on 9 October 2012 will not be one of those *starting somewhere* events or touchstones, although such catalysts do not have to be public events, and could even be organized around objects and things (see also Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 1998; Reid-Walsh and Mitchell 2000; Mitchell 2010).

There are other types of generative prompts. For example, one might work with a set of one's own photographs of a particular time of girlhood (see Kuhn 1995) or curate a small album (Smith 2012) or digital production.[7] Hallam and Marchment (1995) write about a method of collective viewing, using the feminist TV series *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1989) as a starting somewhere point. Inspired by this methodology, Mathabo Khau (Motalingoane-Khau 2007; Khau 2009) organized a film-viewing pajama party in her study of women science teachers in Lesotho and their recollections of their own adolescent sexuality in relation to their current work with young people. As she writes: "My aim was for us to reconfirm our bonds of friendship and have fun together. I hired some video films such as *Coming to America, Lambada: The Forbidden Dance,* and *Dirty Dancing,* which were some of our favourites as we grew up." Viewing the films together also served as memory prompts. As Khau writes: "We discussed the film *Dirty Dancing* afterwards and how Baby had shocked her father and everybody by admitting that she had spent a night with a man who was being accused of theft. How would your father have reacted? Would you have done it? What did you do that shocked your parents? These are some of the questions that we discussed which led to us thinking back to those days when we were adolescent girls" (2007: 34).[8] Where the techniques of feminist memory-work might then call on a deeper analysis (either collectively or individually) of the written memory texts, the process of charting extends into the inclusion of further work with artifacts and other forms of material culture and relevant critical literatures. As noted earlier, in the case of the Montreal Massacre, I finally took the opportunity to view Denis Villeneuve's 2009 film *Polytechnique.* I also accessed an audio archive of all of Andrea Dworkin's speeches, including her forty-three-minute keynote address on the occasion of the first anniversary of the shootings so that I could check what she had really said against what I remembered she had said. Then I went back to the literature on the 1980s and early 1990s on girls, science, and technology (see for example Acker and Oatley 1993).

Representing the charting process, however, is a different matter, and in this chapter I have produced a text that is a straightforward written piece, drawing on auto-ethnographic narrative. But this is where visual arts–based methods and performance could be useful, taking into consideration the various definitions of charting that include maps, graphs, diagrams, and other visual representations. Performance, along with the use of social media and other innovative approaches, could also be part of charting and could engage audiences (and provoke further charting).[9] For example, an activist-artist scholar from the U.K., Rosy Martin, used what she called phototherapy, as the title of the article, "Phototherapy: Transforming the School Photo. (Happy Days Are Here Again)" indicates, as a re-enactment to contest the validity of the normative schoolgirl body. In their work they produce photographic images of themselves as adult women but dressed in their school uniforms, and in resistant schoolgirl poses (for example, posing themselves as schoolgirls smoking) (Martin 1987).

Conclusion

When I first started to work on the subject of charting girlhood and girlhood studies, I had the idea that I would either be able to compress the history into one chapter (impossible), or that I would be able to lay out a grand scheme for studying the field, something that would build on the mapping girlhood project that my colleagues and I began in the late 1990s.[10] Maybe I would even be able to come up with the definitive timeline for girlhood studies. Somewhat ironically, I had occasion to revisit a piece of writing that Jacqui Reid-Walsh and I did in 2008 in our Introduction to a two-volume encyclopedia on *Girl Culture,* and discovered that we had actually offered a timeline of key moments in the field. But our timeline had many limitations, ranging from our decision to include only some disciplines and not others, as well as other decisions to exclude by region and social identity and our own idiosyncratic interests and investments. I am reminded of the work of Douglas and Carless on their attempt to write a history of auto-ethnographic research, where they also arrived at a similar conclusion.

> So what we have here is a history of autoethnography. In fact – and we may as well be clear about it from the outset – it is our history of autoethnography. To do otherwise would be to write against some of the core premises that autoethnography is built upon. In particular, it would risk working against the realization that knowledge about the social and human world cannot exist independent of the knower; that we cannot

know or tell anything without (in some way) being involved in the knowing and the telling. In addition, it would fail to capitalize on one of the unique opportunities that autoethnography provides to learn about the general – the social, cultural and political – through an exploration of the personal" (2013: 84–85).

In my brief history of starting somewhere, I have made no attempt to be comprehensive and all-inclusive in either going back or going forward. Rather, I have highlighted some of the debates taking place around the time of my "starting somewhere," which are now necessarily dated. I also aimed to draw attention to a critical shift in contemporary ethnographic work *with* girls that can be participatory as we saw in the example of the video produced by girls described in the previous section, or as part of a DIY initiative with girls engaged in their own media-making. This does not, however, mean that we should therefore exclude textual readings or historical analysis, but only that we have much a wider range of approaches from which to draw, both in relation to who we are as adult researchers of girlhood and how we might want to also engage girls.

Finally, I want to remind us that we do all have to start somewhere. The tools and approaches to charting girlhood studies that I map out here are meant to be invitational to others to embark also upon charting. It is in this way that we start anew the placing of girlhood studies.

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Notes

1. See also Moletsane et al. (2008).
2. For the complete transcript of Andrea Dworkin's talk on 7 December 1990, one year after the Montreal massacre, see http://radfem.org/dworkin/.

3. For an excellent analysis of the girls-into-science-and-technology movement see Sandra Acker and Keith Oatley's Gender in Education for Science and Technology: Current Situation and Prospects for Change (1993).

4. The report was also cited in other articles related to girls' issues and follow-up stories about schools' attempts to close the gender gap (e.g., Van Tassel 1992; Lombardi 1993).

5. The tsunami includes such works as *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls,* by Mary Pipher (1994); Peggy Orenstein's *Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self Esteem, and the Confidence Gap* (1994); Myra and David Sadker's *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls* (2010); and Judy Mann's *The Difference: Discovering the Hidden Ways We Silence Girls* (1994).

6. http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/50y/brochure/tle/116.htm

7. In Mitchell (2013) I apply a variety of auto-ethnographic approaches to a personal history of growing up in the land of oil in southwestern Manitoba.

8. For an elaborated description of the methodology of memory-work prompts, curated albums, and collective viewing, see Mitchell and Pithouse (2014).

9. See for example the range of auto-ethnographic exemplars in Stacy Holman Jones, Tony Adams, and Carolyn Ellis (2013).

10. Jacqui Reid-Walsh and I came up with a list of questions that we thought would contribute to feminist mapping (see Mitchell, Reid-Walsh, Blaeser, and Smith 1998; Kirk, Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh 2008). It was an ambitious project and at the time we imagined that we might be able to map all that was going on in girlhood across all disciplines and across many regions of the world. Notwithstanding the impossibility of the task, the questions remain useful: How is girlhood defined and why? Who is a girl? What are the geopolitical spaces in which the research takes place? Who is engaging in this kind of research? Who isn't? What is the critical reception of this research? Who funds girlhood? Who are beneficiaries of the research on girlhood? What are the kinds of questions that are being taken up? What is the history of this field? How has the focus of the work changed over time? How does the research link the lives of girls and women? To what extent does the research draw on gender relations? What is the main agenda of the work? To what extent is it regulatory and protective? Advocacy and action-oriented? Policy-oriented? What methodologies are being employed? How do girls and women participate? To what extent is the work girl-centered?

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TEEN FEMINIST KILLJOYS?

Mapping Girls' Affective Encounters with

Femininity, Sexuality, and Feminism at School

Jessica Ringrose and Emma Renold

International research has documented the phenomenon of contemporary young women repudiating or disinvesting from identifications with feminism (Jowett 2004: 99; Baker 2008; Scharff 2012). Indeed, feminism is frequently constituted as both abject and obsolete by a postfeminist media context that suggests women are now equal in education, the workplace, and the home (McRobbie 2008; Ringrose and Renold 2010). Most of the scholarship on the relationship between new femininities (Gill and Scharff 2011) and different forms of feminism or postfeminism (Budgeon 2011), does not, however, explicitly deal with adolescence and teen girls' relationships to feminism, although there is some writing on how the girl and associations with girlishness have historically been set in contradiction to a feminist identity, and the need to overcome this and take girls' political subjectivities seriously (Baumgardner and Richards 2004; Eisenhauer 2004).

One particularly promising area is a growing literature exploring girls' political, activist, or counter-cultural subjectivities, via girls' online identity formation (Weber and Mitchell 2008; Currie et al. 2009) through new media practices such as blogging, zines, and digital social networking (Piepmeier, 2009; Zaslow 2009; Ringrose 2011; Keller 2012; see also Keller's contribution to this volume, among others). However, there is still a limited amount of research that focuses on teenage girls explicitly taking up feminist activist identities and practices. Indeed, much research, including our own, has focused on what Currie et al. call "de facto feminism" (2008: 39) that is, discursive traces of feminist ideology or resistance in the talk and experiences of teen girls, even if they do not explicitly identify with or define themselves as feminist (Renold and Ringrose 2008, 2011). Jessica Taft's work is a notable exception; her book *Rebel Girls: Youth Activism and Social Change* explores

girls taking up feminism (and other activisms), noting how "girl activists' ideas, stories, and theoretical contributions remain largely hidden from view" (2011: 5). Taft also comments on the lack of research with younger teens, given that most empirical work has focused on older teens or college-age feminism (including Taft's own participants, of whom only three out of eighty-four girls were under fifteen).

This chapter aims to contribute to the small but growing research literature that explores young teen girls grappling with negotiating the identity of the *feminist* and engaging in feminist practices in the institutional context of school. Drawing on qualitative research in a UK Welsh Secondary school with teens aged fourteen to sixteen, we try to engage with the complexities of what it means to be positioned, and to position oneself as feminist. We are particularly interested in foregrounding the affective dimension making feminist political subjectivities in the context of girls' everyday lives, especially their school-based teen peer cultures.

Specifically, we explore how occupying the position of teen feminist operates in relation to the contradictory terrain of femininity and sexuality in teen girlhood (Aapola et al. 2005). As noted, mainstream postfeminist media representations tend to produce a projective figure of the abject feminist as a man-hating, anti-sex, prudish, butch, ugly, de-feminized, and almost always adult or older woman (McRobbie 2008). Attempting to occupy the position of young feminist brings contradictions to the fore for girls, since postfeminist versions of sexy femininity are constructed in opposition to feminism (Ringrose 2012). These contradictions may be intensified for the young teen feminist trying on this identity. If feminism is represented and experienced as an abject identity that produces an undesirable and unsexy (hetero)femininity, then how do girls manage or negotiate these contradictions? What is the energetic and emotional toll of these contradictory affective processes on young teen feminists?

To explore these questions we draw on Sara Ahmed's (2010) figure of the feminist killjoy. We deploy her notion of "sticky" affects to explore how good and bad affects puncture and "grip" (Coleman 2009) the bodies of those who occupy the position of teen feminist and participate in feminist practices. We also consider how affects flow through and among local peer cultures imbued with normalized (hetero)sexism and sexual violence, considering the discursive material constraints around the young sexual girl body (Renold and Ringrose 2011). To do so, we draw on an ongoing feminist research collaboration with the school-based girl power group, organized to raise the self-esteem and achievement of girls who were disengaged from formal schooling.

Bad Affect and Feminist Killjoys:
What Can a Teen Feminist Do?

According to Taft (2011), in attempting to occupy particular versions of feminism, girls in her study had to disinvest, reject, and remake girlhood to accommodate feminism. Our interest is in micro-mapping the *affective* dimensions of this struggle to remake the parameters of girlhood sexuality vis-à-vis feminism in the context of peer relations at school. Sara Ahmed describes affect as a way of trying to explore "the messiness of the experiential, the unfolding of bodies into worlds" (2010: 30). Ahmed's orientation is around how objects and things become imbued with positive or negative affects. To describe the affects surrounding feminism, Ahmed theorizes the "figure of the feminist killjoy" (66), whose negativity is felt to kill joy by insisting on the unpleasant truths of sexism and by challenging taken-for-granted, normal, and desired gendered and sexual power dynamics: "The feminist subject 'in the room' hence 'brings others down' not only by talking about unhappy topics such as sexism but by exposing how happiness is sustained by erasing the signs of not getting along. Feminists do kill joy in a certain sense: they disturb the very fantasy that happiness can be found in certain places. … We can consider the relationship between the negativity of the figure of the feminist killjoy and how certain bodies are 'encountered' as being negative. … To be recognized as a feminist is to be assigned to a difficult category and a category of difficulty" (66). For Ahmed, an affective approach recognizes that "feelings can get stuck to certain bodies in the very way we describe spaces and situations. And bodies can get stuck depending on what feelings they get associated with" (39). "Affect is sticky" (29). We find this framing compelling, and our interest is in mapping out what affects surround and stick to girls and their embodied teen feminist relationships in social space. Indeed, we will explore how the luminous (Deleuze in McRobbie 2008) signifier of feminist as an affective term has immense power that can be both destructive and transformative. We are not theorizing affect, however, as *solely* subjective "felt states of emotion" (Clough 2010: 207) but also as a force that flows through and between bodies and things, which can increase or decrease capacities to act (Ringrose and Coleman 2013). We are interested in how girls are encountered (by others) and encounter (themselves) vis-à-vis what Ahmed (2010) thinks of as the difficult category of feminism. Analytically, we explore this in relation to mapping the affective encounters of a range of killjoy moments, attending to how affective flows can energize and open up or deflate and curtail girls' ca-

pacities to survive and/or challenge subtle and overt everyday sexisms and sexual harassment (such as sexual name-calling).

Researching the Girl Power Group

Taft explores the paradoxes of the term Girl Power, which has been co-opted and commodified to the point of semiotic exhaustion to simultaneously mean "anti-feminism, postfeminism, individual power and consumer power [which] all write girls' socio-political power out of the language of Girl Power" (2004: 75; see also Hains 2012). The girl power project under discussion in this chapter started as the result of the international charity WOMANKIND's U.K. Education Program, Challenging Violence, Changing Lives.[1] This program delivered lesson plans, and trained teachers in schools in England and Wales around issues of gendered violence and sexual bullying. One vibrant, inventive, and passionate teacher, Siwan,[2] the director of pupil well-being, was inspired by the WOMANKIND program to set up a girl power group in her school to re-engage girls who were, in her words, underachieving and increasingly disengaging from formal schooling. In this case, the idea of girl power was adopted with good intentions by a teacher who identified as feminist and sought empowerment through the channels available to her—the pastoral school curriculum and a charitable organization's lesson plans.

Our research involvement with the girl power group began in 2010 and has included exploratory observations, focus groups and individual interviews with four teachers and twenty-six young people (fifteen girls and eleven boys aged fourteen to sixteen), as well as ethnographic reflections upon their out of school activities. The latter included, for instance, going on a SlutWalk with them (Ringrose and Renold 2012) and hosting and organizing a Young Sexualities conference that brought academics, policy makers, teachers, and young people together. At this event, they delivered a workshop on sexual name-calling and produced their own film to problematize hyper-sexy femininities through a parody of the TV show *Snog, Marry, Avoid.* They called their version "Mutt to Slut," which is significant because they disclosed how *slut* was a term that could not be named or addressed in their own peer-led sexuality education lessons in school.

A range of educational research shows that school space is thoroughly saturated with curricula, policy, and practice promoting what Epstein, O'Flynn, and Telford (2003) explore as desexualised or non-sexual het-

erosexualities. What this means is that in the UK, sex and relationships education (SRE) tends to be framed not only through a risk and harm paradigm that prioritizes protection, prevention, and plumbing (Carmody 2009) but specifically promotes a non-active sexuality in which the assumed underlying desire is compulsorily heterosexual (Alldred and David 2007). Working within this framework, yet supported by the Welsh guidance on sexist, sexual, and transphobic anti-bullying (Welsh Government 2011), the WOMANKIND intervention opened up further emphasis in lesson plans on gender violence and sexual bullying. WOMANKIND's lessons built on the UK's Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) curriculum guidelines, with greater focus on gender inequality in sexual relationships, including sessions on self-esteem and body image, women's rights, sexual bullying, sexual relationship education, LGBT issues, and domestic violence. The girls' group worked with the WOMANKIND curriculum, participated in local and national domestic violence and bullying conferences, and planned and delivered some of the PSHE lessons (i.e., on healthy relationships) to younger students in their school.

Despite the welcome attention to these issues, much of the pedagogic content focused on sexual risk, danger, and protection (Ringrose and Renold 2012). For instance, in our first research meeting with the girls, they delivered one of their lessons, which focused on unhealthy relationships. They drew upon the example of celebrity singer Rihanna's experience of partner-based violence to demonstrate their knowledgeability and how to recognize the abusive aspects of an intimate partner relationship. Our research encounters with the girls' group explicitly aimed to open up some of these issues and explore further what the girls in this first research session disclosed as a contradiction and tension between gaining status as *sexperts* through their theoretical knowledge about domestic violence and roles as peer mentors and student teachers alongside their struggles to manage the coercive everyday sexism and sexual harassment in their own peer cultures. Below, we draw on a single interview with two girls, Terrwyn and Carys (aged fifteen, white-Welsh). This was one of several interviews in which girls reflected on their three-year experience of participating in the girl power group. The interview narrative moves in and out of their experience and activities as members of the group and their peer relationships and cultures. Our analysis seeks to map the affective dynamics (see Ringrose and Renold 2014) of this talk about how the figure of the teen feminist killjoy traverses and surfaces in a range of contradictory ways as the girls explore their journey and everyday practices of doing femininity, sexuality, and feminism.

Feeling Feisty: Becoming "A Bit of a Feminist"

Taft's (2011) findings showed that girls can gain status and empowerment from developing critical agency and a shared political subjectivity. We witnessed this dynamic in the ways in which girls discussed their journey of belonging to and participating in the activities of the girl power group. Terrwyn and Carys talk about how the group disrupted their original school branding as disengaged pupils and how their engagement and passionate attachment to the group stirred a feeling of responsibility and a sense of purpose, of doing something.

> Terrwyn: I am a hard worker and everything, but I am a bit naughty in school sometimes and the fact that it [the girl power group] is not there like as much anymore like scares me a bit.
>
> ER: It keeps you focused?
>
> Terrwyn: Yes and gave me something to do and something I liked doing and like a responsibility. Now it is not, I am just sitting in detention all the time.
>
> ER: Are you?
>
> Terrwyn: Yeah, because there is nothing to do.
>
> ER: So you need somewhere for your energy to go.
>
> Terrwyn: Because like I loved it so much like I really—people don't understand because they think 'Oh school work,' like okay you like it, but I loved it. It is something I really cared about. Sort of going makes me really scared to think about that.

In the extract above we can glimpse the affective flow that seems to inflate and deflate the joy of being in and belonging to the girl power group as Terrwyn reflects on its potential demise as the girls near the end of compulsory schooling (at age sixteen in the UK), a sense of really caring about and actively doing something is set against the designation of a sedentary naughty existence, trapped in detention with nothing to do. The clear joy of loving the girl power group also surfaced, not only in terms of belonging and activity but also in the intense pride they felt in the impact of their feminist pedagogy. We see this below as one of the girls talks about parents congratulating them on the reach of their work at the school.

> Terrwyn: I know like a few boys, like I know this sounds really weird, but their parents, like … came up and said, 'Yeah you really made him think about that.'

However, as they go on to discuss, this joy and pride is mixed with the awareness of what it means to identify and be known as girls who have feminist views.

> Carys: Some people like some boys find it really good that we are doing what we do, but then other ones just like laugh about it and try to act like they don't really care and they think it is not cool at all … but even if they do like act that we are really nerdy doing all this stuff, I really couldn't care less.

> Terrwyn: I don't care. I don't have certain friends because of it, like because our views are so different, especially about like gender sort of things.

> Carys: We are all known as pretty feisty, us lot.

> Terrwyn: Because we stand up for what we believe in.

Becoming known as girls who challenge, in their words, "gender sort of things" nevertheless created and sustained a deep affective bond *between* the girls. We see this as a rising up of their collective energies, enabling them to stand up for what they believe in, which they express as becoming "known as pretty feisty." Feistiness is a fiery, willful affective state strongly associated with feminism, which suggests a force that radiates out into the wider peer culture—also, however, with potentially unsettling and troubling effects, as Ahmed (2010) suggests. Indeed, doing feminism at school is no easy journey to empowerment. Words become affective sticking points in the daily relations of school culture.

> Carys: Loads of our friends are like really cautious on words they use around us. …

> Terrwyn: People I don't know, go 'Like I have heard about you, don't use slut in a negative context' … like people know and things like that, like 'Oh you are a bit of a feminist,' so people know before they meet us. …

> Terrwyn: And like say they talk about a body, like 'Oh she has a bangable[3] body,' but they wouldn't say it in front of you.[4]

> Carys: They wouldn't say that.

> Terrwyn: And they wouldn't use certain words in front of us.

In these passages, we can see again how the girls experience themselves as known feminists in school and how others experience them as feminist figures. They talk about having a reputation that precedes them, an affectivity that follows them around; their mere presence as a collective girl power group seems to reverberate into the wider peer

culture. We also, however, see the girls' increasing awareness of their feminist killjoy reputations. We see this occurring when the girls describe the halting of normalized and sexually objectifying and abusive language, like slut and bangable happening *in their presence.* While it is possible to interpret the boys' awareness of how they "don't use slut in a negative context" as a feminist success story whereby the reputation of the girl power group is creating change and making their peers think twice about using slut *in front of* the girls, we are cautious of doing so. The signifier slut, as part of a wider discourse of objectification and sexual shaming, may be temporarily interrupted, but reading this as a straightforward positive outcome of the group's impact is complicated, as we explore below, as the girls re-invoke a slut/non-slut binary.

Joy-full? Respectable Non-slutty Feminists

Difficulty in navigating the ambivalence of a pernicious slut/non-slut binary was a pervasive and enduring theme in the interview. As the extract below demonstrates, the girls appeared to pit being a feminist against being a slut, which in this context was being defined by the girls as sexually promiscuous or "easy."

> Terrwyn: I was just thinking maybe they [boys] back off a bit because they know that we are not as easy to get as other people.
>
> Carys: Not as easy—but then boys like that—like the fact that we are not easy. Like, they *really* like that.
>
> Terrwyn: Most boys seem to respect it anyway.
>
> Carys: Yeah. But most of them are really like all for it. Like most of them do think like because, I know it sounds really bad, but with the whole slut thing, people are like, 'Oh it is quite a relief to have non-slutty girls.' Some people are like, 'Oh cool. That's quite nice.'
>
> JR: When you say "non-slutty" what do you mean?
>
> Carys: Like I don't know. That we respect ourselves.

Here we see a range of positive affects in being positioned as non-slutty as the girls talk about being respected and *really* liked. Being known as a bit of a feminist may have encouraged the boys to back off and respect and like them. However, this positive affective flow relies on girls occupying the position of a non-slut. The girls were more than aware of this bind ("I know it sounds really bad … but it is quite a relief to have non-slutty girls"), and indeed, they went on to discuss

their belief that they should not judge other girls who want to be slutty or easy and repeatedly invoke such sexual double standards as vastly unfair—aware, perhaps, that they too are impaled by this binary; they know that they cannot occupy one side of the binary without disturbing the underlying compulsory heterosexual regulation that gives slut its affect force (Payne 2010). The respect they feel in being known as a bit of a feminist also carries bad affect since it attaches to their judgmental feelings of bitchiness toward other girls.

Killjoy? Desiring Slutty, Destroying the Feminist

While the previous section explored in part the girls' hetero-erotic power (joy) and shame (killjoy) in being positioned as non-slutty girls, this section follows this ambivalence as the girls talk about their own desire to be sexy, with their own version of slutty sartorial femininity.

> Terrwyn: People would maybe have a first impression of us (as slutty) because we dress like we do.

> Carys: Then they just like assume that maybe if they are wearing a short skirt or whatever, or short shorts, they just assume, 'Oh yes she is probably a slut' sort of thing, if she has got her bum hanging out.

> Terrwyn: People think we are sluts because … we always mess around like go into town, like 'Put your slutty legs on, your slutty jeans' as a joke, just because we get called a slut for no matter what, so we talk about putting your slutty legs on.

> Carys: Like none of us wear inappropriate clothes. … If a girl walks around like looking like hot, if a boy says 'Oh that girl looks hot' like I can imagine a girl just being like 'Nah she looks like a slut.' Just because boys are like—

> Terrwyn: Yes that is so true. Oh she is really hot, no, she is a slut.

What we are interested in drawing attention to in this section is the ways in which the girls are simultaneously investing and disinvesting in being non-slutty, indicating the powerful affective force of this term in the peer group. Despite being called sluts for "dressing like they do" in short skirts and short shorts, the girls are aware of the ambivalent draw of the erotic capital of the word slut (Hakim 2010). Slut has the potential to signify a normative heterosexual desirability. It is a term that sits in close association with being hot, as the girls point out above ("oh she is really hot, no, she is a slut"). Indeed slutty may be one of the only positions girls can try to occupy to inhabit a recognizable hetero-

sexual desire, given that slut can also be an identity of relative power, knowledge, and sexual prowess for some girls (Lamb 2010).

A range of research has explored the peer rules around sartorial sexual display for girls (Duits and Van Zoonen 2006). The girls' acute awareness of the sexual reading of their bodies is captured in their evocative phrase "putting your slutty legs on," since they know how exposed legs in a short skirt, or wearing jeans that are too tight can render their body parts (legs) as slutty. Moreover, being called hot by a boy may call up competitive heterosexualized aggression, that is, verbal abuse from other girls who draw on the same slut/non-slut binary to police and shame those who are hot as sluts (Ringrose 2008; Ringrose and Renold 2012). Even while joking about this, however, the girls are moved to signal to us and to each other how they do not wear inappropriate clothes, to defend themselves. Appropriateness is aged, raced, classed, and bears a religious tenor as to what can be legitimately worn or not in relation to sexual regulation and control over girls' and women's bodies (Skeggs 2004; Egan 2013).

While in the previous passage they do play with the power of feeling hot with their clothes and wearing slutty jeans, the potential impacts of engaging in heterosexual activity—having sex with boys—was anticipated with palpable fear and anxiety as they reflect on a truncated (for the purposes of this chapter) but originally lengthy narrative about a friend who "did things" with two boys at a party.

> Terrwyn: I don't know people just find it really hard to believe that we are not like owned sort of thing—that we don't have (a boyfriend) … Like people are surprised that some of us haven't had sex.
>
> Carys: No, like nearly all of us haven't.
>
> …
>
> Terrwyn: I think for me as well, for all of us, it is probably a bit of our reputation because I know I wouldn't go to a party and like do loads of things.
>
> Carys: I wouldn't do it because I wouldn't want to, but your reputation would get like absolutely killed.
>
> …
>
> Terrwyn: I wouldn't want people to know me as a person that is easy to get with and do stuff with.
>
> Carys: I wouldn't want to have that reputation.
>
> Terrwyn: I wouldn't be able to live with it.
>
> Carys: Neither would I.

> Terrwyn: I would find myself—I dunno I just wouldn't like it. I know it sounds really bad but I would feel dirty.
>
> Carys: Yeah I would feel so dirty.
>
> Terrwyn: Because most people think of you like as something to do. … Like they wouldn't take you serious, you think that every boy that speaks to you just wants one thing.

The girls describe the tensions between being respected and boys thinking of them as something to "do." They discuss how feminism has created a space in which they are not owned by boys, and do not have to have sex, but they invoke sex as something dirty and indeed actually life destroying. They relate a palpable fear of sex and what would happen to their reputation, which would "get killed" if they "did something" and leave them unwilling to live. While they use words like killed figuratively, this is not just girl teen drama (Marwick and boyd 2011), but illustrates the difficult, painful peer group contexts where girls' reputations continue to be framed through sexual (in)activity (Lamb 2010). They went on to say that it was their position as part of the girl power group that was particularly under attack.

> Terrwyn: Like people—it is almost like they are waiting for something like that to happen, for one of us to do something so they can have something to talk about. So they can have that. … Boys have said that, 'Like somebody needs to have sex with her'. … Like it is true, if someone asks you, like 'Ah so have you had sex?' and you are like, 'No' and then they are like 'Definitely I would' and then you are like, 'Right.' Loads of boys say like 'I will destroy you.'

The girls articulate anxieties that the peer group at school will have something over them if they do not live up to their perceived feminist ideals. Sex is figuratively constructed here as a weapon by boys who desire to destroy their affective power as respectable, non-slutty girls. Returning to Ahmed (2010), we see that the affective joy being killed here is also the girls' own ability to enjoy their sexual bodies and sexual relations more widely. Again, this destruction could be possible only in a context in which girls' perceived sexual activity (of any sort) continues to be constructed as dirty and shameful and subject to "reputational risk" (Tolman 2013). In this peer context, it is *teen-girl-feminists* who become luminous targets of a deep misogyny—she must be done to, banged, and destroyed, with all of these terms being used figuratively to stand in for sex in ways that we see as reassertions of a violent, phallic masculinity (Renold and Ringrose 2011).

Getting Real: Beyond the Feminist Killjoy

Towards the end of the interview the girls became particularly impassioned about the need to share this complex, messy terrain around being in a girl power group with other members of the school community.

> Terrwyn: I would love to have something like this (referring to their own interview) … with like the governors of our school, because I would love for them to know what actually we are faced with. …
>
> Carys: Say if like younger girls or boys sat in on a conversation like this, like I know if I didn't know anything about it and hearing all these opinions and all these thoughts, all these words. …
>
> Terrwyn: Like the school radio [points to the school's public address audio system behind them]. Like they could put the radio on now for people to hear this!
>
> Carys: It is kind of like shockingly real!
>
> Terrwyn: I really want to go round loads of different schools teaching people about it. … We will have an effect … I really want to do loads of things … because like some of our teachers call us the underachievers. …
>
> Carys: 'Underachievers talking again. …'
>
> Terrwyn: So it would be nice to show them that actually. … This would be a good way to just like prove them wrong. … That is why I feel so passionate about this. We are not all stupid and idiots!

Here the girls' energies and passion intensify. Their talk quickens, their eyes widen and their bodies visibly open up and relax as they move from the fear and shame discussed above to re-igniting a more joyful vision of bringing their messy reality of growing up girl (Walkerdine et al. 2001) to a wider audience, from school governors to younger peers. We have written elsewhere about the affective intensities or glows (Ringrose and Renold 2014) that can circulate in moments like these, where ruptures to local or global gender and sexual normative cruelties (Ringrose and Renold 2010) erupt into the air and expand into the space, leaving residues of feeling strong, powerful, and capable of transformation. We see this as the girls critically rethinking and disrupting the pedagogical category of the disengaged girl as they describe their passionate refusal of the tags stupid, idiot, and underachiever. Yet as we have been suggesting, this is not an easy, straightforward journey towards feminist empowerment. Rather, the girls' desire is to find ways of communicating the *complex* and *messy* realities of their lives as girls

in the girl power group on the school radio waves, as they have done with us in the interview. They are intensely aware this might shock, trouble, and displace the everyday complacency around gender and sexual norms and categories at school. With this they envision a pedagogical girl power process that is more real, in that it can tolerate the painful and joyful experience of what girls are actually are faced with—being able to bear "hearing all these opinions, and all these thoughts, all these words."

Conclusion: Working Affectively with Feminist Pedagogy

In this chapter we have tried to think about the experiences of teenage girls who try on and live with the ambivalent process of becoming "a bit of a feminist." Taft talks about the critical tensions at play between young teen activists and girlhood: "at the conceptual centre of this [was a] series of oppositions between 'girl identity and activist identity' (superficial/serious, mean/supportive, insecure/confident)" (2011: 88). Our analysis has shown the critical importance of engaging another layer of contradiction and tension around binaries organizing teen girls' sexualities. As we have illustrated, the girls in our research experienced the girl power group as a joyful site of powerful solidarity and strength in the midst of uncertainty around their schooling, yet occupying the identity of teen feminist also brings affective difficulties. When girls challenge sexism and sexual harassment (like sexual name-calling), this can be experienced as affectively problematic: girls can be positioned as feminist killjoys when they interrupt or stand up to the normal sexualized school banter around girls' bodies and sexual reputations (like the figure of the slut).

This chapter has helped us to reflect upon the complexities of how slut operates in peer groups, considering the multiplicity of what slut means for young people and not second-guessing what it can signify and do. In our previous research we illustrated how slut can be temporarily transformed and reclaimed by teen girls through taking up the digital usernames of "slut" and "whore" on social media platforms, for instance (Ringrose and Renold, 2014), and it was certainly experienced as a form of playful banter at points of the narratives in this chapter. However, we found that girls seemed to invoke slut/non-slut categories to stand up to slut, which set slut in opposition to a *good* feminist identity. This was complicated because being non-slutty was affectively charged for them since the boys "liked it," so the reference point came back to whether or not they were accepted in relation to the heterosex-

ual masculine gaze of approval. The girls also desired the erotic appeal of slut, which they talk about sartorially as "putting on" at various points, as well as the problem of being slut-shamed by girls if boys found them hot. They also, however, disclosed a very palpable fear and lack of trust of boys and the potential consequences of their own sexual activity, which they felt would kill their reputations (as girls and as feminists). They discussed boys finding their good girl personas as something to take down or destroy by having sex, which continues to be constructed vis-à-vis an enduring binary between virgin and whore and as something that would soil, defile, and ruin the girl (Payne 2010).

We wish to conclude by suggesting that feminist pedagogical processes in contemporary schools (for instance starting up girl power groups) must start from the social, cultural, and affective complexities of girls' own experiences of growing up girl, which in this case involved acknowledging the dilemmas of teen feminine sexuality (Tolman 2002, 2013). Engaging with feminism can be at the same time a radically pleasurable *and* painful set of experiences and processes of identification, contestation, and potential transformation. Ahmed suggests that part of working with the idea of the feminist killjoy is an acknowledgement that "we might need to attend to bad feelings not in order to overcome them but to learn by how we are affected by what comes near, which means achieving a different relationship to all our wanted and unwanted feelings as an ethical resource" (2010: 216). This means we need to engage with feminisms that are inclusive of and work with the complexities and affective ambivalence of teen feminine sexuality—that explore sexuality as often simultaneously pleasure *and* danger, judgmental and non-judgmental (Tolman 2013). By confronting what girls are actually faced with (such as the painful contradictions around wanting to be both a slutty and a non-slutty girl), we open up space for a more critical, inventive, and ethical feminist pedagogy capable of engaging with the complex material realities of different girls in their various specific embedded and embodied locations and relations.

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Notes

1. The school is based in an urban city in south Wales, with a quarter of students coming from the most economically deprived area of the city and a further quarter coming from some of the most prosperous areas of the city. Around 10 percent of students are eligible for free school meals, and around 20 percent of students have been identified as needing additional special educational support.
2. We have used pseudonyms throughout this chapter.
3. "Bangable" is a colloquial expression for "fuckable."
4. This program delivered gender equality curricula in schools. Although a detailed exploration of the program is beyond the scope of this chapter, an evaluation/review can be found in the report "Freedom to Achieve: Preventing Violence Promoting Equality Starting in Schools" (Maxwell et al. 2010).

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7

Placing the Girlhood Scholar into the Politics of Change

A Reflexive Account

Caroline Caron

Problematizing Voice, Participation, and Social Change through Reflexivity

Girlhood studies is a rights-based approach to research and activism that aims to achieve gender equality for girls of all ages in local and global contexts (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2009). Seeking to foster girls' and young women's empowerment across contexts and locations, feminist scholars and activists working in this field demonstrate a strong commitment to enabling girls' participation in their communities and to listening carefully to girls' voices in the research process (Brown and Gilligan 1992; Mazzarella and Pecora 2007). Indeed, despite being relatively new, the field of girlhood studies is already "replete with references to participation and the need for girl-centredness (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2009: 214) [with] [m]any of us want[ing] to claim that the voices of the girls with whom we work are [being] heard" (221).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine critically the assumed relationship in girlhood studies among its politically driven feminist agendas, its explicit focus on voice and participation by girls, and its concern with social change. I will foreground the issue of accountability in the field of girlhood studies by asking three questions: In what ways, and to what extent, does a focus on girls' voices and participation inform an approach to social change? How do scholars in girlhood studies identify evidence of social change, and in what forms does that evidence take shape? If social change is a goal of our research practice, what happens if no demonstrable change results from our research? To sum up my approach I pose a fourth question: Are girlhood scholars self-critical about their claims that they do, indeed, pursue social change?

Although featuring centrally in the literature on feminist methodology (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002), accountability remains a neglected

area of discussion and debate within the "limited body of literature that attends to methodologies for work *with* girls or for facillitating research *by* girls themselves" (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2009: 214). In this chapter, I seek to address this issue through a critical self-reflexive account of my past work with Francophone girls in Canada. My purpose is to emphasize the peculiarities of conducting feminist work *with* and *for* girls while assessing, in order to eventually improve, my capacity to enact the political commitment endorsed by girlhood studies. In doing so, I want to stress that reflexivity may be a productive tool for examining the truthfulness of the claim that feminist knowledge "has the potential to produce alterations in social systems along with personal and group empowerment" (Jiwani and Berman 2002: 6).

Reflexivity is a widely acknowledged principle in feminist methodology. It has been described in the literature as an ethical research practice that attempts to make visible "the power relations and the exercise of power in the research process" (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002: 118). Increasing the researcher's accountability for the methodological choices she makes, reflexivity asks the researcher to locate herself within the process of knowledge production, so as to foreground the impact her particular social location has on the research process and on her relationship with research participants. Reflexivity is a task fraught with tensions, dilemmas, and unease, since the critical self-awareness it requires may result in negative feelings such as doubt, undecidedness, and guilt (see Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1996).

I approach uneasiness and uncertainty in my work as challenges that deserve careful consideration and attention, but that are ultimately impossible to overcome fully. This unstable ground puts me in a state of vigilance that is key, in my view, to improving the ability to conduct responsible and responsive research with regard to feminist ideals of social justice and gender equity; my work in the field is grounded in a commitment to "hear the voices of girls for the purposes of [my] own research … [while] ensuring that [I] take appropriate steps with policy makers" (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2009: 223–224) or with any other body that can have an impact on girls' lives.

Being Accountable towards a Community of Girls: A Feminist Perspective on Research Ethics

Accountability is a concept in its own right in the literature on social science methodologies; it promotes "the development of more democratic social relations" (Harding and Norberg 2005: 2009). In the field of

girlhood studies, structural age-based social relations complicate this goal because a sharing of power is not fully achievable. That this power differential is also hierarchical further complicates the achievement of egalitarian relationships between the adult researcher and young research participants. For example, it is the girlhood scholar who occupies a privileged position when she is designing and conducting a research project. Whereas the scholar (or activist) has chosen to conduct a study of her own and has been afforded material resources to achieve her chosen goals, young subjects are often captive in institutions and organizations where their participation is mandatory and in which their choices are limited or, worse still, constrained. Consequently, the two following questions are worth asking: To what extent are young research participants free to take part in our research projects? To what extent do they really participate in their design?

There is a legal aspect to this structural power imbalance between the adult-researcher and the young research participants. In every country in the world, the law not only treats children and adults differently, it defines and monitors the relationships between underage people and adults. This pre-existing structure of social relations complicates the endeavor of achieving an egalitarian relationship between a girlhood scholar and her young female research participants. For example, when the underage voices tell us stories of violence and abuse committed by legal guardians, how are we to translate our commitment to social change and girls' empowerment?

The critical research problems and ethical dilemmas that arise from this structural power imbalance between adults and young people in the field of girlhood studies may be successfully addressed through critical reflection on methodology. Here, methodology should not be confused with methods. Methodology implies the link of an ontology to an epistemology and a set of rules that specify how valid knowledge claims about social reality can be made (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). It involves "the theory and analysis of how research should proceed, how research questions might best be addressed and the criteria against which research findings might be evaluated" (Maynard 1994: 14). Methodology uncovers the research process as a whole whereas methods refer to research techniques and procedures used for data collection and the testing of evidence found (Bromley 2012). As indicated in italics in the following representation of the research process in social sciences, methods apply only to one specific stage of a research project: Theory → Research question(s) → *Data* → Coding → Interpretation → Conclusion(s) → Modification of theory.

The Politics of Feminist Methodology

Feminist researchers and girlhood studies scholars share a common "quest for valid knowledge of social realities by a knowing subject" (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002: 42; see also Olesen 2005). This is not to say that feminist methodology is monolithic; the use of the singular is meant to signal a key feature of feminist methodology—its rejection of the positivist claim to objectivity, which feminism shares with critical social theory and other emancipatory research methodologies (Bromley 2012).

Despite being informed by a wide range of theoretical perspectives, feminist methodology usually posits that since no value-free research can be conducted, subjectivity provides a valid ground upon which ethical relationships can be built and sustained between researchers and research participants (Richardson 1997). This principle was coined, famously, by the American sociologist Michelle Fine (1994) in her classic article, "Working the Hyphens," in which she emphasizes the need for researchers to probe their relationships with the contexts they study and with their research participants. As eloquently summarized by Ramazanoglu and Holland, such a contention illustrates that "*Feminism* implies a moral responsibility for feminist knowledge and a general ethic of accountability to a community of women [and girls]" (2002: 170).

A feminist ethics of accountability means that researchers are responsible and accountable for the knowledge they produce, as well as for both the expected and unintended consequences of their research. Consequently, feminist praxis is guided by the principle of doing no harm (Maynard 1994; Kiragu and Warrington 2012). Researchers bear responsibility for ensuring that the voices of marginalized women are heard in the ethics of accountability (Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1996; Krumer-Nevo 2009), which accounts for the centrality of voice and experience in the literature on women's studies since the 1970s (Harding and Norberg 2005).

Feminist ethics are of capital importance in girlhood studies, given that the research participants' age places them in a subordinate position to adults. To ensure an adequate assessment of the risks young research participants may incur as a result of their participation in our work, girlhood scholars' notions of potential risk must be carefully probed. When what we hear from research participants' calls for immediate action against those who have legal authority over them, what is our responsibility? What is the purpose of our hearing in such situations?

The available literature on issues of access, confidentiality, informed consent, intergenerational equality, positionality, and relations of power in the research process shows that the field of girlhood studies is actively engaged in dealing with the ethics of conducting research with and for girls (see Holland and Ramazanoglu 1994; Harris 1996; Oliver and Lalik 2000; Kiragu and Warrington 2012). Since these discussions are informed by feminism and feminist methodology, girlhood scholars' apparent lack of interest in accountability remains puzzling. If the ethics of accountability has been widely discussed and debated in the context of research *about* women, *for* women, and *with* women (Maynard 1994), the same cannot be said of our field. The following reflexive account of my research praxis is meant to foreground this lack, locating the research process as the primary site where accountability begins.

Francophone Girls in Canada: A Solidarity Standpoint

Feminism aims for the inclusion of all differences, particularly of subjugated groups and voices from the margins (Bromley 2012). Yet designing a research project requires a sequence of choices that inevitably have exclusionary consequences. For example, that some research questions are to be asked implies that others will not be raised. Decisions must also be made about which populations or girls are to be invited to participate in a research study. Categories such as age, geographical location, and sociodemographics inevitably frame decisions about which groups of girls are invited to participate, which necessarily means that some girls will be included in the research design and others excluded.

A reflexive approach begins with the unsettling admission that the research project is itself an active process of inclusion and exclusion, and that researchers are accountable not only for the people and topics they include but for what they leave out as well. Consequently, it is vital to reflect critically on *how* we make decisions about who and what is included in our work and why (see Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1996). But how do we make ourselves accountable to the girls we include or exclude as a result of our privileged position in the research process?

Over the last ten years, I have conducted research with and about adolescent Francophone girls, focusing specifically on their readership of magazines targeted at teenage girls. My research explores public discourses about youth sexuality within the context of Quebec, a Canadian province in which a large majority of the population is French-speaking. This choice reflects my own position as a native Quebecer, as well as my own linguistic preference and ability as a native French-speaker.

This stance is also an attempt to stand in solidarity with the girls I study because they are part of a minority language group in the context of North America. My commitment to making interventions in the English-speaking literature on girlhood rather than the French seeks to counter the absence of French-speaking girls in both Canadian and international girlhood studies. As noted by Gouin and Wais, the Anglocentric focus of girlhood studies "constitutes a powerful form of … homogenization which silences diverse and alternative stories of girlhoods" (2006: 35). My chosen focus on Francophone girls, then, is not a matter of access to research samples, but rather a political statement that situates my work in solidarity with my research participants.

Language is not always the category that merits primary consideration, yet languages are far from being neutral. The hegemony of English in Canada and elsewhere in the world, for instance, denotes power structures that remain imperceptible: English becomes the only audible language. My decision to work with Francophone girls, then, resonates with the feminist politics of inclusion, diversity, and social justice (Bromley 2012).

My point is not that language or any other category (age, class, sexual orientation, ability, poverty, experience of violence, rural/urban location, and so on) should be *the* focus of our work. *Au contraire,* I believe it is the researcher's prerogative to make the best decision she can with regard to her own concerns, preoccupations, constraints, and capabilities. What is crucial is the ability to answer the question: Why are we deciding to work with these girls rather than others? *My* chosen solidarity standpoint makes *me* accountable to a specific category of girls, even though I acknowledge that this group cannot be studied as a whole, given the several differences between and among girls who share the same language such as age, class, sexuality, citizenship status, and religion.

Voice and Participation: Are They Enough to Tie Research to Action?

Looking back at the work I have conducted over the last ten years, I notice a recurring theme that is worth addressing here—the silencing of girls' voices in mainstream media, public policy, and local decision-making processes. Like much of the work in girlhood studies, countering the silencing of girls' voices has been enacted by giving voice and listening carefully to what girls have had to say (for an overview, see Caron 2009, 2011).

Addressing accountability requires asking questions about the political impact that the research can have on girls' lives. Girlhood studies not only means allowing marginalized voices to speak and be heard, it also aims to tie research into action in order to better enable girls' political agency (Kirk, Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh 2010). This goal is not uncontentious, however, for it raises questions about who should listen to these voices, for what purpose, and with what consequences, as well as that of who should bear the responsibility for making change happen.

Tying research to action in politically effective ways is a demanding, complex, and not always feasible task. Doing so would require, first, a shared definition of what the notions of action and social change mean. Thus far, social policy and public policy have been the preferred sites for making structural changes happen, even though few studies in the field explicitly undertake action with policy makers.[1] Since it is the researchers, not the young research participants, who are responsible for catalyzing change, this seems to indicate a failure in the field's attempts at moving towards the *political* empowerment of girls, as advocated by Kirk, Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh (2010) and by Caron (2011).

It is necessary to think critically about our unquestioned assumptions about the meaning of action and change and how we aim to make these happen. Our conception of girls' political agency is crucial to this pursuit since it centers our attention on politics, a topic that is increasingly difficult to pin down in youth research. As I will show in the example below, politicizing young people through research is complicated by the age and status differences between the researcher and her subjects.

Micro-Change as a Form of Valuable Mode of Intervention in the Field of Girlhood Studies: A Practical Example

Within the parameters of my research on mediated discourses of hypersexualization in Quebec, I conducted focus group discussions with twenty-seven adolescent girls in 2007. Media coverage at this time was portraying female high school students and their clothing as being too sexy and as a threat to the proper learning environment of primary and high schools. Within the discursive landscape of this mediated controversy, school administrators tried to maintain social order by regulating girls' dress through school dress code reforms. These reforms, widely undertaken in the province, assumed that the banning of (female) sexy clothing would erase (female) sexuality from schools and bring back a neutral and healthy learning atmosphere. The stigmatization and condemnation of female sexual expression was neither debated nor

challenged in mediated discussions of what was then labeled hyper-sexualization in the context of Quebec.[2]

Although this was not what I originally intended to have them do, my research participants seized the opportunity to voice their opinions about how the media framed the issue of hypersexualization. They were also eager to discuss how the trend of girls' wearing revealing clothing had been handled by school authorities according to gender norms.

The safe space provided to my research participants to voice their opinions about the controversial issue enabled them to contest their mis-representation in and exclusion from public discussions on clothing and the meaning of a healthy school environment.[3] They also used the op-portunity to speak about their sense of disenfranchisement from school governance. Frustrated by the ways dress code reforms were adopted and implemented in the seventeen high schools they attended among them, my participants discussed at length their perceptions of the un-democratic, top-down, and unfair school decision-making processes at the root of dress code reforms. These heated discussions clearly hinted at a demand for increased political agency for students in their high schools. From this point, how was I to tie research to action?

Certainly, telling their stories and having them heard had an em-powering effect on my participants. Group discussions allowed them to at least make sense of some of the thoughts and feelings they had about the issue, and created a shared awareness about the gendered and reg-ulatory nature of media discourses on girls' sexualization. Indeed, most of my research participants thanked me very enthusiastically for the opportunity for discussion that they would not otherwise have had. I contend that this form of (micro)change qualifies as a valuable and legitimate mode of intervention.

There are, nonetheless, limitations to change. For instance, none of my research participants seemed able to acknowledge her own respon-sibility in the slut-labeling phenomenon they were so keen to condemn. On many occasions, they used the slut label in order to distance them-selves from the (Other) girls. They believed their own sexy clothes to be normal and acceptable, although other girls' clothing was deemed too sexy, tasteless, and even slutty. In fact, my research participants used the slut label as a form of othering that was clearly meant to position themselves favorably in the cultural script of the good girl/bad girl. It is only when I analyzed these findings that I came to grasp fully the paradox at play—there are sluts out there, but none to be found among my research participants—as a mere reflection of my participants' in-vestment in hegemonic discourses of femininity, whiteness, and hetero-

sexuality. Had I been able to pin down this complex dynamic earlier in the research process, I may have attempted to challenge their essentialist beliefs about gender and sexual expression through clothing. This strategy would have served as a form of action, since we could have worked together on deconstructing patriarchal social categories that shape, limit, and govern girls' and women's sexuality.

Nonetheless, the analysis of mediated discourses about hypersexualization I have crafted decenters the authoritative voices of experts and draws attention to girls' experiences, on the one hand, and to the regulatory effects this mediated controversy has had on their daily lives, on the other. That is, the voices of my research participants feature centrally in my publications, as suggested by the ethics of representation (see Maynard 1994; Kitzinger and Wilkison 1996; Richardson 1997; Olesen 2005). This writing strategy is based on the premise of the epistemic privilege of situated and subjugated voices; its use has allowed me to emphasize the intersectional social categories at play—gender, age, class, race, sexual orientation, and ability—in the construction of hypersexualization as a social problem.

This feminist (standpoint) epistemology was instrumental in my capacity to build knowledge grounded in girls' accounts and experiences. From this point, I came to grasp the unexpected consequences that the discourse of hypersexualization—the policing of gender and heterosexuality in school settings through dress code reforms—had had thus far on the daily lives of my research participants. In effect, dress code reforms were experienced by the majority of my research participants as an unscripted policy of harassment enforced by teachers and principals. Dress codes and uniforms targeted mainly female students, and when they were deemed delinquent, they faced a series of consequences, ranging from an informal notice, to in-school forms of punishment (isolation, extra assignments, mandatory covering of their body with provided baggy sweaters), to banishment from school.

Critically Assessing My Commitment to the Politics of Girlhood Studies

A feminist theoretical framework was instrumental in making the centrality of the female body and sexuality visible to me in the controversy over hypersexualization in Quebec, shedding light on what then appeared to most to be a trivial topic. Even though my work has not resulted in any tangible social action or policy change thus far, it can be argued that foregrounding the political nature of the struggle—the

regulation of females' sexuality—is a legitimate form of feminist intervention. Furthermore, my call for carefully listening to the voices of females was congruent with the feminist politics of girlhood studies regarding girls' participation, their voices, and their empowerment.

However, if I reflect on my work only from the perspective of policy change (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2009) or structural change (Jiwani and Berman 2002), my assessment becomes more complicated and discomforting. What would have been the correct course of action according to these perspectives? For instance, would inciting girls to organize against the sexist implementation of dress code reforms have been a positive step towards action? Could I have made connections with school boards in order to use my (assumed) privileged position on the girls' behalf to address their concerns? Should I have organized a workshop on students' rights in order to foster my research participants' political agency with regard to school governance? If so, would this have put my research participants at risk of being stigmatized by teachers and school principals?

The politicization of the research process created by a commitment to tying research to action raises ethical dilemmas and questions of feasibility that are heightened by the age and status differences between the researcher and subjects in girlhood studies. As minors, my research participants could not be politically empowered the way adults could. Conducting research as a graduate student, a junior researcher, a senior professor, or a research assistant informs the work in totally different ways, each associated with different sets of opportunities and constraints that have to be taken into consideration when we are assessing ways to tie research to action. Such an awareness of our positionality is perhaps a strength that we can bring to our work, helping us to define what action and social change mean in specific locations, conjunctures, and times.

The "What's Next?" Step

There are two steps I see as being potentially helpful in envisioning ways to draw closer ties between research and action. The first step consists of adding a "What's next?" step into the research process, so that the incentive to take action is made integral to it, as in the following modified sequence: Theory → Research question(s) → Data → Coding → Interpretation → Conclusion(s) → *Modification of theory leading to a search for meaningful action(s)* → *What's next?*

Inserting this step into the research process is a powerful way to make accountability central to our work. It assumes that the purpose

of research goes beyond modifying theory by giving space to the goal of improving the lives of the girls with whom we work. Theory modification is not an end in itself, then, but a possible step towards action. Furthermore, this step can also help, when necessary, to link projects to one another to foster the development of research programs congruent with and accountable to a given community of girls.

I see the linking of projects in the field of girlhood studies as a valuable form of action geared towards social or policy change. My reflexive account has demonstrated that, for several reasons, it is not always possible or feasible to make a specific form of change happen during the course of one research project, especially when the change we seek to facilitate is the political empowerment of research participants who are assigned a subordinated position by the law. The "what's next?" step can ensure, nonetheless, that we do not lose track of this goal. However, there are forces working against the commitment to creating meaningful links between projects and to bringing about social and policy changes in the lives of girls. For example, as a masters and Ph.D. student, and as a postdoctoral fellow, it has been necessary for me to design new research projects while my older existing research has been still underway because of the way in which research grants are allocated in Canada: completing one before applying for another is not how it works.

The second step to tie research to action I propose is inspired by the significant contribution feminist geographers have made in feminist methodology over the last decades (Thien 2009). In order to place myself within the research process as an embodied subject, I suggest a literal understanding of the notion of the politics of place. I suggest that we remain aware not only of the power relationships embedded *in* the research process, but also *within* and *outside* of academia, to develop a clearer understanding of how contexts shape our research agendas and their possibilities (or constraints) for action and change. In this way, accountability will not be restricted to the power relations between the researcher and the researched; it will include a critical yet realistic examination of what taking action can mean within a specific research setting that includes the researcher's positionality and professional status.

Doing research as a graduate student, a research assistant, a junior faculty member, an activist, or a volunteer in a girl-centered non-profit organization shapes the researcher's location in different ways in terms of power, autonomy, access to research participants, access to material resources, and so on. Conducting work in poor rural areas in Canada is not the same as working in conflict zones or in so-called developing countries. The challenges, opportunities, and constraints differ by loca-

tion just as much as the needs of the communities of girls we study do, so the meaning we afford notions of social change and action has to fit the contextual location of the researcher and her chosen community of study.

Feminist research methodology often focuses on the research process and the power imbalance assumed between the researcher and subjects. The placing I am suggesting is meant to locate the multiple layers making up the context of a research project—the physical, social, and structural spaces in which we conduct our work. Thus this place we are talking about is not only related to geographical space; it also has social, political, institutional, personal, and symbolic dimensions. Furthermore, privilege and subordination are not fixed but fluid and context-dependent. If our work is geared towards change, we must be able to see or place ourselves, as embodied subjects, not only within the research process, but within the multiple networks of people, organizations, and institutions with which or within which we are working. Our position of power may sometimes shift from one place to another, and this has to be taken into consideration as well.

To conclude, the two steps described above are an invitation to break with the conventional representation of an abstracted research process from which the researcher is absent. I suggest a literal placing of our embodied selves within this research process so we can see ourselves in it so that we are not outside the process, but striving in our professional and personal lives to achieve social change through research and action. This placing is central to building new research paradigms since it can open new spaces and modes of intervention that are congruent with a feminist approach to accountability. I believe that thinking critically about the meaning of change and action in our work can increase our collective capacity to tie research to action in girlhood studies.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. A notable exception was the work done by the Balkishori Team of VACHA Women's Resource Center with Jackie Kirk in 2005.
2. This heated controversy—the mediated discussion that cannot be called a debate, as evidenced in my doctoral thesis (Caron 2009)—lasted for about five years (2001–2006) and has been echoed in other countries through concerns about the eroticization of childhood and the media sexualization of girls since the late 1990s.
3. Public discussions on the topic held that sexy clothing worn by female students polluted schools' learning environments since it was too distracting to (heterosexual) male students.

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8

Returns and Departures
through Girlhood

Memory-Work as an Approach to the Politics of Place

in Mother-Daughter Narratives

Teresa Strong-Wilson

This chapter combines an autobiographical with a biographical approach to a project of exploring what may be described as a *coming of age* relationship between a daughter and her mother, in the sense of a relationship coming into its own (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008). The chapter explores the mother-daughter relation (Grumet 1988) through the prism of the author's almost decade-long memory-work with her mother, Maggie, at a time when she was starting to experience memory loss. An auto/biographical approach considers the relationships between autobiography and biography (King 2004); one line of inquiry suggests that, in lieu of "metaboliz[ing] the story of the other" (Cavarero 2000: 91–92), an autobiographical self may wish to be told through the life of another. Clearly this is a delicate project. Central to mine was girlhood, specifically the idea of a productive return (a *coming of age* in the mother-daughter relationship) through a reappreciation of girlhood and the transition from girlhood to womanhood.

Emerging from the inquiry were certain principles that have guided the writing. First was Benjamin's (1988) notion of intersubjectivity, which argues for mutual recognition of the mother by the child, which is predicated on recognizing the mother as an entity separate from the identity of the child, and especially the daughter. As Benjamin also points out, the child typically metabolizes the mother. This chapter is also grounded in Giorgio's (2002) thinking around the potentially productive role of culture in mother-daughter narratives; in other words, the idea that womanhood (and therefore also girlhood) involves developing a shared sense of identity where that identity often involves place. In my relationship with my mother, that shared place was real (namely, Scotland) but was also largely imaginary (in the sense that our only referent to it was through story—stories heard from relatives,

stories remembered from childhood and reading fiction and non-fiction set in Scotland). Within a politics of place, though, this shared interest in place acted as a catalyst for a mother-daughter/woman-to-woman relationship coming of age, and where that belated journey involved a return to, and through, girlhood. I argue that such a coming of age is first and foremost an imagined relation, and more precisely, a matter (indeed, a project) of reimagining the past through the present and future.

The first part of the chapter sets the scene for the mother-daughter inquiry. The second part introduces my own narratives in the voice of Teresa, and composed over the last two decades, but essentially emanating from two different entry points in imagining girlhood and womanhood. The third part, in the voice of Maggie, experiments with my mother's voice, a voice very much informed by her girlhood. The final part explores the implications of the narratives for the role of girlhood within reimagining the politics of place in girls coming of age to be women.

The Suspended Grape

On Thursday evening, we were all there in the seniors' home: the lock-down facility where my mother resided. It was always a question of the degree to which my mom was suffering from Alzheimer's. On the occasion of our December visit (she passed away less than three months later), my mother was already attracting comical attention because of the white sock on her left hand. My mom often helped with the laundry and had clearly befriended a wayward sock, expending energy in putting it on and taking it off her hand, carefully inspecting it for folds and creases. The sock served multiple purposes, as became apparent, one of which was to wipe tables. We were seated in the common room and my mother began moving systematically around the table, wiping the edges. My father, meanwhile, tried to catch her eye and engage her in conversation. Just a few minutes before, she had been on his knee and small affectionate kisses had been exchanged. It happened that as she was polishing, my father suggested she have one of the green grapes that we had brought as a gift. Yes, she indicated. My father was always trying to encourage my mother to use her wits to solve problems so as to keep those synapses actively moving. After several attempts to tease a grape from the plastic Ziploc bag, he gave her one, nudging it into her mouth as she polished. She took it in slowly, then stopped, expelling it, then pulled it back in, pushed it out, in and out, like a child playing with its tongue, until the grape finally hung by a thin thread. Meanwhile, she continued moving around the table, polishing. We—myself, my two children of sixteen and fourteen, my older sister, my father—watched the grape with growing suspense. It began to dangle precariously. She continued to rub and polish, rub and polish, as if blissfully unaware of her audience while my father continued

to gently taunt and tease her, increasingly anxious about her intentions with respect to this grape, until he finally rushed over and caught it as it dropped. There was a chorus of laughter. She finally looked up at him directly as he went to sit down and gravely gave him a mock boxer's punch as if to say (as had been her practice over almost sixty years of marriage) "right in the sucker." Nothing wrong with her wits, was my thought.

Generations

Typically a daughter initiates narrative projects with (or, mostly, on) the mother (Giorgio 2002). In our case, it went both ways. In 1993, when my daughter was three years old, we gave her grandmother/my mother a gift. It was a hardcover book called *Generations: My Grandparents' Reflections* (Discovery Toys). The book contained prompts such as "Do you have a favorite grandparent memory?" and "What fads do you remember from when you were young?" and spaces in which to write the responses (see Figure 8.1). Little did we know that with the *Generations* book, my mother would initiate and sustain a systematic inquiry into family stories and origins. She was sixty-four at the time. My mother had always been interested in history, especially of the British Isles. She read both fiction and non-fiction. She particularly liked to read biographies of kings and queens. She was also an inveterate writer. What she
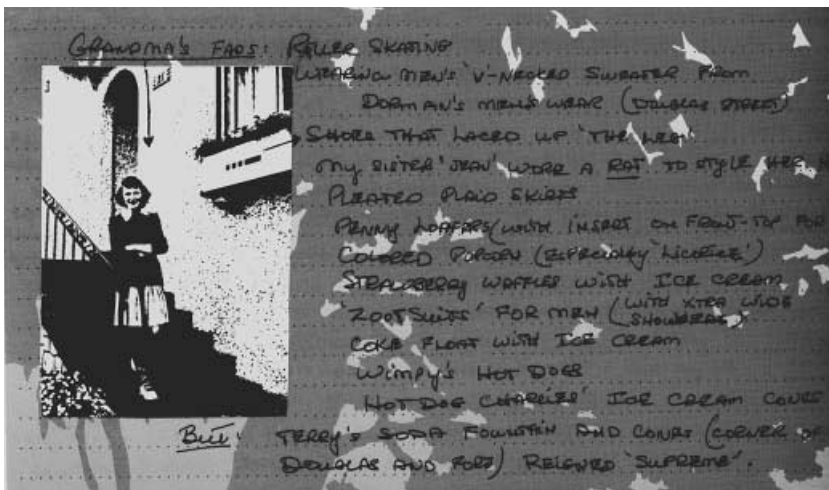
Figure 8.1. From *Generations: My Grandparents' Reflections.* Photo of my mother as a girl and her response to the question: "What fads do you remember from when you were young?"

wrote primarily were notes. Upon their house being sold, my father and I started to go through the things collected over the years. I found my mother's writing everywhere—in books, in magazines, on notepaper, clipped inside recipe books, in letters, in Christmas lists, on the backs of photographs, in kitchen drawers on papers neatly collected in small Ziploc baggies. Both of my parents were interested in memory, although my mom was a veritable student of the past. When my mother was passing away, I stayed with my father in his small apartment. He shared with me the little things that he missed, like the memory game they used to play on going to sleep. One would say a name of someone from the past and they would go back and forth, back and forth, trying to generate as many names and stories as possible connected to that person. My mother returned the *Generations* book to us almost a decade later, in 2000. It was filled to brimming with narrative anecdotes, family trees, photographs, newspaper clippings, and cultural history, especially on the Scottish side, but it had clearly been a collaborative effort involving my father. Its full significance was not appreciated until around 2002, after I began to write short autobiographical narratives in which my mom figured as a main character (discussed later).

The life history project did not formally begin until 2005 and consisted of interviews conducted over the phone and in person, which were audiotaped. In 2007, we also engaged in photo elicitation interviews, with my father, my mother, and I sitting at the kitchen table and my parents telling stories as we pored over the photos in their albums. I also kept a commonplace book in which I would note interview questions, transcribe tapes, write reflections, and collect various artifacts that had become connected to the project with my mother.

Sifting through the loose papers at the front and back of my commonplace book, I find a page from a Maxine Greene article, in which she talks about the importance of having a project: "We are trying to become what we are not yet by acting on perceived deficiency, or on perceived possibility." This is followed by a belated birthday card from a friend; pictured is a bouquet and a stubby writer's pencil, the one (writing project) being related to the other (life's bouquet). What drove the inquiry was a late meeting of my mother's and my inner selves. What I write about in this chapter I would have never known about my mother unless I had embarked on this project with her.

My mother died at the age of eighty-two. She entered a seniors' home in 2009, the first of three places, not including some time also spent on a hospital ward. Her decline had begun at home and became especially noticeable when she began to lose her capacity to communicate through speech, a stage of Alzheimer's identified by Shenk (2001).

During this period and until close to the end of her life in 2011, the family history work became a practice.

Teresa

For most of my life, I do not remember being close to my mother; in fact, I remember the opposite. It was a classic case of my not wanting to be trapped into being the woman that I thought my mother had become, and who I envisaged as the antithesis of what Heilbrun (1988) has called the feminist intellectual ideal. My mother has different memories—of herself, and of her relationship with me, especially when I was a young child and before I became conscious of being a girl (which is when our differences began). According to my mother's account, when I was young, we spent a lot of time together (see Figure 8.2), especially in literacy-related activities such as games and puzzles.

Figure 8.2. Picture of Teresa and Mom, with my mom's labeling of photo.

As a young girl, I have many positive memories of playing I-Spy on long road trips, these initiated by my mother. I also have memories of my mother, my father, and me playing cards on TV tables in the basement room and of watching figure skating championships on TV with my mother. There are several memories I have from when I was younger than ten.

The Sandbox

In our backyard, we had a small sandbox on the side of the yard, under the shade of the bushes. The next-door neighbors' kids, a German family, used to come over and we would make mud pies. My mother was a presence, someone watching over us as we played in the sun and the shade, and who eventually called us to come and sit on the steps and drink lemonade in plastic Tupperware glasses, and eat a cookie. This was when I was about three or four.

The Library

I remember going to the public library, which was located above the fireman's hall. We had to climb a lot of steps to reach it. I remember best the journey there, of my mother, myself, and my younger sister. I remember the little path to the library, a shortcut with green bushes on either side. I remember the heat and the dappled spaces of shade. I remember the magic of walking along what at the time seemed like a secret pathway leading to a highly desired destination.

Sewing

I remember accompanying my mother on her trips to buy material, sewing patterns, ribbons, or buttons. The few concrete steps leading to the basement door were shrouded in cool shade. A bell rang as we opened the door. Inside, it was even cooler. As my mother shopped, I listened to the thump, thump of the material as it was unrolled on the table and cut to precision. I never did learn to sew. My mother was an accomplished seamstress. But I did go through a period when I helped my mother with sewing, as she cut out the patterns and laid the thin paper on top of material distributed on the pool table and pinned the patterns to the fabric. I remember the ritual of Maxwell's instant coffee in mugs, with milk and three spoonfuls of sugar.

In these early memories (from which few photographs remain), I recognize my mother as presence, indirectly there and within reach, if needed; she is part of the fabric of my growing up, connected especially to those rituals like birthday celebrations and holidays around which

the curriculum of daily life is often organized (Grumet 1991): memories of birthday parties and a cake with green icing (I was born the day after St. Patrick's Day); memories of helping prepare the Halloween treats of mostly baked goods carefully wrapped in Saran wrapped portions; memories of Christmas and New Year's suppers and the plentifully laid dining room table, with its bread and sausage stuffing and, for dessert, hot Christmas pudding with white icing gently laced with rum; and the outlay of foods in the living room, from an assortment of various nuts and pickles, to the small white cupcakes filled with icing and topped with two delicate "butterfly wings" dusted with icing sugar. I remember my mother washing my hair in the kitchen sink. As a child, I owed my daily existence to a world whose parameters were created in whole or in part by my mother (as well as my father) but in which my narrative of myself has always been constructed around self-styled "moments of being" (Woolf 1978)—my inwardly generated reality. For instance, one of my most vivid memories of childhood/girlhood (apart from reading books; see Strong-Wilson 2006) is of hiding between the back wall of my mother's bedroom closet and her clothes, many shrouded in plastic wrap, as we kids played hide-and-seek. I knew that no one would dare to look for me there because I was in a place that was, strictly speaking, out of bounds for childhood games. And yet, I felt perfectly invisible and protected, mildly smothered by the heavy scent of my mother's perfumes and eventually needing to risk escape—but at the same time my choice of where to hide presaged my later contempt of my mother and all that about her that was symbolized by those perfumed clothes as I stood, pressed in— this combined with a deeply hidden desire to be more like her— as I strove to hide my own body from others, including myself (see Figure 8.3).

Figure 8.3. Swimming hole. Everyone else is pictured in a bathing suit. I (on the cusp of adolescence) am safely shrouded in a large bath towel.

My autobiographical narratives, written as a doctoral student, slipped out as easily and smoothly as water. The narra-

tives centered on my adolescent body and opposed my own awkwardly developing body with my mother's womanly one (or womanly garbed one). I use my intellect—and burgeoning body—as a weapon against her. The following excerpt was part of the teaching autobiography that I wrote for a graduate class.

> *[Tea] meant tea, coffee, cookies and cakes spread out on fluted fancy plates on top of crocheted doilies, and hot beverages served in Royal Doulton china cups with saucers. It's high English tea or rather high Scottish tea … My mother, slim and well-dressed, sat poised on the edges of chairs or couches, sipping her tea, while holding the saucer circumspectly so as to catch any wayward drops … I, on the other hand, inelegant, in no apparent need of dessert, luxuriated in the tasty treats then retired to a corner with a Nancy Drew mystery.* (Wilson 2000 in Strong-Wilson 2012)

Another of my stories recounted trying on clothes in a department store, my mother in the stall with me (Strong-Wilson 2012); I use third-person narrative.

> *She [Teresa] is partially unclothed. She is trying to pull on pants, some stretchy pants, and they're not budging, they're refusing to climb over the hills and valleys and troughs of her skin, which buckles and folds, as first she attempts the improbable and then cold hands intervene, painfully wrenching, tugging, bloodless tears falling on unrepentant flesh. Flesh touching flesh. Fleshes flinching. She is being corseted, and her prospects for marriage are becoming slimmer the more difficult it is to find an appropriate pair of stretchy pants to fit her. Her mother glares, her mouth a thin line. It's no use. Disgusted, she flashes angry advice: "Stop eating!" Her daughter's tears fall heavy and wet, plop, plop, and the sobbing infuriates her. "Just get dressed." All that year she wears ugly checkered pants, size large or extra large or maybe they're extra extra extra extra large (she flashes back) and her mother abides their presence, eyes averted* (Wilson 2001 in Strong-Wilson 2012).[1]

In "Old Narratives Break Apart" (Strong-Wilson 2012), I have expressed my distrust of these narratives; they are compelling pieces that ring true to the adolescent girl I remember, but I wonder now how complete they are. I also recall that the narratives were written at a time when I was going through separation and divorce. Narratives of girlhood—of the tensions experienced with my mother—often blended with those of my ex-husband, with one being seen as a segue into the other. I recently reflected that they came from a fierce place, full of emotions like anger, resentment, fear. They helped make sense of experiences that had long "lain" (Chambers 1998: 32) in me. Some stories were no doubt of a younger self narrating. The ones that featured my mom sprang from a real place but exorcised demons created by my adolescent imagination; she was a caricature, more a reflection

of what I perceived and failed to perceive than of what she truly was or may have been. They were stories that, in becoming public (on the page or screen), helped heal a part of me—stories that took care of me by running through me. And in running through me, they escaped. … I think at the time of writing, I misunderstood their real power, which was to be told and then forgotten, so as to create new space for myself, yet to be defined.

In my childhood album, which my mother composed (there is one for each of her three daughters), I am pictured as moving from babyhood to early then later adolescence, followed by adulthood. The chronology pictured is perfectly accurate; there are no obvious lapses. When I look at these photos, though, what I fail to see is the deep angst—and anger—that informs my "department store" narrative and that I also remember; it is as if my adolescent coming of age is absent, accompanied by no corresponding visual image of me in horrible checkered pants. I now see only a plumpish young girl growing into a young woman. I went on a self-administered diet and exercise program early in high school (see hands on hips approach in Figure 8.4), and lost weight that

Figure 8.4. Teresa in grade eleven.

I may have struggled to keep off but did not gain back until I became pregnant, when I also remember my mother commenting after my second pregnancy on the weight I had gained. Such comments stuck—and had the same effect as they had had when I was ten: I read more and I did anything but stop eating. Looking back, my mother and I clearly needed to invent a different language and story for our relationship. Any loss in weight, though, had not resulted in a closer relationship with my mother. There are several photographs from my late teens and into my twenties in which my mother and I are in the same physical space but are clearly miles apart. I am often turned away from her.

When they retired, my parents lived in a little house in a trailer park in Cobble Hill, British Columbia.[2] Some of my fondest memories are of visiting my parents in this place during the 1990s, when I myself was married and had young children and my mother was primarily a grandmother. In July 2012, after my parents' passing, I returned to the area, staying with a close family friend of my parents. In a notebook, I wrote cryptic notes about the trip: "Suffusion of memory … Feeling as if childhood spent there (second childhood through kids/parents' retirement years)." It is as if in my relationship with my mother, I have been moving back in memory to a time when I could reimagine myself as a girl—and my mother as a girl.

My mother's journey has also been one towards the past. My parents left Cobble Hill for Victoria, where they had lived first in a Lions Club retirement home (my father had long been a member of the Lions Club) but then on my mother's instigation, moved to an apartment building in James Bay.[3] James Bay, a small community lying between the Parliament Buildings and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, is a beautiful location, right beside the ocean. Maggie grew up there in the 1930s. At that time, it was populated by immigrants seeking a new life and with few means at their disposal. My mother's family moved four times as her parents relocated from one rented home to another, staying in each place for six to seven years. Some of my mother's fondest memories as a girl are of this time and place. On moving back several decades later, she found that it was not the same place she had remembered. My mother's onset of dementia dates from this time and place, when she was least happy in the place of her growing up. Her brother also passed away. My mother was in her early seventies. My parents were very proud people who believed in self-reliance and dependence on one another as a married couple. My father had also had past experiences of visiting a co-worker on a psychiatric ward, as well as memories of caring for his father, who died of pancreatic cancer in a "poor man's" hospice, and so

was terrified of my mom being taken away and confined in some kind of institution. Eventually, around 2002, he poured out the story of my mom's recent erratic behaviors and upon being briefed, I could then see her. I was in my mid-forties. I was expecting to see someone who was frail and diminished. The effect on me and on our relationship of that meeting was striking.

> *When Maggie came up my stairs, her green eyes were deep translucent pools. Her eyes, welling with tears, shone in the darkness. The tears colored her vision and mine as well. I was seeing this woman as if for the first time. Her self, resplendent, blazed through me. Veils of shadows, lingering from the past, fell away. My father waited patiently in the car. My mother didn't come in the house but stayed in the porch with me. We hugged as if we had been forcibly separated for a long time and she had finally been able to escape and make her way back.*

The mother, Benjamin points out, "is external reality—but she is rarely regarded as another subject with a purpose apart from her existence for her child. … Yet the real mother is not simply an object for her child's demands; she is, in fact, another subject whose independent center must be outside her child if she is to grant him the recognition he seeks" (1988: 23–24). The next part of this chapter tries to explore Maggie as "subject" and especially as girl entering into young womanhood, and in which Maggie speaks in "her own" voice about her life and about her mother whose name was Peggy.

Maggie

Alec and Peggy

My parents came from the Scottish Lowlands. My father, Alec, was born in Cockenzie, where he grew up and which at the time (the late 1800s) was a small but thriving fishing village close to the Firth of Forth. He had his own boat and used to sell fish door to door. As a young man, he moved to Kirkaldy, a bustling town on the opposite side of the bay. It was there that, living on Links Street, he met my mom, Peggy, whose family was living 'back o' the toon' on Overton, close to the Italian ice cream place, probably in one of the council houses built for workers. At one time, my mom worked in one of the linen factories but then she worked in people's houses. My dad was selling his fish door to door. My mom would be in the kitchen or making lace. Whenever the women could see my dad coming to the door, they would run to her and say, "There he is! There he is! Go open the door!"

Growing up in James Bay

I loved playing by the water in James Bay. Our house was only a short distance from Dallas Road: a simple two-story structure. I slept upstairs with my two sisters. At night, I would huddle under the covers for warmth, heated bricks wrapped in towels by my bare feet. My father worked in the Parliament Build-ings, uptown, but only a few short blocks away. If my window had not been facing the strait, the B.C. Government would have been my backyard neighbor. My father was a janitor there. A small, wiry man, he would walk to work in the wee hours of the morning, his pockets stuffed with rocks to keep the dogs away. In his heart, he was a fisherman. When not at work, he could be found in his garden or down at the beach where he would collect firewood or take his small rowboat along the coastline. I liked to help my father. Sometimes I collected rocks. I also collected shells. I liked to rest my warm feet in the cool waves. The only frightening time of growing up in James Bay was when our windows had to be covered in black paper. I would try to sleep in the total darkness, waiting for the Japanese bombers that would surely come to invade the still night. My sister loved to sew; she stayed inside and made doll clothes. I liked to play baseball and basketball. I loved to be outside. When we kids played "Run Sheep Run," one person stayed to count at the telephone pole and we would run for blocks and blocks, all around the Bay.

Hard Times

Your great-grandfather was killed in the quarry in Kirkaldy. That was in 1925. Gran had three boys and four girls. We always called her Gran. I loved her Scottish brogue. And like her, I have a sentimental attachment to Scotland and to things Scottish: watching Scottish dancing; hearing the bagpipes and kettle drums. She used to go dance at the Caledonia downtown on the corner of Yates and Broad. Then go for fish 'n' chips across the street. But those were tough times, coming here to Canada, finding jobs, finding a place to live. At one point, my Gran and her kids lived with our family; there were sixteen of us in the house. My sister was born just before boarding the boat to come here. They say she was so small she had to be kept in a shoebox in a warming oven. My Gran had seven kids. My mom had four who survived. We could always tell when my mom was pregnant. She would faint. One day when we came home from school, we found her out cold on the floor. It was hard in those days. You had to heat your iron on the stove. Heat hot bricks for your feet at bedtime. Because the houses were cold—none of them had furnaces, except people who had money—and you couldn't afford the heat. We didn't have money. I used to sit with my mom in the hallway, near the stove and knit. She had bad arthritis from the age of thirty-nine; they say, from having a wet sock on her knees while

she peeled potatoes when she used to work at the fish 'n' chips shop. When we lived on Oswego, we didn't use the living room because my parents rented it out. Us kids had to wait for Mr. Donaldson to get out of the bathroom to get ready for school. But it was a good life, with lots of fun and laughter.

Becoming Independent

I loved school. I used to babysit after school and earn a bit of money to buy material to sew clothes. My older sister was an excellent seamstress. I liked the tartans best. For my first job, I got called to the principal's office. I had to go downtown to the Parliament Buildings. It was raining the day I went. I put on my kerchief, as girls did in those days. I went for the interview. My future boss said, go home and fix your hair. So I did. I went back after lunch and I was hired. I never had to look for a job; jobs came to me. And I liked to work. I'm reserved like my mom. She was the glue that held our family together. I was shy, too, but more independent, which I was glad of.

Sifting further through the loose pagination of the commonplace book, I (Teresa) find handwritten quotations from an old-fashioned Victorian advice book (originally published in the late 1800s) called *What a Young Woman Ought to Know,* by a Mrs. Mary Wood-Allen. When I found this book in a bazaar, certain passages seemed to echo my mother's stories on how my father courted her, her movement from young girl to young woman in love but keeping some of her feelings in reserve, to keep my father guessing. "Refuse to be flattered, to be played with, to be treated as a female, but insist on being treated as a woman with intelligence." It was a practice that late in her life, I saw her using with my father—*still* using since it was clearly one that likely escaped my notice, given the chip on my shoulder that I regularly carried for years when it came to anything connected to my mother. It was with some admiration late in life that I observed these playful exchanges that established my parents as separate, yet connected, selves. Again, Maggie:

Maggie and Art

It was our first Christmas since going together. Art stood grinning from ear to ear. There in the middle of my parents' living room stood a chimney. My parents were as perplexed as I was. For the life of me, I couldn't figure out what it was. He had the present put together like a chimney. I don't know where he found that wrapping paper! And it was quite a large present. I knew it couldn't be a ring. "Open it," he encouraged me, smiling all the while. So I opened it and inside I found a set of suitcases: a large bag and a smaller one. They were

beautifully made, with a brick-like color and pattern on the outside, stitched carefully around the edges, and on the inside, filled with deep wine-colored material, with customized places with a hanger for me to put my slacks without them getting creased. I just about fell over. "You haven't travelled anywhere yet," Art announced. I guess I was about to. And it was then I understood that he had expectations of staying together.

The Alzheimer's had progressed to the point where walking was becoming an issue. My mother's sleep patterns also became erratic. For days on end, she would be awake all night, walking the hallways. Run, sheep, run. Her knees would sometimes buckle and then she would fall. We tried a bike helmet to at least protect her head. She saw other residents living in their wheelchairs. The staff talked about wheelchairs within earshot of my mom. They took her for a practice run. "What if her medication is causing her to lose her balance," asked my father. As soon as her mind was clear, she refused to eat and let it be known by her actions that she had chosen the ending to her own story.

Returns and Departures

Our lives are shaped by the stories we choose to tell about them and by the stories we choose to live. Giorgio, in "renegotiating" how the relation between mothers and daughters is written, points out that the maternal figure is often "a metaphor of origins, encompassing not only kinship but also race, ethnicity, and language" (2002: 32). For me, it became my mother. For my mother, it was her grandmother, with her Scottish brogue and Scottish ways. We gave my mom the *Generations* book in 1993. By 1994, Maggie was the proud owner of MacGregor's *Scotland: An Intimate Portrait,* in which I later found a stapled sheaf of notes, one of which lists pages, starting at page two. As I looked up each page, I realized that my mom was creating an itinerary, for in and among his observations on Scottish life, MacGregor recommended places to visit. My parents were supposed to travel to Scotland—they had made their reservations on a cruise that would travel around the islands—but it was abruptly canceled upon their hearing of foot-and-mouth disease. All of her married life, she had been Marge (Margaret). Around 1994, she asserted herself as Maggie (see Figure 8.5), the name of a younger self, a girl who imagined herself as being from the (Scottish) Isles and deeply connected to her Scottish roots.

From the time I was young, I also wanted to visit Scotland; this desire persisted even during the time when I was not close to my mother. We

had a small collection of books in the house. Among these was a set of *Reader's Digest*, kept on a high shelf in the living room, separate from the encyclopedias in the hallway. When I was in my early teens, I read a story set in Scotland about a girl with second sight. The image of Scotland as a place of castles, moors, green pastures, and visionaries captured my imagination. My mother and I were both caught in a nostalgic prism of a young girl's longing to "go home" and where home, imaginatively, meant Scotland.

However, the relationship between our Scotland project and our mother-daughter relation-

Figure 8.5. Maggie's book stamp in MacGregor's *Scotland.*

ship is much more complex than may seem at first glance. I am persuaded that our coming of age as two connected women occurred through a return first and separately to who we first imagined we were. This imagined self would have first appeared in girlhood—in my mother's growing up by the water in James Bay and in her curious return to self through her dementia, as if she had forgotten who she was then remembered and was holding for dear life to this memory, and in my sheltered existence in the suburbs which is remembered primarily for my dwelling in books and in reading (see Strong-Wilson 2006), a past dream that I saw reinvigorated with my decision to complete my doctorate and to which my mother's presence became linked through my developing interest in memory. This moment of connection between my mother and me happened at the top of some stairs, and it happened and it happened again and again in deep tender moments of genuine enjoyment in one another's company over the course of my mother's and my life history project together, and until the end of her life.

Mutual recognition, Benjamin (1988) suggests, provides the basis for intersubjectivity—in Giorgio's (2002) formulation, for mothers' and daughters' conscious reappropriation of their (potential) connection. Perhaps, Radstone (2010) also suggests, a productive nostalgia can conceive of home as a place of departure rather than of regret. For my mother and me, our common project around place(s) marked a departure that also signified a return, to ourselves as young girls first imag-

ining ourselves in the world *and through this memory-work, re-imagining one another,* as Maggie and Teresa. Our dreams, though they may have involved many things, shared at their core a realization of the important *place* in the world of love and mutual recognition in our coming of age.

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Notes

1. Short excerpts from this writing have appeared in Wilson and Oberg (2002). Also, my published writings up to 2003 appear under the name Wilson; after 2003, under Strong-Wilson.
2. Cobble Hill, populated by close to 2,000 people, is a small rural community located approximately forty-five kilometers north of Victoria on British Columbia's retirement mecca, Vancouver Island.
3. James Bay is located on the south side of Victoria's Inner Harbor, behind the Parliament Buildings and Victoria's inner core and main tourist attractions (e.g., the Empress Hotel, the Royal B.C. Museum, First Peoples House). It is now a residential neighborhood of high density and prime real estate.

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9

GIRLS ACTION NETWORK

Reflecting on Systems Change through the Politics of Place

Tatiana Fraser, Nisha Sajnani, Alyssa Louw, and Stephanie Austin

In this chapter, we engage in a reflexive process of studying an organization for girls with which we have all been involved as adult women. While engaging in a reflexive exercise, we ask the following questions: What can we learn about networks as vehicles for change? What have we learned from facilitating a diverse network, and how have we come to know this? Where does this process take us?

This chapter has two main sections. First, it presents the theoretical frameworks that have informed the growth, theory of change, and impact of the Girls Action Foundation (GAF)[1] and the Girls Action Network (GAN).[2] The second section identifies politics of place within the network and reflects on what has been learned through practice, in order to better understand how diverse networks can act as vehicles for social change. By analyzing the results of a recent evaluation (Fraser et al. 2013a) of the network alongside focus group discussions with Girls Action staff, we identify key issues and provide direction for moving forward. Our goal is to inform network theory and practice as well as to share knowledge with other girlhood scholars working to effect systems change in girls' lives.

Looking Back to Look Forward

We come to this point of reflection through different kinds of involvement with GAF. Tatiana Fraser and Stephanie Austin co-founded the organization in 1995; Tatiana continued on as Executive Director until 2011, and Stephanie serves as Chair of the Board of Directors. Nisha Sajnani has played a central role in developing Girls Action Foundation training curricula and facilitating annual retreats with network members since 2003, while Alyssa Louw more recently became involved in 2012 as a community researcher. In 2013, after ten years of developing

the network, we wanted to evaluate its impact to gather insight into how we should move forward.

A Brief History

GAF (girlsactionfoundation.ca) creates and supports popular education programs for girls and young women through a flexible, responsive network model. The following are the organization's major milestones:

1995. Stephanie Austin, Tatiana Fraser, and Willow Scoble co-founded POWER Camp. After noticing a gap in violence prevention, health promotion, and leadership education for girls, they developed a local program in Ottawa that combined fun, arts-based activities with feminist values, and pedagogical approaches that address issues faced by girls.

2001. Following requests to borrow the model for similar initiatives, POWER Camp met with ten local programs from across Canada to explore how best to expand and advance grassroots work for girls. The organizers started to think strategically by asking the following questions: How do you seed girls' programs, share a complex approach to supporting girls, and respect the diversity of communities and their need for programs that respond to local contexts? How can we scale up the approach while supporting and respecting local contexts, leadership, and expertise? From this, an informal, diverse, and loosely structured network began to form.

2003. POWER Camp National was launched, and, in partnership with Concordia and McGill Universities, the first Canadian National Girlhood conference, entitled Transforming Spaces: Girlhood, Agency and Change, took place. The launch provided the occasion for the first annual retreat for national network members, which became an anchor for the network by facilitating face-to-face learning and exchange.

2005. An annual National Day of Action was launched, as a means of co-ordinating and creating action-oriented projects to raise awareness about issues facing girls and their communities.

2007. The organization initiated Amplify, a national girls training program where cohorts of twenty organizations come together shortly before a retreat for intensive four-day training on the design and delivery of popular education programs for girls. Network members requested regional meetings during the year, which became known as

Zoom gatherings, organized in cities across Canada with help from the national office.

2008. Noticing a persistent lack of resources supporting young women's leadership, the Girls Action Foundation launched Elle, a national leadership training program.

2009. POWER Camp National changes its name to the Girls Action Foundation.

2013. Ten years after the first retreat, the network had grown to engage over 350 individuals and organizations. The annual Amplify and Elle training programs and regional Zoom gatherings continued, while the Girls Action national office developed web tools including newsletters, social media, a website, blogs, and webinars to support exchanges between network members.

The Philosophy behind GAF

GAF programs are informed by integrated feminist analysis in that the challenges girls face are understood in relation to the social structures and intersecting systems of power and control that influence them. The programs do not see young women as passive recipients of knowledge but instead situate them as experts in their own lives, able to effect change through collaborative, creative, and differentiated action. They aim to support girls and those who work with them to identify and address the internalized (e.g. self-harm), relational (e.g. bullying, dating violence), and systemic violence (e.g. poverty, racism, sexism) in girls' lives and communities (Berman and Jiwani 2002). Leadership skills, media literacy, sexual health, and violence prevention are fostered through all-girl spaces, which offer resources and encouragement for girls to be agents of change in their own social and community networks.

GAN is comprised of organizations that share these values and support and work with girls and young women across the country:

- 87 percent of network members work with girls in low-income neighborhoods
- 40 percent of members have significant participation from Aboriginal girls
- 45 percent work with racialized girls and young women
- 19 percent work in northern or rural communities
- 24 percent work with LGBTQ communities

Network members focus on a diverse range of issues. However, the network creates an integrated web to foster knowledge, resource sharing, collaboration, and new initiatives. This community of practice thrives on peer learning across diverse communities and has created numerous skill- and capacity-building opportunities. But it is also a community of influence in that the network shapes the national office's focus. As the network has grown, our national programs, advocacy, and research efforts have been shaped by the issues around which network members' energies seemed to bubble and cluster.

Key Theories and Models that Inform the Network

Complexity Theory

GAN's early form took direction from several network models. For example, we deployed a model inspired by complexity theory (Zimmerman et al. 1998), which emphasizes using minimum specifications (*min specs*), the fewest requirements necessary to define something. Keeping min specs in mind allowed us to identify the key principles that would seed girls programs: popular education (Freire 1970) wherein learning is emergent, collaborative, and action-oriented with a focus on challenging unequal power relations; an integrated feminist analysis that takes into account how girls' and young women's lives are informed by multiple systems of power and control; and an asset-based strategy that values the strengths of girls and their communities rather than focusing only on their deficiencies and challenges. This network model resonated with the feminist values inherent in our work by challenging traditional hierarchical models of scaling up. Instead, we chose to scale up *and* scale deep by valuing local knowledge, leadership, and diverse forms of expertise while keeping intact our min specs. We felt that this approach to movement-building would allow communities to engage and collaborate without falling prone to the traps of national-level identity politics or the limitations of traditional organizing structures.

Social Network Theory

GAN is also informed by social network theory; specifically, it is influenced by current theory, which differs from traditional paradigms in a number of meaningful ways. Broadly speaking, current theory conceives of networks as clusters of mutually beneficial relationships between social entities (individuals, organizations) that are interdependent, that

are bottom-up, and that emerge through mutually shared goals (see Wheatley and Frieze 2006; Christensen et al. 2006). In contrast, traditional network theory maps out hierarchical structures, metrics, and the roles of social entities within a network (Wasserman and Faust 1994; Borgatti and Foster 2003). Whereas traditional theories tend to produce linear, mechanistic descriptions of network behavior, newer theories focus on networks' emergent, self-organizing properties. Moore and Westley describe the qualities of these newer models.

> Most generally, networks are considered to be a mode of coordination characterized by integration across vertical, horizontal, and spatial boundaries. They are decentralized, flexible, and self-adaptive structures that feature multi-directional relationships and rely on norms of trust and reciprocity. Constituent units retain their individual autonomy but participate in processes that affect the network as a whole. Social networks are a form of social organization defined by the patterns of vertical and horizontal relationships, or 'ties.' Social networks consist of strong ties, or 'bonding' relationships and weak ties, known as 'bridging' relationships, as described by authors such as Granovetter (1973), Putnam (2000), Newman and Dale (2005). The ties can be undirectional or directional (2011: 5).

Research on the ties of these structural patterns shows several different network topologies, including star-shaped networks, small-world networks, and scale-free networks (Moore and Westley 2011). Considered structurally, the ties that form GAN resemble a multiple-hub small-world pattern.

Lifecycle of Emergence

Another idea that we have drawn on is Wheatley and Frieze's (2006) notion of a lifecycle of emergence, described as a three-stage process. The first stage involves bringing together networks of like-minded people based on mutual self-interest and characterized by fluid membership, depending on the personal gains and losses of members. Communities of practice develop in the second stage; they share resources, concern for one another, and a commitment to advancing their field. Many new ideas are generated and implemented during this period. Stage three is characterized by the emergence of systems of influence. This phase occurs spontaneously, and, as Wheatley and Frieze note, it is impossible to map how these systems emerge. At this point, they explain, policy and funding debates often involve innovative network members who may have been originally ignored, and the new practices they recommend become the norm. The lifecycle of the emergence model offers

a clear and detailed description of how networks can transform small community initiatives into global systems of influence. This model is of particular importance to GAN now as members consider how their collective practices have given it form.

Scaling Out, Scaling Up, and Adapting to Change

Westley et al. (2011) address how non-profit organizations can expand their influence on social structures by scaling out (replicating and disseminating innovations) and scaling up (addressing larger institutional root problems). Moore and Westley (2011) expand on this, emphasizing that networks need diversity in order to effect systems change while sustaining strong bonds that support trust and reciprocity. That is, they need to recognize that different phases of adaptive cycles require different structures. The challenges lie in knowing who is in the network, understanding the nature of those relationships, determining whether these connections offer resources, and identifying ways to leverage those resources.

Moore and Westley emphasize the importance of agency and institutional entrepreneurs (those who help to transform a system) and the skills required by networks to support innovation. These include pattern generation, relationship building and brokering, knowledge and resource brokering, and recharging the network. This is the role that the GAF national office plays—discerning larger, emerging patterns and themes, making connections between members to maximize resources and opportunities, and convening gatherings to facilitate assessments of the network's identity and direction.

Girls Action Theory of Change: Network Model and Systemic Change

Systemic social change is at the heart of our change theory. While GAN's programs serve as tools for girls' empowerment to create social change, keeping an eye on the bigger picture allows the network to stay connected to systemic issues facing girls and young women. The national office supports the network by providing opportunities to convene and carry out research to help members to make connections between the challenges faced by their participants, such as girls' lack of self-confidence, and the systemic inequalities related to gender, race, class, and other axes of social difference. The process of reframing and politicizing issues through discussion and critical thinking with girls creates opportunities for them to break out of isolation, to gain knowledge and tools, to build communities, and to take action for change that is mean-

ingful to them. This approach encourages girls to locate their experiential realities within a broader sociopolitical context.

Taken together, these theories contributed to the articulation of our own theory of change, depicted in Figure 9.1. The GAF *Theory of Change* (2013d) sets out multilevel strategies across local girls' programs, young women's leadership initiatives, and in the network to maximize the exchange of knowledge. This multi-pronged approach both supports a community of practice and aims to influence systems change. The GAF theory of change cites systemic change as a key objective, as described on our website:

> We believe that individual and/or collective social action can lead to social change, which has the potential to create a socially just world. Our approach to social justice is context-specific: it develops and advocates for alternatives grounded in young women's realities. In working towards social justice, the Girls Action approach promotes transformative change directed towards altering existing social structures and frameworks.

Evaluating and articulating this impact has been a challenge over the years, and this must continue to be refined, clarified, and strengthened. Evidence is easier to measure when one is dealing with linear change models and quantitative data, but GAF's approach understands that
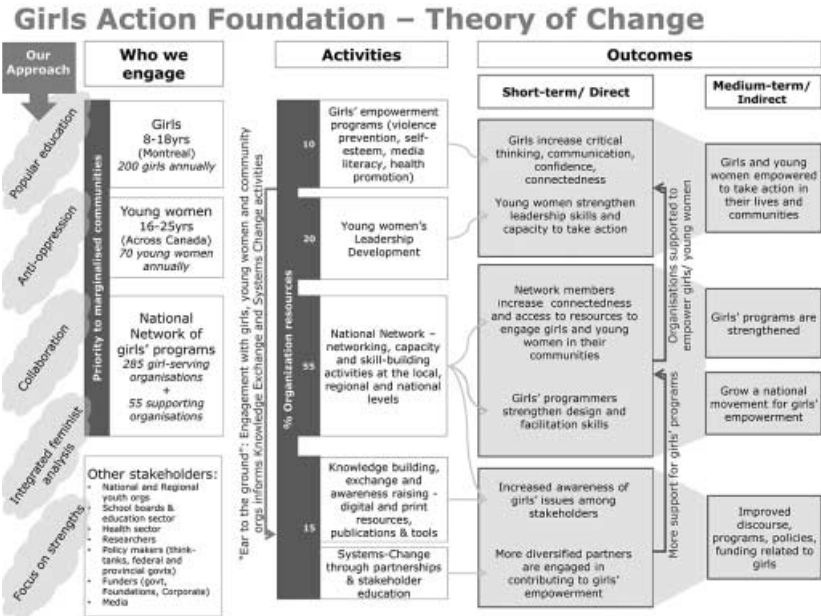
Figure 9.1. Girls Action Foundation's Theory of Change.

girls' realities are complex, and we have tried to take this into consideration in our programming and theory of change. When asked what impact the network has had, one member responded that

> it is creating leaders. These girls and what they learned at the girls group impact their families, their peers and the community at large. These are girls that are now well-versed in their rights, healthy relationships, conflict resolutions skills, and communication skills. These skills will benefit the entire community—especially considering it is a small/isolated community, rampant with violence against women. Strong girls and strong female leaders is exactly what is needed. Also, through the program they are gaining social activism skills, which they can access within themselves later when they need it. … When girls are told they have a voice and are given spaces where they can learn about themselves and important issues in the community and feel empowered, they can create change directly in the community by speaking up and using their voice. … Educating the community on the issues they face, standing up for themselves against violence against them, sharing their voice and supporting projects and programs as peer leader and educator (GAF 2013a).

In 2013, we conducted an evaluation of the change theory and the national network. We wanted to evaluate the impact of our work as well as gain insight into the members' perception of the network and future priorities. The evaluation involved a document review, focus groups, interviews, and a survey. The results of this evaluation gave us insight into the life, impact, and possible future of the national network.

The evaluation found that, overall, there was alignment between the outcomes described in GAF's theory of change and those reported in its programs, but there is still work to be done to advance understanding of systems change. How do we measure the ripple effects created when a girls group empowers girls towards community action? It is not as simple as measuring a change in policy. What policy are we trying to change—if any? Systemic change takes time, and we lack traditional metrics and indicators that clearly express change at that level.

It is also unclear whether the network understands itself as becoming more than a community of practice—that is, whether it is emerging as a system of influence (Wheatley and Frieze 2006). During staff focus groups, the team debated whether the network is a system of influence or if it facilitates learning that supports action at a local level among members: "The network is not really a movement; it's a community of practice. It's a place to build relationships, to share and help. But a movement, that means taking action, moving forward and advocating for something, and I don't see the network as doing something like that. I don't see it doing that unless we change the structure" (GAF 2013a).

According to evaluation survey responses, network members overwhelmingly perceive the network to be a community of practice. Respondents replied that they were very satisfied with the network in the following areas: (1) connecting to a community across Canada; (2) sharing financial resources with members; (3) strengthening local girls' programs; (4) fostering the exchange of skills and peer support; and (5) raising awareness of girls' issues by providing information, publications, and resources. These indicators speak to the network's standing as a flourishing community of practice (Wheatley and Frieze 2006). However, looking forward, both members and staff articulate priorities that reflect the transition from community of practice to a community of influence. Priorities include:

> Looking at systemic change. Teaching young girls about political systems, not necessarily so that they can go into politics but so that they understand how things work in a capitalist patriarchal system so that they can decide how they want to engage with it.

> In five years, the network is a key player in the government consultation on policies that affect girls.

> I would like to see the national network be able to respond to changing political contexts. To become a pressure group that influences policy—only with necessary resources.

> Policies of immigration & refugee, connections between indigenous and newcomers, stronger stance on tolerance of racism and homophobia.

> Where government allocates money especially towards young girls and their future (GAF 2013a).

The evaluation also indicated that members were highly supportive of activities that would enable the network to emerge or strengthen as a system of influence. Examples included strengthening collaboration between researchers and programmers, and building campaigns to effect systems change.

Politics of Place: Reflections on the Practice of Learning across Communities

How do the politics of place play out in the GAF national network, and how do the politics of place strengthen our efforts for systems change? What can we learn about networks influencing change—from the lived experience and dynamics created through a politics of place? As noted above, in theory, networks need diversity in order to effect

systems change while sustaining strong bonds that support trust and reciprocity. What does this look like in practice? The politics of place are alive and key to the engagement of the network given that members are place-based spaces and programs that engage girls on a local level rather than an interconnected web directly engaging girls across the country.

The growing interest in girls' well-being is largely defined by a discourse that is reactionary, panicked, individualistic, and based on protecting the morality of white middle- to upper-class girls (Currie et al. 2009: 33). The network continually reflects critically on the question of *which* girls we are talking about when we talk about girls. GAN is committed to engaging with diverse realities through a network model that breaks down the narrow definitions that society projects onto girls about what it means to be a girl. Racialized girls, Indigenous girls, and newcomer girls are often rendered invisible in the broader societal conversations that take up girl issues. These dominant conversations tend to focus on individualizing issues like body image, self-harm, self-esteem, and confidence. Within these frames, girls are often seen as problems to be fixed rather than agents of change, and broader social contexts are not named. Girls who are situated differently based on class, race, and sexual identity are also held up to dominant social norms that then either erase their experiences or frame these girls as being at risk and in need of intervention. Critical race theory, Indigenous feminism, and an intersectional analysis are examples of frameworks that recenter the dominant discourse and offer tools for the network members to engage the politics of place within the life of the national network. From a practical perspective, this means starting where girls are at, and locating their experiences within broader social and political contexts.

The evaluation revealed that some members experienced barriers to a fuller engagement in the network, namely, insufficient time and money, as well as the problem of physical distance, especially for those living in remote and rural areas. The practical challenges of time, money, space, and meaningful communication have an impact on engagement. Girls' programs and spaces face a constant challenge of underfunding and lack of infrastructure support. For marginalized communities this challenge is exacerbated. Communities organizing with youth-led, informal approaches, or social justice advocacy face challenges in sustaining their work. The politics of place is a constant dynamic in GAN's work, and these tensions are addressed in a number of ways.

The network, as a community of practice and as an emerging community of influence, aims to support girls' empowerment in diverse contexts. GAF has sought to do this in a number of ways, while keeping

in mind the challenges members have reported as potential barriers to engagement.

Reflecting on Learning: Creating Conditions to Learn across Difference

Recognizing the Value of a Diverse Network

Building a diverse network requires intention and commitment. However, we firmly believe that the social conditions affecting girls and women across the country will not change unless they are met with the ingenuity and integrity that a diverse network offers. We have learned through experience that we must consider carefully *who* we engage in the network's leadership. All GAF activities strongly emphasize outreach, and there is a focus on securing funding to subsidize travel to ensure engagement from communities across Canada. Commitment to a diverse network is ongoing, requiring consistent efforts to reach new and emerging groups to understand what is happening at the grassroots level. The national office is considerate of this and has developed criteria to elicit participation from communities based on gaps in representation. We have learned that outreach and relationship-building are constant activities, ones that require evaluation and tracking to ensure that the network is consciously and intentionally diverse.

At the annual national retreat, girls and women come from under-resourced urban and rural areas, Aboriginal communities, large centers, and privileged neighborhoods from across Canada. GAF tries to reach out to girls and young women who are newcomers and racialized, and to communities. Our recent evaluation (Girls Action Foundation 2013a) of the network revealed that these kinds of activities, where diverse practitioners are brought together, result in an enthusiastic sharing of resources, critical dialogue, and practices that then travel back to local communities. Program evaluations from the retreat indicate that these gatherings advanced members' understanding of social justice issues affecting girls and young women. Here are a few examples of what members had to say about the annual national retreat.

> I learned a lot about different approaches, and the geographical and socio-cultural forces that shape the ways different people resist. Using what you have, what you know. Being from northern Canada, I can relate, as I was doing work to eradicate oppression before I had any sense of what it meant to go through anti oppression training or what consensus even is.

> One girl I talked to quite a bit because she came to my anti-bullying workshop and I got some honest feedback—"I don't know if that would

work with racial violence." I realized I need to look at different kinds of violence to make my workshops more relevant.

I learned many things about strategies and approaches to girls groups, I went deeper in my reflections of class, gender and especially racial issues, and most of all you gave me all the powerful energy and motivation for my projects.

Collaborative Feminist Pedagogy

The network is a learning ground for creating relationships across differences to move past the identity politics that have challenged movement-building. As our website notes,

> [a]n integrated feminist analysis recognizes and takes into account the multiple and intersecting impacts of policies and practices on different groups of women because of their race, class, ability, sexuality, gender identity, religion, culture, refugee or immigrant status, or other status. This framework recognizes that girls' and women's experiences of life occur in multiple and compounding spheres. Employing this analysis from a self-reflexive position, the Girls Action approach envisions building solidarities with communities and young women. Only by recognizing the differing locations and varying histories of individuals can we begin to build relationships and mobilize for social change together (n.d.).

The feminism espoused by GAF has evolved in relation to those involved. For example, in the recent evaluation, one member noted that she wanted "to see the national network provide spaces for us to connect and share resources but to do it in a way that supports and recognizes the very specific and complete needs of racialized, indigenous, queer and trans girls/women/people." This perspective had been voiced before, resulting in changes to workshop content to include sessions on colonialism and its impacts with special attention to indigenous communities, being in and supporting transgendered realities, and working with and for newcomers.

The network has been consistent in its adherence to one of the earliest feminist slogans that the personal is political, and the imperative of its expression in popular education, such as that espoused by Paulo Friere. All of the training activities offered at GAF begin by examining personal experience and knowledge as a basis from which to strategize collective action. The groundwork for collaboration is created at each gathering and training session where participants develop group agreements about ways of acknowledging consent and dissent. We have also learned that setting the stage for constructive collaborative learning has required anti-oppression training for staff, facilitators, and participants.

The training in Amplify and that in Elle often brings people living in very different contexts into proximity with each other. A community in rural Newfoundland can share and learn from girls living in Toronto. A racialized young woman coming from Ottawa might meet a First Nations girl living in Wemindji, Quebec. Through their formal and informal exchanges during the training, over lunch, and during large group activities, they come to discover more about one another and the issues that matter most in their respective communities. They leave with a better sense of one another, a familiarity that has the potential to spark future collaboration. Here are two reflections from Amplify participants:

> Because of my experience there I've shifted quite a bit as far as how I address cultural issues in my group. I am a lot more likely to be … I'm more conscious of creating space for really appropriate and empowering cultural expression.

> I am going to change the focus of my girls group to include a broader range of issues around social justice.

Elle evaluations indicate that participants appreciated connecting with other young women from across the country, and many noted that what they learned there would help them to make a difference in their communities. Here are a few of their reflections.

> My experience in Elle was indescribable. On a personal level, I rejuvenated my spirit and passion from hearing the incredible stories of all the girls here. The environment was safe to open up and yet to get critical, intellectual feedback when necessary. My vague ideas were brought into a clear vision and I have been given the practical tools/ resources to make a reality.

> It was an amazing growing experience that challenged me to think differently, connect with people of various backgrounds and to step outside my comfort zone.

> It took my breath away. For once in my life I had a safer space to discuss issues which mattered to me. I had a voice and was actively listened to by those who felt similarly/differently. It is now that I know the definition of home.

Shared Leadership

In traditional models of coalition leadership, consensus building and agreed-upon priorities are primary in collective efforts; in a network model, emergent issues lead the way. GAN adopted this network approach to facilitate learning across difference more strategically. Re-

sponding to the quoted statement from a network member cited earlier and others like it has required workshops and gatherings to accept leadership from people who understand these realities and can teach others about them. This has provided opportunities for leadership in all areas of the organization, from staff to regional leaders, to workshop facilitators.

The network's leadership must represent its participants, and, since it is a living organism, this has meant remaining responsive to the need for new and different leaders over time. For example, in 2008, several network members from northern Canada participated in the national retreat and regional network sessions. During these meetings, these members identified the need to create a northern-specific project to provide a forum for young women in northern communities and to strengthen a network specific to these girls' issues and concerns. This model became a blueprint for further collaborations that focused on building community tools and knowledge specific to racialized girls, immigrant girls, and girls living in rural areas. Face-to-face gatherings of the network have become a hub for collaborative practice, creating generative spaces where new partnerships and projects are born. Organic working groups build national projects that are responsive to diverse needs. National collaborations develop research, as well as community tools and resources by and for racialized girls (*Our Communities, Our Words: Stepping Up for Racialized Girls' Empowerment* (GAF 2009)), northern girls (*Northern Reflections: Looking Back and Moving Forward for Girls Empowermen*t (GAF 2008)), First Nations girls (*Indigenous Young Women: Speaking our Truths, Building our Strengths* (Native Youth Sexual Health Network 2011)), rural girls (*Rural Community Action Guide* (GAF 2013b)), and newcomer girls (*The Bridge Guide* (GAF 2013c)).

In 2012, shared leadership meant giving space and resources to facilitators working to address new themes. This resulted in a co-authored publication entitled *Decolonizing Social Justice Work: Stories to Support Organizations, Facilitators, and Youth Working against Oppression* (Sajnani et al. 2012). This, like all of GAF's publications, is available as a free downloadable book on our website for all members and for the public. Girls Action Foundation's role is to support the leadership of community members, to leverage resources to advance this work, and to provide a networked infrastructure in which to implement activities.

Emergent Design

The training offered through GAF aims to respond to the needs and interests of those present while still disseminating the min specs or con-

sistent, core elements of the GAF approach. As noted on the website, "The Girls Action approach is continuously shaped by young women's input and feedback. A fluid spiral of learning, reflecting, researching, doing, and evaluating informs this work on both organizational and programming levels. We are committed to remaining adaptable and relevant to the changing realities of girls' and young women's lives." While GAF training still provides the basics of popular education, it has evolved to respond to emergent interests and needs. For example, training has included components on being and becoming an ally, trauma-informed programming, and relational and heart-centered approaches to facilitation as an appreciation of the potential of relationships have come more into focus.

Getting Comfortable with Tension and Ambiguity

While not an explicit goal, becoming comfortable with ambiguity and tension underlies GAF's diverse network. There have been many moments during retreats and other gatherings where mistakes have been made, where it has been necessary to have difficult conversations, and where staff, facilitators, and participants have needed to ask hard questions and remain open to finding a way forward. Evaluations from gatherings are an important space for reflection and they provide constructive feedback. When asked how these gatherings could be strengthened, participants voiced the following strategies.

- Building a common understanding of safety/safe space. Having a process in place to deal with the tension, conflict, and distress that arises.
- Explicitly setting expectations for white participants around silence, observation, learning without intrusion, and giving up power.
- Creating more spaces to talk about oppression, more spaces for us as allies to step back and shut up.
- Fostering more aboriginal and racialized anti-oppression resources.

Sometimes these moments were met with an awareness that we were at the edge of our understanding and needed time to respond. Sometimes they called for an awareness of just how different we are from one another and that coexistence and movement-building is a challenge, but a worthy one. This learning is captured in evaluation feedback expressed by one retreat participant: "I have learned to recognize my privileges; those many things I never thought twice about before. I believe that the reflection, and real discomfort I felt through-

out the retreat, has provided me with the opportunity to 'look deeper,' to 'feel more' and to appreciate that even though things on the surface appear good and equal and okay, there is a much bigger picture that I am at least aware of now."

GAN's gatherings have been important to learning how to mobilize for change. To advance girls' issues, we need to develop our understanding of them. To build collaborative action, we need to create conditions for learning across difference.

Looking Ahead: Opportunities to Influence Systems Change

As Girls Action continues to work towards systems change, how can we use the practice of learning across difference to influence broader social change? What are the opportunities?

We have explored our reflections and the conditions required to learn and work across difference within a community of practice. There is further work to do to translate what we have learned from our rich and diverse network into influential political advocacy. GAF acts as what Moore and Westley call an "institutional entrepreneur" (2011: 771) noticing emerging patterns; building and brokering relationships, knowledge, and resources; and recharging the network. GAN amplifies and validates the knowledge generated by girls in their local contexts, suggesting that the network may be able to influence other movements by creating opportunities for grassroots learning to be transferred across sectors. Strengthening partnerships between and among researchers and practitioners and building partners in corporate sectors also creates opportunities to share practice, methodology, and analysis on girls and social justice issues. These diversified partnerships could also foster collaborative action on systemic issues, while introducing a feminist lens and structural analysis into influence systems, such as education. Finally, the network can leverage opportunities to reposition and reframe conversations about girls and social justice issues.

Looking Ahead: Diversity, Networks, and Systems Change

Network theory has informed girls' action practice, creating a framework for working across difference. While diversity in networks is key to their health, there is little research on the practical realities of diversity in social change movement-building. Further research should be done to understand how diverse communities move from practice to

influence. Our hope is that our learning can contribute to a broader conversation about how networks influence systems and the conditions needed to create collaborative learning across difference.

Stephanie Austin is a co-founder and Chair of the Board of Directors of Girls Action Foundation. She is an Adjunct professor in Community Psychology at the University of Ottawa, Canada, where she supports students who have an interest in applied social research on equity and health. A current area of focus is the prevention of violence against girls and young women.

Tatiana Fraser is co-founder and past Executive Director of Girls Action Foundation. In 2010, she was awarded an Ashoka fellowship and recognized as one of the 100 most influential women in Canada (Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100). She currently serves as Vice President for the Carold Institute and Treasurer for Food Secure Canada and sits on the board of directors of Execo. Tatiana is currently a social innovation and leadership consultant and is completing a book project, *Girls Positive*. She is passionate about the ability of networks to influence change, scaling deep while scaling up, and women's role in leadership and social innovation.

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journal, *Arts in Psychotherapy.* She has been the lead facilitator for Girls Action Foundation's national programs since 2003.

Notes

1. The Girls Action Foundation is a national charitable organization based in Canada, founded in 1995 as a local grassroots girls empowerment program (originally called POWER Camp). The Foundation creates and supports popular education programs for girls and young women, and their mandate is to lead and seed girls' programs across Canada. The organization works to build girls' and young women's skills and confidence, and inspire action to change the world.
2. Girls Action Network is made up of over 350 organizations across Canada that share a vision of girls' empowerment and a desire to advance girls. Facilitated and led by the Girls Action Foundation, the network is a vehicle to scale out girls' programs and to facilitate a community of practice. The purpose of the network is to create a space for practitioners to share skills, build capacity, and advance understanding of the issues facing girls today. The communities represented in the network are varied and they reflect local concerns about the realities faced by girls and young women.

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SECTION 3

GIRLS AND MEDIA SPACES

🎔 10

"What This Picture of a Girl Means to Me"

The Place of Girlhood Images in
the Art History University Classroom

Loren Lerner

In 2010, as an art historian interested in pictures of children, I set out to teach what I thought would be a typical art history seminar. The course objective was to analyze imagery of childhood found in the works of Canadian artists, and then, based on the assignments, to produce a website. Partway through the seminar, as a result of input from the young women in the class, the focus shifted from imagery of childhood to pictures of girls. This new focus motivated me to approach the concept of place differently, not as the place of girls in works of art, but as the place of female students in the university classroom reacting to these works. In this chapter I explore the female environment of the university classroom, as well as the website we created, now called *Picturing Children and Youth: A Canadian Perspective*[1] within a framework that connects an anthropological interpretation of place to feminist pedagogy and art historical ways of seeing. I also consider public pedagogy and virtual networking as ways to introduce girls to works of art that counteract the sexualized images of girls that are so pervasive in the media.

The Concept of Place in Pictures of Girlhood: An Art Historical Perspective

In my study of visual images of Canadian girls, I am particularly interested in the significance of place. By place, I mean setting, the type of surroundings where girls are positioned. The girls might be located at home or at school, or they might be in a park or another public space. I also note how the arrangement of the composition comes together in the setting to effect the desired meaning. This emphasis on place arises from my belief that it strongly links to symbolic references, moral and cultural notions, political contexts, and social and religious undercurrents.

In the *Picturing Her* exhibition I curated at Montreal's McCord Museum in 2009, my exploration of William Notman's photographs revealed the cloistered world inhabited by Montreal's middle-class girls in the late nineteenth century (Lerner 2009a). Notman situated his young female subjects in studio settings that simulated three locations: the home, the garden, and nature. The home was where girls learned how to be good wives and mothers, the garden symbolized their natural innocence, and the winter environments emphasized their Canadian identity. These limited depictions of girlhood were in keeping with the charm and reserve expected of girls whether they were performing the daily routines of domestic life or participating in leisure activities.

In relation to the place of girls in recent artworks, at a Society for the History of Children and Youth conference, I considered the role of the road in the social construction of female adolescence and as a location of passage from girlhood to adulthood. My analysis examined the spatial transformation of the street—from a place of homelessness, vagrancy, and sexual vice for girls in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to a landscape in modern times that resonates with the thoughts and feelings of adolescent girls. This, I explained, was the result of changing attitudes to the female body, the recognition of women's place in society, and the acknowledgment that older girls are allowed to inhabit public spaces.

Female University Students in the Classroom: An Anthropological Definition of Place and Identity

This concept of place that I adopted for my research reflects the work of French anthropologist Marc Augé, who defines place as "relational, historical and concerned with identity" (1995: 77). For Augé, place is an identification with emotions and memories, as well as a space where encounters occur and people create social ties. This concentration on place as a location where we maintain individual identities while meeting others and establishing relationships has continued to guide my research, with one important difference: place is more than where girls appear in specific images. I have broadened my interpretation to include the viewer and the environment where the viewing occurs, and how that environment influences the interpretation of the image. Specifically, I now consider the female students in the university classroom where I teach a course on pictures of children to be the *place* of my new research.

In teaching my undergraduate seminar, entitled Picturing Children, Envisioning Childhood, I found that despite prodding the students to explore historical images of children and contemporary pictures of

both boys and girls—whether in paintings, drawings, photographs, or film—the images they preferred to analyze were those of contemporary girls. Of these, the works that attracted their attention the most were the creative responses by Canadian artists to the stereotypical images of girlhood found in the media. Unquestionably, the reason for this interest was that the majority of my students were women, which is the case in most art history classes at the university level.

In response to this development, I adopted a concept of place for the seminar that included the political possibilities inherent in the classroom setting. The classroom is where, if the correct guidance is provided, young women can learn new ways to respond to diverse representations of girls. They can begin to acquire the skills they need to critically resist the notion that images of girls, whether artworks or advertisements, are unmitigated expressions of reality. I actively embraced the opportunity my seminar presented to use the classroom as a place for challenging society's false ideas and provoking my female students into examining their preconceptions.

The Impact of Media Images on the Mental Health of Girls and Young Women

In my approach to teaching, I am indebted to Henry Giroux, a cultural critic and one of the founding theorists of critical pedagogy in the United States. Giroux looks at the ways youth are being presented in the media and how the use of various critical strategies in the classroom can create new conditions for interpretation and creation. In *America on the Edge*, he argues that America's current political crisis is threatening the democratic foundation of politics, culture, and education in the United States, and he challenges educators to address the political exploitation and manipulation of American youth. He criticizes the "dominant media" (2006: 30) for proclaiming suburban high school girls to be "vacuous, but also ruthless, arrogant, and sexually manipulative" (1999: n.p.).[2] In truth, these adjectives describe few girls. As reported in *The Facts about Girls in Canada,* produced by the Canadian Women's Federation (n.d.), girls typically suffer from low self-esteem, stress, a negative body image, and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. They experience dating violence, are victims of unwanted sexual comments and gestures, and a growing number of girls are being victimized by sex trafficking. Depression, high rates of sexual assault, suicide, addiction, poverty, and a sharp decline in mental health in adolescents are major concerns.

Playing a significant role in the deterioration of girls' mental health is the widespread sexualization of females of all ages. The media bombards girls with artificially created images that are considered ideal; girls and women are portrayed as either sexually provocative, with the purpose being to sell consumer products, or as passive. In 2007, the American Psychological Association (APA) formed a Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls. Long involved in issues relating to the impact of media on children, the goal of the APA was to address the concerns of psychologists, child advocacy organizations, and parents regarding sexual images of young women in television, music videos, music lyrics, movies, magazines, sports media, video games, the Internet, and advertising. The shared consensus was that these images, ever more numerous and more frequently displayed, had a negative effect on girls. The mandate was to examine "psychological theory, research and clinical experience addressing the sexualization of girls via media and other cultural messages, including the prevalence of these messages and their impact on girls and the role and impact of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status" (1).

In its report, the task force concluded that the sexualization of women of all ages is a ballooning problem of major concern. Pictures of girls in suggestive poses and seductive clothing are purposefully designed to imply sexual willingness. These provocative images, as well as the characterization of girls as sexual objects through their focus on female body parts, prevent an appreciation of the girl as a whole person. Such depictions are especially prominent in media, such as teen magazines and video games that target young girls and female adolescents. These pictures display a narrow model of femininity and physical beauty that is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for girls to emulate. Moreover, the studies reveal that parents, teachers, boys, and even girls themselves, when communicating with one another—including communication characterized as harassment, bullying, and sexual abuse—contribute to the media messages that sexualize girls. In brief, the overarching societal message is the belief that physical attractiveness should be the key objective of a girl, the first rule of which is to conform to a thin and therefore sexy body.

The report has been criticized, notably in an interdisciplinary feminist commentary published in 2009 by Lerum and Dworkin that challenged the task force's premise that "sexualization should be designated as a harmful and dangerous process that only has negative impacts on girls and women" (251). A review of the literature published since the report's publication (Hatch 2011) was also critical, particularly because of the continued reliance by more recent literature on the studies cited

in the report. Significantly, however, the corpus of recent research supports the major findings of the task force regarding the detrimental effects of sexualized images on girls.

One of the major recommendations of the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls was to look for "alternative presentations of girlhood, sexuality and power" (4) and to develop programs that encourage discussion about non-objectified models of girlhood. As an art historian, I believe that one method of counteracting these false representations is to provide girls and young women with opportunities to critically interrogate artist-created depictions of girls that oppose the predominant social and cultural messages.

Closely looking at and engaging with works of art of this type can be a meaningful encounter that precipitates what Giroux (1994) [3] refers to as the "rupturing spirit" (n.p.) necessary to inform awareness and social activism. In my classroom, where positive reciprocity is encouraged, I witnessed undergraduate female students express their ideas and opinions openly as they shared in the responsibility for creating dialogue about the artworks in question. In so doing, they became more aware of their own learning processes and how to think critically about them. During discussions, my female students demonstrated that visual imagery produced by artists can provide a springboard to connect with the real-life experiences, challenges, and ideals of girls.

Picturing Children and Youth: A Canadian Perspective; Website Exhibitions and Essays

The website my students and I created, entitled *Picturing Children and Youth: A Canadian Perspective,* reflects their classroom discussions. The images and texts are arranged according to the structural organization of the seminar and correspond to the class presentations and written assignments. In the first section, the students were given the assignment to work together to conceptualize virtual exhibitions that related thematically to the essays in *Depicting Canada's Children*, an anthology I edited in 2009. The essays consider pictures of Canadian children and youth and take into account the collective meanings of stories, histories, memories, signs, symbols, and perceptions that contribute to the creative production and critical interpretation of visual imagery. By emphasizing approaches that endorse innovative scholarship and methodological diversity, the essays were intended to be catalysts for further research by scholars and students of art history, visual culture, Canadian studies, and the history of children.

For example, the starting point of the virtual exhibition by students Eliana Stratica-Mihail and Hannah Sutherland was the 2009 essay by Derek Foster, "Locating Children in the Discourse of Squeegee Kids." Foster discusses the disparities between media depictions of squeegee kids in Ontario in the late 1990s and the reality these kids faced. In his analysis of four newspaper cartoons by Gareth Lind, he illustrates the harsh approach taken by Ontario's politicians, who blamed the squeegee kids for all manner of socially disruptive and violent activities. Upon reading Foster's essay, Eliana and Hannah contacted Leave Out Violence, a non-profit organization in Montreal founded in 1993 by Twinkle Rudberg after her husband was murdered by a teenage boy when he went to the aid of an elderly woman whose purse the boy had stolen. Leave Out Violence gives troubled youth between the ages of thirteen and eighteen the opportunity to attend photojournalism classes. There they learn various skills, including how to take pictures and write poems about their violence-related experiences, which range from bullying and physical fighting to assault, homicide, and suicide.

Included in the exhibition of photographs taken by the youth in the Leave Out Violence program is Eliana's analysis of the form and content of a picture of a suicidal adolescent girl. Eliana writes:

> This photograph taken by a sixteen-year-old teenager from Toronto depicts a suicide attempt by a young girl who ingested a large amount of medication in the form of pills. This action might have many causes as defined by the Leave Out Violence youth, such as depression, a negative self-image, bullying, and parents who are fighting or are alcoholics. The girl lies on the floor, with her long black hair covering her face and her right arm over her stomach; while in her left hand she is holding pills capable of killing her. Next to her, the viewer can see a small open bottle of pills.

My students invariably selected subjects and themes from *Depicting Canada's Children* that they experienced themselves during their girlhood or witnessed in the lives of girls they knew. For example, what captured the attention of a group of students with Latin American, Iraqi, and Armenian backgrounds were the images related to growing up as part of an ethnic minority. Focusing on the binary concepts of inclusion and exclusion, they compared professional photographs with their own family albums, their goal being to discover visual markers of ethnicity. Regardless of where they found connection, whether in the image of the girl overdosing on drugs or elsewhere, the students were forthcoming in their discussions. Even when the subject matter

was ostensibly objective, such as the realistic depictions of daughters by artist-parents, the students' individual feelings, imaginings, and explanations rose to the surface as they examined the images. Indeed, because art history does not pretend to be a field of scientific objectivity, personal opinions on matters regarding human existence and the changing sphere of the sensible are encouraged. Art history, while identifying with the hermeneutical interpretations of history and culture, leaves room for subjective observations that affirm the expressive qualities of the works of art.

Wanting the students to understand the different frameworks that exist for engaging with images of children, I designed this first assignment as a preparatory exercise that would sensitize them to research on child-related imagery. My principal aim was to develop the newly sensitized students' ability to actively critique dominant stereotypes. Following the assignment, each student dedicated considerable time and effort to developing an essay about two or three works by an artist of her choosing. The students were instructed to consider the diverse social, cultural and historic contexts of particular images, the various ways Canadian artists have chosen to visualize children and youth, and the effects of such explorations on the viewer. Their essays can be found in the second section of the website. Here are synopses of two of them:

> In her work on Angela Grossmann's *Gang of Three* (2010), Allison Smith explores how the artist exposes a society that blurs the boundaries between childhood and adulthood. The collage, she explains, uses discarded photographs and acrylic paint on canvas to narrate the emotional world of young teenage girls. The various blacks, whites, and grays, while excluding the skin's fleshy tones, nevertheless allude to the veiling and unveiling of the three girls' physicality. Sexuality, desire, and eroticism are conveyed through the covered and uncovered parts of their bodies. The crossed legs and the girls' unsteadiness in their shoes evoke a sense of their unease and awkwardness. Their upper bodies, however, emanate confidence: backs straight, hands on hips, and heads close together as if the girls are sharing secrets and laughter. Allison argues that *Gang of Three* speaks volumes about the adultification of girls. She also sees a second connotation in this sexualization of young females: that girls mimic the popular imagery they consume. What is disconcerting about *Gang of Three*, Allison writes, is that the girls can be compared to Erin Blackwell, the fourteen-year-old prostitute in Martin Bell's 1984 documentary *Streetwise*. Erin, who goes by the name Tiny, delivers one of the documentary's most powerful statements: "I think that it is very strange that older men like little girls. Because they're perverts that is what they is. I mean, I like the money, but I don't like them." This observation makes tangible a

world in which men have sex with girls. Allison believes that the child-hood innocence envisioned by Angela Grossmann is an innocence that is bought, sold, damaged, and, finally, discarded.

In her essay, Alice Stratford-Kurus focuses on the children presented by Ken Lum, a Vancouver artist of Chinese heritage interested in identity, portraiture, and language. In *A Tale of Two Children: A Work for Strathcona* (2005) (see Figure 10.1) the children appear quite ordinary in the context of urban Canada. On view as two billboards in the neighborhood where Stratford-Kurus was raised, the photographs address children's upbring-ing, not just in terms of the children being a product of their upbringing, but also in terms of their relationship to others and the moments that influence them. Although children are examined in these images, the viewer, too, is drawn in and provoked to reflect on his or her own child-hood. For example, the image of the mother and daughter is very disturb-ing. The woman has her hand tenderly on the girl's shoulder, seemingly a sign of support, comfort, and encouragement. Yet the woman is not sitting beside her daughter; rather, she is standing behind her with the back of the bench between them, which can be interpreted as a barrier between the two. The accompanying text states, "You so smart. You make me proud you so smart. I so proud you so smart." These words support the idea that this is a mother who speaks affectionately to her daughter. They also betray that English is not the woman's first language. The back-
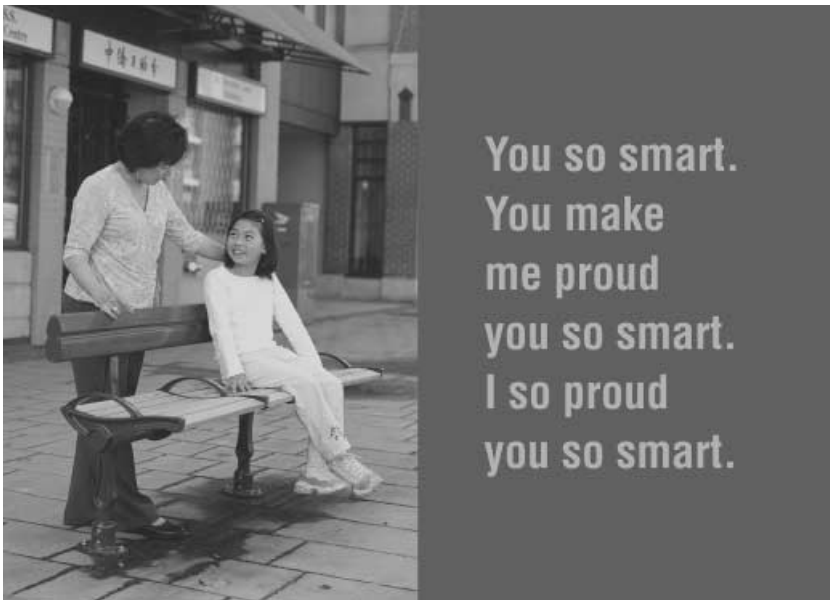
Figure 10.1. Ken Lum, *A Tale of Two Children: A Work for Strathcona,* 2005.

ground in the photograph is Vancouver's Chinatown, so we may surmise that she is a Chinese immigrant who is proud that her child is excelling in Canada. At some level, however, her words may indicate pressure being put on the girl to succeed. Alice points out that it is almost a truism that children are frequently photographed but seldom portrayed. Millions of snapshots attest to the parental proclivity for preserving a record of their offspring's charming childhood, yet few photographs of children in family albums do more than catch a brief moment in time. Alice concludes that by dismantling notions of idealized images of children, Lum creates loaded images—personal, local and intimate yet anonymous, global and public—that mirror the complexities of family life.

Analyzing Images of Girls: The Contributions of Art History and Cultural Studies

As my students and I analyzed these diverse images of girls, we were guided by several critical thinkers associated with the field of art and cultural studies (Lerner 2011). In the process, the insights of these scholars took on new perspectives. Mieke Bal argues, in "Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture," that the central focus of visuality as an object of study is the relationship between the seen and the seer. When people look at a work of art, Bal writes, what emerges from that act of looking is "a fleeting, fugitive, subjective image accrued to the subject" (2003: 9). In "Enfolding Feminism," Bal borrows the Deleuzian notion of the fold to imagine an embodied vision. The narrative dimension of this vision, she explains, derives "from its appeal to an interaction with the viewer, to its own processing in time … a bringing into the future." Because of the difficulty posed by the fold to any uniform way of seeing, Bal suggests that the image becomes an allegory for feminism in that it refuses a master viewer. "Looking at a picture requires time," Bal says, and during that time, "the relation between the subject and the object of looking hurts your body" (2001: 328). As such, viewing is an act of intense attention wherein the female body of the viewer connects with the image of the girl in the picture. In fact, what my students, as young seers, offer when describing, analyzing, and critiquing these pictures of girls are their memories, experiences, and personal knowledge.

Also taking on new relevance is Michael Baxandall's (1972) challenge to art historians to consider our role as interpreters of visual objects and to contemplate the limitations of our practices. At earlier times and in certain places, Baxandall reminds us, viewers understood aspects of an image that went unrecognized in later times and other places. He has a

chapter called "Period Eye" [4]in which he states that developing a period eye helps in the retrieval of the pertinent features of a period's culture, style, knowledge, and methods of production. The young women in my class certainly helped me develop a period eye by coming up with interpretations linked to the experiences of a generation considerably younger than my own. This is inevitable because, as individuals, we constantly project onto the world interpretative schema whose mental and emotional filters influence our understanding.

With this in mind, more than ever before I am aware that visual thinking—what Rudolf Arnheim defines as "a form of reasoning, in which perceiving and thinking are indivisibly intertwined" (1969: v)—is best when not undertaken alone. Arnheim's idea of visual thinking involves controlling the urge to immediately identify significance. If one is to comprehend the multifaceted meaning of a painting, he says, one must take the time to study its balance, shape, color, and movement. To this end, I have replaced the *I* with *we* in my teaching. By including in my visual thinking the place of my students in the university classroom, I have arrived at a more nuanced and meaningful relationship with imagery associated with girlhood.

Female Students, the Non-Place of the University Classroom, and Feminist Pedagogy

Returning to Marc Augé's concept of place, it is crucial to understand the importance of its antithesis, what Augé calls "non-place." In *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity,* in which Augé analyzes locations that are lonely, transitory, and sterile, he refers to non-places as "spaces of circulation, consumption and communication," without individual identity and socially significant connections (1995: 178). Airports, railway stations, superstores, highways, and hotels are on his list of non-places. I would suggest an addition: for female students who pass through the university system without feeling they belong to the learning that occurs in the classroom, the classroom itself is a non-place.

As an adherent of feminist pedagogy I try to make the classroom a place where young women actively engage with the subject matter being discussed in an ongoing reflective process (Luke and Gore 1992; Martin 1994; MacDonald and Sanchez-Casals 2002; Crabtree, Sapp, and Licona 2009). According to Luke and Gore (1992), the objective of the feminist pedagog is to create an environment that empowers students and encourages them to explore the ways in which relations of domi-

nation can subordinate subjects because of gender, race, class, and the many other characteristics of difference. The challenge, Amie MacDonald and Susan Sanchez-Casals (2002) explain, is to break down the binary positioning of teacher and student to open the way for educators to encompass multiple positions that legitimize knowledge gleaned from students of diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Taking this into account, I recognize the classroom to be a place of power, privilege, and hierarchy, and that teaching is an innately political act for which methods of instruction have ideological presumptions, as does the selection of readings and assignments. I consider an undergraduate seminar that focuses on pictures of girls to be an excellent place to counteract the non-place of the university classroom, because it was in that place that I was able to adopt teaching strategies that helped my young women students to combine learning with meaningful engagement. In *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy,* Elizabeth Ellsworth emboldens the teacher to see herself more as a curator of a learning environment than as a teacher, to consider pedagogy not as the transfer of "already-known ideas, curriculums, or knowledges" (2005: 27), but the means for promoting conditions that make the movements of knowledge possible.

As my students analyzed the pictures of girls, I watched them take on the roles of presenter and discussion leader, and collaborate without fear of censure. The classroom setting, imbued as it was with empathy, cultural sensitivity, and respect for ethnicity, gender, race, and sexual orientation, became an inclusive space that recognized the value of personal female experiences. In the concluding chapter of *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy,* Ellsworth sees in William Wordsworth's poem "We are Seven" a young girl immersed in "descriptions of her embodied experiences of continued being." Indeed, for girls of every age, from young child, preteen, and adolescent to young woman, personal female experiences should be understood as the "continuous emergence" (2005: 174) of the learning self.

In my providing my students with an environment that was learner- rather than curriculum-centered, they came to understand that the synergy born of common ground, interpersonal communication, and mutual respect yields new ideas. They engaged with one another in the give and take of intellectual exchange, asking questions and trying out tentative answers in their attempts to comprehend their reactions as visual thinkers and structure their responses to the works. As a result of their dialog, in which they recalled girlhood memories, similar references were revealed and shared interpretations were developed. Without a doubt, being in a classroom setting and looking at images

of girls, particularly recent works by women artists, connected directly with the lives of these young students.

Working together to interpret the images, we recognized two key premises about the artist. The first was that her idea of the girl, rather than being definitive, was a changeable social construction that contained the potential to inform our learning about actual girls. The second was not to interpret representations simply as illustrations of a verifiable external reality. Making images presupposes the agency of a creator and the activity of visual inventiveness, leading us to assume that complex meanings can be embodied in images. A work of art is an artist's construction that involves different modes of production and an artistic consciousness that observes, interprets, references, and transforms external reality in a way that is unique to the artist.

As for the place of the viewer—the person who is critically looking at these works—it is evident from my students' comments and analyses that females studying at the university level face many of the same problems as girls in general: stress, social pressures, academic demands, parental expectations, anxiety, questions related to gender identity, sexual victimization, and suicidal thoughts. Moreover, they continue to be haunted by the apprehensions and insecurities of their girlhood years. Indeed, in key respects women in their late teens and early twenties can be understood as being in the transitional zone between adolescence and adulthood, still actively engaged in the psychological processes by which girls develop into women.

Girl Culture and Photographic Works of University Student Artists: The Catalog Section of the Website

For the seminar's final assignment, my art history students were paired with student artists taking the Boy/Girl Culture photography course taught by artist-photographer Marisa Portolese. In the realm of the visual arts, girl culture has two interrelated meanings. The first, which is the common definition, refers to girls, media, and cultural artifacts, the impact of commodities designed for girls of every age, the struggles girls have with their bodies and identities, and the notion of girls as victims of the culture that surrounds them. This definition includes the alternative viewpoint that girls are free agents able to resist, negotiate, and contribute to cultural messages (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008). The second definition connects historically to the work of feminist art historians such as Linda Nochlin, who wrote in the influential

text "Why Are There No Great Women Artists?" that "the fault lies not in our stars, our hormones, our menstrual cycles, or our empty internal spaces, but in our institutions and our education—education understood to include everything that happens to us from the moment we enter this world of meaningful symbols, signs, and signals" (1971: 483).

Writing on why Picasso could not have been born a girl, Nochlin concludes that social structure and social context discriminate against women making art. Throughout the centuries to the present day, this social discrimination still inculcates girls, explicitly and implicitly, at every stage of their development into believing that they cannot pursue art as a serious career. Reacting to this state of affairs, women artists have devoted themselves since the late 1960s to addressing the fact that there are few female subjects and artists represented in major art collections (Armstrong and de Zegher 2006). Despite the occasional dismissal of feminist art for being old-fashioned (Buffington and Lai 2011), women artists continue to purposefully explore subject matter that takes into consideration the circumstances of women's lives and, most importantly, the lives of girls.

Since the majority of students in Marisa Portolese's class were women, it came as no surprise that their work focused on girlhood. My students were tasked with interviewing the artists and writing entries for selected works. Their entries, which constitute the catalog section of the website, took their influence from the classroom environment created for them and an understanding of feminist art-making and art history.

In *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope,* Henry Giroux writes that it is imperative to create classroom conditions "characterized by a pedagogy that demonstrates its commitment to engaging the views and problems that deeply concern students in their everyday lives. Equally important is the need for schools to cultivate a spirit of critique and respect for human dignity that will be capable of linking personal and social issues around the pedagogical project of helping students become active citizens" (1997: 143). This, he says, can create an environment for rewriting the typical scripts of a "*commercially* saturated and politically reactionary rendering of the ideological and political contours of children's culture" (1995: n.p.), the kind of rendering one might find in Hollywood films about youth.[5] This rewriting can also refer to imagery of youth created by students in an open university environment. In Portolese's studio course, the students were encouraged to create images that connected with their own lives, interests, and concerns. Below, three of my art history students analyze images of girls created by Portolese's photography students.

In the series *The Seven Deadly Sins* by Carrie Henzie, writes Jodi Schachowskoj, Henzie questions religious theory and how it impacts people and their perceptions of life. More particularly, the artist is commenting on religious ideals and the allegorical manipulation of the young female form. By using the girl as her subject—the girl being a symbol of modern innocence—Henzie criticizes the concept of original sin, which she considers to be a perceived fallacy. For example, in *Pride* (see Figure 10.2), where we see a young girl transfixed by her own reflection, she plays on this fallacy in an attempt to challenge and provoke her audience.

Figure 10.2. Carrie Henzie, *Pride,* from the series *Seven Deadly Sins,* 2010.

In *Family Album,* a series by Julie Morel, the artist examines the relationship between her family and the context of their everyday life, writes Maya Dynbert. Instead of focusing on the kinds of familial events that are typically showcased in a family album, Morel depicts regular day-to-day events, as in the photograph titled *Breakfast* (see Figure 10.3). Here Morel's two children, Marie-Eve and Philippe, are positioned immediately in front of the observer and presented each in their own little world.

Figure 10.3. Julie Morel, *Breakfast,* from the series *Family Album,* 2009.

Marie-Eve's direct gaze invites us into the scene, while Philippe focuses on drinking his milk. *Family Album* demonstrates that ordinary events are worth capturing and can be just as memorable, if not more revealing, than a celebratory or supposedly noteworthy family event.

According to Rachel Rotrand, Kinneret Sheetreet's *Portraits from the Hard Bitches Callout* (see Figure 10.4) questions categories imposed on us by society and the labels we place on ourselves. In this series, all the subjects were friends of the artist and collaborated with her on the shoot. Here, a young woman named Kerri sits on the floor in her own apartment, leaning against the rundown wall moulding while she unconsciously plays with her ear. Her body language is demure, but she stares up at the viewer with strength and defiance. This photograph challenges the

Figure 10.4. Kinneret Sheetreet, Untitled, from the series *Portraits from the Hard Bitches Callout*, 2010.

> idea of the stereotypical bitch: through her androgynous appearance and body language she simultaneously exudes power and vulnerability. Her inner strength is shown not because she presents a hard countenance, but because she is unafraid to show the viewer a more fragile identity.

Pictorial images shaped by a plethora of assumptions about girlhood have played an important role in identifying the characteristics and traits of girls. The images refuse closure, affirming instead the ambiguous, tenuous nature of female identity. With the help of works by Canadian artists, the students in my art history seminar became more sensitive to the ways in which girls are being exploited in the media and began to consider some of the real experiences of growing up female. We considered physical rites of passage, the social and psychological development of the girl as an individual and in relation to societal structures,

and the ways adolescent identity asserts itself during the transition to adulthood. Key topics that were addressed included sexuality, beauty, body image, self-fashioning, clothing, manufactured goods, the living environments of young people, the upbringing of youth, familial relations, gender issues, and childhood memories. We explored the ramifications of peer pressure, the formation of cliques, and the emotional suffering that can take place during this tumultuous time. We also discussed the importance of the concept of place in the images, noting how the artists articulated psychic spaces as places generated and inhabited by the female figure.

The Networking of Place: Girlhood Artworks on the Internet

In the place of the university classroom, my students formed relationships with one another as they expanded what they knew about culture, society, girlhood, and themselves. But what about the website we produced? By reaching out globally to girls, can *Picturing Children and Youth: A Canadian Perspective* be a place where individual identities and social relationships flourish? In "Place: The Networking of Public Space," a chapter in *Networked Publics* (2008), Augé's definition of place is considered by Kazys Varnelis, a historian and theorist of architecture who specializes in network culture, and Anne Friedberg, a historian and theorist of modern media culture. Taking as their entry point Augé's concept of place as locations in which individuals with distinct identities form human relationships, the two scholars argue that the Internet is one of myriad forms of electronic communication where connections can occur. I believe that Varnelis and Friedberg's assertion is not so much a confirmed reality as a challenge to educators. I say this because as recently as 2012, Henri Giroux reiterated in an interview that the Internet, like other media such as films, newspapers, television programs, cable TV, and cellphones, is "driven by the imperatives of commodification, privatization, consuming and deregulation" (Tristàn 2012). Giroux stressed that at issue is "the creation of a human being that views him or herself as a commodity, shopper, autonomous and largely free from any social obligations. This is a human being without ethics, a concern for others, and indifferent to human suffering" (n.p.).[6]

Carefully guided and well-orchestrated programs of public pedagogy have the potential to counteract this state of affairs. As educators, we must expand our reach beyond the classroom into the public places and virtual spaces frequented by our girls and create ethical and caring environments where girls of all ages can interact safely and build

community. We need to design and develop places that enable girls to contribute to the participatory processes of interpretive analysis and positive communication. As teachers, we have the opportunity to extend our teaching environment by becoming public pedagogs who take a critical stance concerning socially pervasive processes, artifacts, and interfaces that influence the lives of our girls as well as girlhood values and beliefs. In the physical place of the classroom, in museums and galleries (Ehrlich 2011), and in the virtual spaces of electronic media, we are in a position to more actively encourage our daughters to criticize pictures that celebrate a paradigm of girlhood that is false. Moreover, we can help them engage with works of art that explore the everyday life actually experienced by girls.

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2. http://firgoa.usc.es/drupal/node/22832
3. http://www.henryagiroux.com/online_articles/doing_cultural.htm
4. https://books.google.ca/books?id=dmpMcyeEX5EC&dq=baxandall+period+eye&q =contents#v=snippet&q=contents&f=false
5. http://www.henryagiroux.com/online_articles/animating_youth.htm
6. http://www.globaleducationmagazine.com/critical-interview-henry-giroux/

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♪ 11

MODDING AS MAKING

Religious Flap Books Created by Eighteenth-
and Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Girls

Jacqueline Reid-Walsh

Modding is a term we connect to new media and participatory culture. Henry Jenkins, in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2008), discusses modding in terms of how gamers make additions to a favorite game by editing source code or using tools that come with the game to produce their own content. Is this practice current only today? How did children in earlier periods, particularly girls, engage in a participatory fashion with their texts and what does this tell us about girlhood? Can an historical angle contribute to scholarly efforts to push girlhood studies beyond a present-day focus? (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008). Here, I explore these questions in relation to three religious flap books[1] created by British or American girls in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, all examples of girl-modified paper media.

Jenkins provides an approach; he gives an historical context to this type of modification of commercial texts by referring to modders and modding as continuing folk traditions associated with America from the earliest days of the settlers. He describes a loose relation in the nineteenth century between domestic cultural production and entertainments such as telling stories, singing songs, making quilts, and dancing where no individual author or artist is credited, and early commercial entertainments such as minstrel shows, circuses, and showboats. He notes, "There was no pure boundary between the emergent commercial culture and the residual folk culture: the commercial culture raided the folk culture and folk culture raided commercial culture" (2008: 139). He goes on to describe the story of American arts in the twentieth century as a displacement of folk culture by mass media. On the one hand, this tended to force the former practices underground, while on the other, fan communities emerged in response to mass media content. He considers that the continuing story in the twenty-first century entails a "public re-emergence of grassroots activity," as people use the facilities

of digital technology to "archive, annotate, appropriate, and re-circulate" (140) media content.

While Jenkins is not referring to children's domestic production but to a widespread folk culture, in this chapter I argue that key processes of remaking older commercial texts can be seen in flap books produced by girls in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I demonstrate how in relation to the four processes listed as separate activities (archiving, annotating, appropriating, and recirculating) they merge them. Since the texts consist of words, illustrations, and movable parts, I am interested in how the processes become complex literacy activities.

The core of the chapter is an analysis of three examples of early British or American flap books known to have been created by girls—the first by Eleanor Schanck in 1777, the second by Betsy Lewis, who lived in Dorchester Massachusetts, around 1800, and the third from 1805 by Sally White Dawson, who lived in the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia—in comparison with commercially produced texts: Although my examples do not, of course, constitute a sample, I consider whether the girls' artifacts reveal sociocultural contexts such as education, class, and geographical location.

To begin with, however, I clarify some points about a few aspects of flap books. I describe briefly what flap books are and sketch their history in Anglo-American culture. I also situate the girl-made artifacts in relation to literacy education in earlier centuries, which encompassed writing and drawing as one process.

A flap book is a type of movable book. Bibliographically, movable books are texts in codex form (the conventional book format) in which some of the words and/or illustrations are presented in the format of a mechanical device such as a wheel, tab, slat, or flap. Readers literally "[make] their own meanings" (McKenzie 1999: 19), not only by looking at the words, as in a story book, and gazing at the pictures, as with a picture book, but also by engaging physically with the book object itself by manipulating the components, as in a puzzle, game, or toy (Hurst 1995). Depending on the design, readers engage with a flap book by lifting the flaps up and down or sideways to produce a simple type of changing picture.

Elaborate flap books with beautiful and detailed illustrations were created before the invention of printing to teach anatomy, and they continued to be used as teaching tools during the Renaissance (Montanaro 1993). By the mid seventeenth century, simple flap books consisting of a single piece of paper cut and folded into flaps began to be produced. These were cheap paper artifacts composed of crude woodcut images and simple rhymed verse (Muir 1969). Similar to chapbooks, they were

directed towards a wide audience consisting of the semi-literate and children of different classes.

These flap books were of a religious and moral nature. The earliest known one, *The Beginning, Progress and End of Man* (1650, 1654), written in verse, was re-published in England from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. The 1650 version contained four episodes and that published in 1654 contained five: if examined in the intended order, they feature Adam who transforms into Eve, and then Eve transforming into a mermaid; they may have a Cain and Abel episode; then a lion who transforms into a griffin and then an eagle who steals a child (thus referencing an old myth); then a child as a young man who collects money; finally the miser dies and is transformed into a skeleton. If the flaps fall back down (as they are designed to do), different and incongruous creatures appear that are not in the poem, for example, a merman, and a monster that is both lion and eagle.

Little research has been undertaken about the meanings of the traditional images and words of these texts, and I am wrestling with the challenges of interpretation. The historical circumstances of their publication during the British civil war between the (high Anglican) Royalists and the (reformed) Puritans may offer some clues. For example, since there are slight variations in the lion's face to suggest that of Charles I in the various seventeenth-century editions, this may suggest a political commentary in addition to the apparent religious messages.

The flap book, *The Beginning, Progress and End of Man*, traveled to America in the late eighteenth century and was re-published there until the latter part of the nineteenth century. It was given a cover and a title directed specifically to children: *Metamorphosis; or, a Transformation of Pictures with Poetical Explanations for the Amusement of Young Persons.* In Pennsylvania it was also published in German.[2]

The American English-language texts of this work are an elaboration and updating of the British ones. The illustrations are more detailed. For example, in the first episode a snake in an apple tree has been added. When the flap is lifted it appears to move toward Eve! These texts also include an extended religious poem without illustrations but with peritextual matter consisting of the twenty-six-letter alphabet and Arabic numbers one to nine and zero. These bear no relation to the content. It is interesting to note that the peritextual additions seem to be directed toward girls since the letters, numerals, and ornaments against a narrow lined background recall needlework samplers (Swan 1977). Indeed, there is a similarity in the style and content to samplers produced by girls in England and America from the seventeenth century onwards, most extant examples dating from after the execution of Charles I in

1649 (Curry 1975). For example, a sampler created by schoolgirl Sarah Collins in Salem, Massachusetts, dated 1673, owned by the Winterthur Museum, features the alphabet and the girl's name stitched at the bottom of the piece, similar to the way in which the name of the author of the *Metamorphosis*, B. Sands, is usually presented at the end of the flap book.[3] Biblical motifs such as representations of Adam, Eve, and the Serpent in the Tree of Knowledge have also existed in sampler work since the seventeenth century (Bausum 2001). A sampler made by an English girl, Hannah Smith, circa 1810, held by the Victoria and Albert Museum, features this scene.[4] One of the 1814 editions of Benjamin Sands's flap book stresses the intended needlework application, using the entire cover for the title and adding an additional subtitle, *Also, an Alphabet of Large and Small Letters to Aid Females in Marking Linen.* The flap book's elegant illustrations suggest Regency fashion. Another edition, *Metamorphosis, or, A Transformation of Pictures: With Poetical Explanations* (Hale and Hosmer 1814), includes extra illustrations of flower designs and of a girl, wearing a high-waisted dress, sewing (see Reid-Walsh 2012b).

During the same time period, in England and America, families and children made their own versions of *The Beginning, Progress and End of Man.* The earliest known manuscript dates from 1698 (Muir 1969). Most manuscripts date from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and many are American (Clive Hurst, personal communication; Welch 1972).

It is not known why this activity was popular. Laura Berry, a curator at the Folk Museum of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in Virginia, has speculated that the biblical and moral motifs may have made the projects appropriate for children to engage in, even on the Sabbath (personal communication with Margaret Ryther). Similarly, it is not known how many artifacts exist. Some are in library and museum collections, while others are privately held. I know of twenty-four examples and have seen sixteen flap books to date in different special collections in England and the United States. While a couple of them are pen and ink, most are colored quite vividly, which is part of their charm because they look fresh and new. I have seen a few that include the snake in the apple tree, but not one yet that successfully shows motion. Neither have I seen any that contain the extra verses or the letters, numbers, and ornaments of the American *Metamorphosis.*

Sometimes it is difficult to ascribe a maker, place of manufacture, or date to the homemade flap books, unless there is a provenance or the child has inscribed on the object her or his name and perhaps age, or a date. Many are anonymous, and since these were family activities it is

hard to determine if the final product is a collective effort or one done by the child alone. It is a fascinating endeavor to examine child-made artifacts for clues about the author-illustrator-flap-bookmaker, for the books are examples of juvenilia by ordinary literate children. In this way, the definition of juvenilia is being extended beyond the exceptional child who became a well-known writer or artist.

Seventeenth- to Nineteenth-Century Literacy Education: Writing and Drawing

From the Renaissance until the nineteenth century, writing and drawing were taught generally in the same way. Indeed, the latter was presented as a type of the former. Drawing masters traced the idea back to Aristotle who defined *graphice* as using the pen for both skills (Bermingham 2000). The Renaissance architect Leon Battista Alberti expanded this idea by presenting the technique in both arts as a reduction to key elements. He compared the teaching of writing, which begins with drawing letters, then writing syllables, and then words, with the teaching of painting by first drawing outlines of the planes, then joining the planes together. Common to both sets of practice was the ability to manipulate the line. In both cases there was a part-to-whole logic.

This approach continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, in drawing manuals such as *Drawing and Writing,* circa 1730, composed by the father and son George Bickham [1740?], instructions for both were combined and writing was described as an exercise for the hand. Similarly, the *American Drawing Book* (Chapman 1847) opens with a slogan "Any one who can learn to write can learn to draw" (cited in Bermingham 2000: 44). In all periods, however, examples of elaborate art show effectively which skill is more difficult.

For his part, applying ideas of classical education in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, John Locke presented learning to write and learning to draw as a progression that begins with reading English well. In each case he emphasized good technique. With writing, he broke down the stages of calligraphy into a clear sequence for a boy, beginning with how "to hold his pen right, then how to lay his paper, and place his arm and body to it." Then the boy would copy from a "plate graved with the characters of such a hand as [he liked] best" (section 1693: 160, 214–215). In this context, Locke introduces drawing as a means to "continue the exercise of [the] hand" and improve its use. He argues that drawing is a useful skill for a gentleman, especially when travelling, "as that which helps a man often to express, in a few lines well put

together, what a whole sheet of paper in writing would not be able to represent and make intelligible." He clarifies that the young man is not seeking to become a painter, but "insight into perspective and skill in drawing, as will enable him to represent tolerably on paper any thing he sees" (section 161, 215).

Gender and Drawing

Locke believed that drawing was a useful skill for everyone (Bermingham 2000). Although the parents of elite boys had commissioned his treatise, and boys were the specific subject, he did not treat girls as being of a different order. Rather, he advocated treating girls as much as possible as one did their brothers, believing that "the greater advantage will they receive from it all the remaining part of their lives" (1693: section 9, 89).

In comparison, Rousseau divided his gendered art education into subjects more suitable to males or females and relating the practices to higher ends such as discipline and morality. He advocated that boys learn art in order to acquire "an exactness of eye and flexibility of hand," and so attain "a clearness of sense-perception" and "good bodily habits" (cited in Bermingham 2000: 168). By contrast, girls should learn art in order to produce needlework, which he (like women moral reformers such as Hannah More and Maria Edgeworth) considered to be both a practical task and a means of inculcating discipline.

Making samplers in particular taught utilitarian and decorative stitches to girls while they were reproducing their moral messages of godliness, obedience, and modesty (Bermingham 2000). Teaching girls and young women botany and how to draw flowers and plants was considered a decorous activity. Girls became acquainted with a beautiful but domesticated nature, at the same time training their minds to think in an orderly fashion.

In the next section, I compare several girl-made manuscripts in relation to the published religious flap discussing how the girls wrote out the words, drew and perhaps colored the pictures, and made the objects out of paper. All the girls appear to have been working from the four-part British text and/or in combination with the American one (itself based on the British text).[5] I am interested in how the girls apply their literacy knowledge of writing and drawing. Although none of the girls includes the peritextual matter pertaining to needlework, I am intrigued as to how they may be applying skills that they have used on fabric to a paper medium.

Girl-Made Flap Books

Eleanor Schanck's flap book has pen and ink illustrations and is composed of a single sheet of paper folded into four panels. While the date 1777 is inscribed on the text along with her name, where she lived, England or America, is not clear. The images reveal her limited ability to draw but also her ingenuity in design and in interpretation of the presumably religious and traditional text. Her education in literacy and needlework is exhibited as well.

Consistent with the published versions of the flap book, the male figures' clothes are updated to the contemporary period. The costumes of the male characters are all eighteenth-century. The men have chin-length hair, flipped up at the ends, ornate frock coats, and tricorn hats, and one has a cravat. They hold their flowers as if they are offering posies. Even Adam and Eve are not naked; their arms are covered and they wear long drawers. The mermaid's tail is perfunctory.

By contrast, the mythological animals are detailed and domesticated. The lion is transformed into a cat and the griffin into a swan combined with a cat. The eagle is also the swan. This suggests that Eleanor liked drawing cats and swans since she uses the correct terms in the verse by referring to a griffin and to an eagle. Since the images do not accord, this suggests a deliberate decision—a seizing of agency in her drawing in creating a new hybrid monster in the illustrations. The theme of domestication applies to the skeleton as well. It appears to be a man holding his props of an hourglass and cane or scythe dressed in almost a pantomime costume with a black mask, smiling mouth, and with black-covered arms and legs, and a v-shaped variegated design on the chest.

Eleanor's education is suggested by her design sense, her use of roman numerals, and her beautiful handwriting. The needlework aspect is suggested in the additions of the flowery sprigs that represent trees

Figure 11.1 does not appear in the Open Access edition due to rights restrictions.

Figure 11.1. *Eleanor Schanck* 1777. Courtesy: Cotsen Children's Library.

and are most apparent in the elaborate third panel. Here the cross-hatching in the drawings of the heart and moneybag sequence also suggest sampler stitches. The way the elaborate roman numerals of the date are worked around the top ornate figure, resembling a butterfly, MDCC on one side of the image and LXXVII on the other, recalls a sampler.

Eleanor's name appears on the reverse side of the sheet of paper on the back of the third panel, on the flip side of which is the date. There is a faint script that says "her" and perhaps "hand." Her signature is in elegant script. Indeed, her handwriting is so beautiful and clear that it is still easy to read after hundreds of years. This shows her level of penmanship in its application of the tenets as set by educationalists like John Locke. Her creative approach to the illustrations suggests a domestication of a stern and potentially terrifying text if it is to be interpreted literally. Her skill in creating an artifact composed of one sheet carefully folded so that her name appears inscribed on the outside shows her sense of authority as an author. That her name appears to be written on a label proclaims her ownership of the object as if it were a published book (Pearson 1994).

Betsy Lewis's flap book was created circa 1800 in the United States; she writes her location as Dorchester (Massachusetts). Like the other girls' manuscripts, it consists of one sheet of paper folded into flaps. In contrast to the others, it has three panels, the first episode about Adam and Eve being missing.[6] Since the artifact is composed mainly of watercolor illustrations, the visual dimension dominates.

Figure 11.2 does not appear in the Open Access edition due to rights restrictions.

Figure 11.2. *Betsy Lewis* c. 1800. Courtesy: Cotsen Children's Library.

The visual is emphasized further by the layout and design; the neat but utilitarian script occupies less than a third of a leaf, the rest being dominated by the exquisitely rendered, detailed illustrations. Words and images are enclosed in a ribbon-like border that draws the eye in, as to a framed (movable) picture. The impression is of a carefully rendered piece of interactive art with accompanying words.

Since the manuscript does not include the Biblical story and begins with the episode about the lion, as a text the emphasis rests on the sections about the creatures' transformations, the story of the young man stolen by the eagle, and his rise and death. The effect is to reduce the religious teaching but emphasize the moral. Indeed, as I discuss below, the girl has not only apparently studied the illustrations of the published versions in relation to the words, but grasped the movable effects possible in the design and placement of the flaps. These either fall over the midsection of a body or object, creating a split-body effect; provide a view of two separate scenes; or create a split-scene effect as in a comic book (Reid-Walsh 2007). Her adaptation and modifications of these techniques at times create a substantial visual alteration of the published versions.

Each of the creatures, especially the lion and birds, has a character and personality revealed by their stance and attitude. Instead of having the book consist of three separate episodes, Betsy Lewis has drawn the figures in such a way as to connect them with one another, as in a triptych panel painting. The way each is positioned suggests action and emotion: the lion seems to be gazing at the eagle and at the young man in the second episode, while the glamorous young man in the last panel gazes back at the other two. The only isolated figure staring toward the viewer is the skeleton, rendered in black pen and ink, holding a scythe and hourglass. Unlike Eleanor's pantomime-like skeleton, here there is an attempt at anatomy that suggests some training in art.

These visual links occur within the space of individual episodes as well. For example, when the lion transforms into an eagle upon the lifting of the flaps, instead of the eagle being represented stiffly, facing sideways as in the published versions, the eagle looks down at the child he is holding. Similarly, in the next episode this link between the eagle and the human is continued through the eagle's gaze. The most sophisticated depictions occur in the development of this sequence. When the flaps are closed, the words begin in the same way as do the published versions. But unlike the commercial works, Betsy maintains the eagle as a visual presence in her work. The eagle (from the previous sequence) hovers over the head of the young wealthy man who has not only escaped it but has also thrived. The eagle appears to be looking

down at the young man and is holding the top of a heart that is above the young man's head. The image makes sense emblematically for it suggests a connection between the eagle and the person.

Visually, this manuscript is in some ways more coherent than the published texts, which use a split-scene effect that makes no sense when the flaps are closed.[7] The girl retains the design device, but her visual narrative makes sense even before the leaf is turned down. More surprisingly, this visual coherence continues when the flaps are turned in the opposite way from the directions in the text.
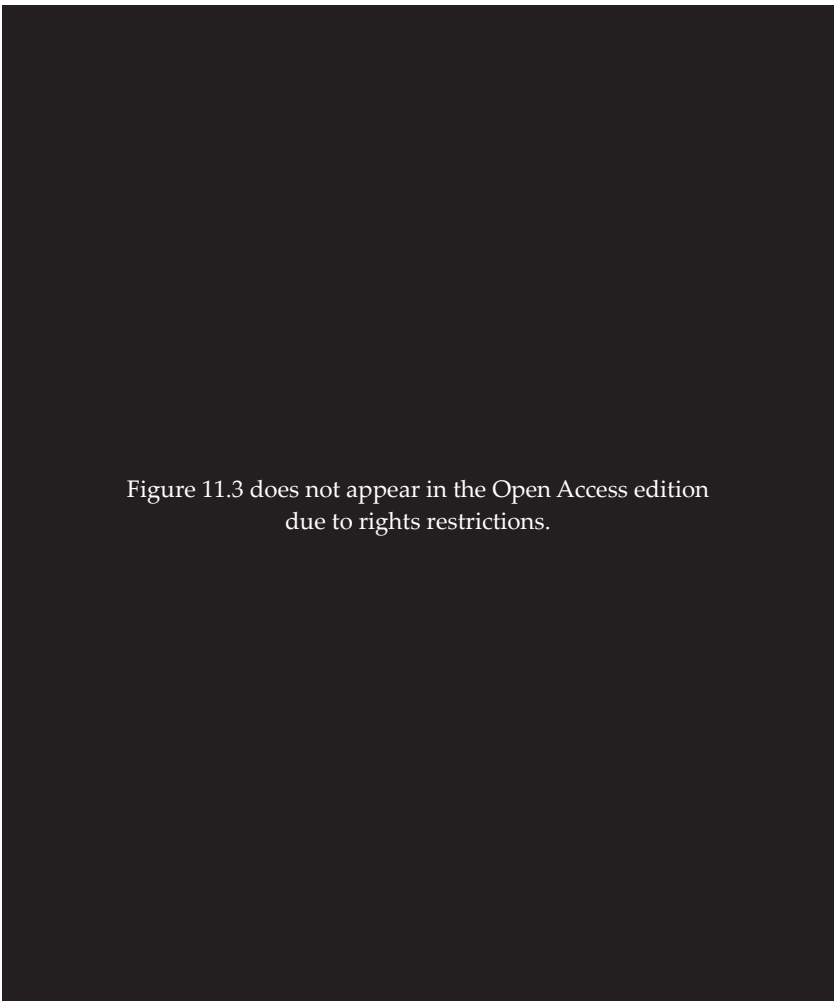
Figure 11.3 does not appear in the Open Access edition due to rights restrictions.

Figure 11.3. *Betsy Lewis <partial mistransformation>.* Courtesy: Cotsen Children's Library.

This photograph shows a flap book with the top flap lifted but the lower one closed (not turned down as is necessary to follow the words in the sequence). This is a lovely mistransformation and is effective in design since the top is the money purse with strings apparently floating over the lower images of flowers and a heart-shaped strawberry.

These images appear to be an ingenious artistic solution to the problems with visual flow in the published versions, for Betsy's art makes sense of each transformation, overriding the words. Notably, the photograph also shows Betsy's self-correction, for there is an error in her transcription. She has crossed out one word that, though illegible, looks like "pound" and has corrected it to "pain."[8]

Sally White Dawson's flap book is mainly pen and brown ink with occasional touches of green and pale pink watercolor (Laura Berry and Margaret Ryther, personal communication). As with the other girl-made religious flap books, this one is based on the four-part British text, *The Beginning, Progress and End of Man* (1650) and the later American
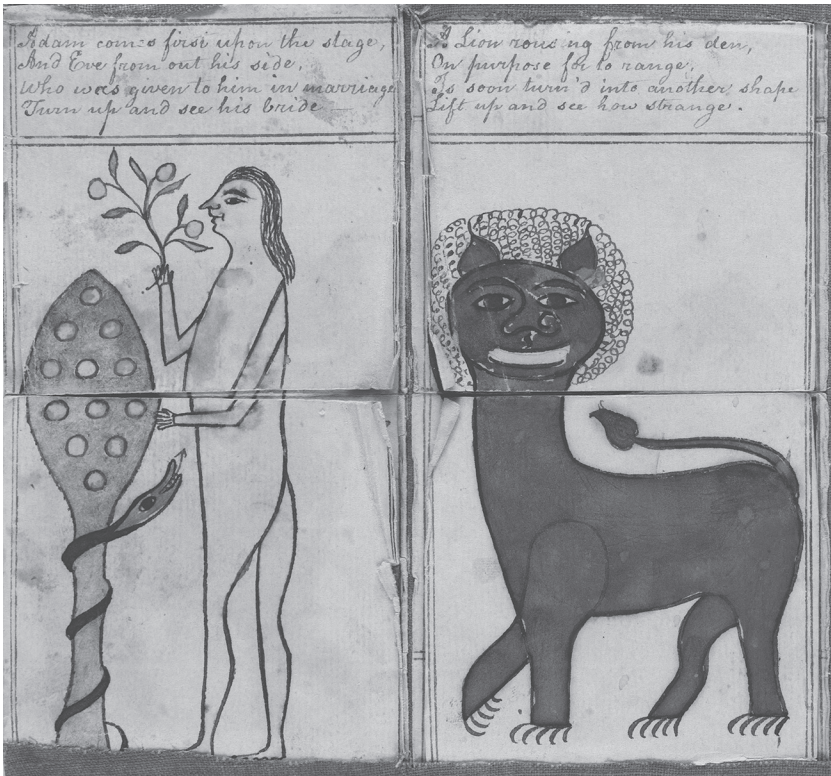
Figure 11.4. *Sally White Dawson* circa 1805. Courtesy: Margaret Ryther and Laura Berry, the Williamsburg Folks Museum/The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Museum Purchase.

Metamorphosis (1814). In contrast, though, when I saw Sally White Dawson's stylized pale green apple tree with a snake curled around its base, I was struck by how much this illustration appears to be an adaptation of the American flap book. Because of the snake having been drawn on the lower flap but not extended to the top flap, when the flap is lifted the head of the snake does not appear to move. This is comparable to the few other ones I have seen in which the child artists have wrapped the snake around the tree trunk.

As with the other two examples, the most striking differences between the published and handmade version lie in illustrations. Like Eleanor's, Sally's drawing skills seem limited as far as depicting human bodies is concerned, although she has given Adam and Eve slightly different profiles. Again, like Eleanor, she has domesticated the sequence of the lion and griffin, but in her own style. The lion looks like a smiling housecat with long claws, with a lion tail, and a curious but ingenious halo mane; she is creating her own monster.[9] The griffin (and apparently also an eagle) looks like a domestic fowl (perhaps a chicken). These images suggest that she is drawing creatures with which she is familiar.

As with the other two girls, Sally devotes care to her depictions of flowers. In the episode about the young miser she provides details of three different types of flower that recall sampler art. Like Betsy, Sally makes some effective visual links between the episodes. For example, through the sparing use of pale pink on the apple sprig Adam holds and the flower sprig the young miser holds, she ties the characters together. Similarly, in the final two sequences, she clearly depicts the same man by way of the attire of each, and uses the same distinctively designed moneybag in each.

While there is no name on the document, unlike the other two girl-made flap books, where all I have located so far are the catalogue records, here there is known provenance. Margaret Ryther owns Sally's flap book; it has been passed down through the generations to her. It is known that the flap book was made by her ancestor, Sally White Dawson, of Scottish-Irish descent, who lived in Albermarie County, Virginia, around 1805. It is presently housed in the Folk Museum of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in Virginia.

Conclusion: Placing Girls' "Modding" Historically

This discussion of homemade religious flap books made by three girls from the late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth centuries, the first either

British or American, and the last two identified as American, reveals insights into a girls' DIY or participatory culture hundreds of years ago. By engaging with the artifacts through looking at the illustrations, reading the words, lifting the flaps up and down, and comparing them with the published versions of similar flap books, it is possible to gain insight into the girls' understandings of the story. Significantly, the flap books reveal a different understanding of girls' literacy education than our own, one that combines writing and drawing as well as copying and creating.

In relation to Henry Jenkins's (2008) anatomy of the process of modding as consisting of appropriating, archiving, annotating, and recirculating, it appears that the girls have merged the various reproductive and creative functions. Each girl has taken a published text (or texts), written out the words and drawn the pictures, and in so doing transformed them into her own creative artifact.[10] This appropriation involves the other functions of archiving and annotating.

Significantly, each girl has maintained the style and format of the commercially produced works. When the flaps are lifted up or down the transformations are consistent with published sequence. In this way, they have created an archive of the artifact. At the same time, within the limits of their skills in writing and drawing, they have annotated the standard religious text and made it their own.

As I have noted, the annotations are primarily visual and are most extensive in the ways in which the girls have drawn and colored the figures, personalized the characters, and implied connections among them. While Eleanor Schanck drew with pen and ink, Betsy Lewis and Sally White Dawson used ink and watercolors. The inclusion of color, to different degrees, is a significant modification in itself, most of the commercial texts, British and American, having black-and-white images.

As I have discussed, the girls tended to domesticate the animals and birds, like turning a lion into a cat, turning a griffin or an eagle into a swan or a chicken, and, on occasion, suggesting relationships between the human characters and the creatures (as in Betsy Lewis's eagle and young man). Indeed Betsy has succeeded in using her own visual logic to transform the images so as to create an improved text, one more coherent than the published originals.

Notably, all the girls have also exhibited skill in drawing flowers, which may relate to their knowledge of floral design for needlework according to the educational beliefs and practices of the period. Depending on their skill and interests they have variously sketched posies in the young men's hands, in the case of Eleanor Schanck; used draw-

ing and exquisite water colors to create floral clusters that, because of their size, appear almost as characters in the scenes in the case of Betsy Lewis; or sparingly used color to connect the flora across different episodes, as in the case of Sally White.

Jenkins's final point about recirculating materials seems to be related to the presumed adult-oriented impetus for the activity. As mentioned above, since the text is of a religious and moral nature, this activity might have been permitted even on the Sabbath. At the same time, within a collective activity or communal setting, since the girls have discriminated between which features to copy, alter, or add to, they are practicing critical literacy skills using writing and drawing equally as means of communication (Locke 1693; Bermingham 2000). This individual critical and creative ability shows how the girls have modified the texts for their own purposes. At the grassroots level, their recirculation adds "value and meaning" and points perhaps to the possibility of "changes in the cultural agenda" (Rose 2013: n.p.). These changes are not spectacular for they have neither added extra episodes nor strayed far from the published texts in relation to the words, or in their sources for the drawings. Rather, the way the girls have formed their drawings and colored the images suggests that each of them has appropriated a purportedly religious text and subtly made it her own. The design of the flap books impels the flaps to fall in the opposite way from the intended religious and moral narrative. How can we think of historical children's play that modifies, and perhaps subverts, the intent of a purportedly religious text? Is this an example of the medieval genre of the "world turned upside down"? (Reid-Walsh 2012b: 70).

The flap books constructed by the three girls, then, give brief glimpses into how girls' DIY or participatory culture flourished in earlier centuries in England and America. Examining their techniques of copying and reworking a commercial text gives a contemporary viewer an glimpse into practices of an earlier, girl-centered domestic culture. The similarity to art illustration and to needlework, samplers in particular, are avenues I wish to explore further in relation to the quiet, contained beauty of their handiwork.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. See http://sites.psu.edu/play/
2. For interactive facsimiles of the *Metamorphosis,* please see my project website with Penn State University Libraries: http://sites.psu.edu/play/.
3. An image of Sarah Collins's sampler is available on the Winterthur Museum website. http://museumcollection.winterthur.org
4. An image of Hannah Smith's sampler is available on the Victorian and Albert Museum website. http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O141139/sampler-smith-hannah
5. These examples form part of an ongoing project on early movable books created for and by children. The first three are housed in the Cotsen Children's Library, Princeton University. The fourth is privately owned but held at the Folk Museum in Williamsburg.
6. I need to investigate further to determine why the first section is separate.
7. The illustrations vary in this episode. The British texts show a partial heart over the head of a cavalier, while the American ones show part of a canopied heart over an elegant young man in a landscape. The sequence makes sense only when the leaf is turned down, as directed, to reveal a moneybag.
8. In the 1650 and 1814 texts the word is "same," not "pain" but Betsy keeps the rhyme scheme. Her final two lines follow the American text.
9. I cannot locate a source; it reminds me of halos in religious art and of the iconography of a winged lion with halo representing St. Mark. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion_of_Saint_Mark.
10. Copying was understood differently in previous centuries before the age of mechanical reproduction. The only originals were God's handiwork. In

modern day terms, educators elided copying and creating, or reproduction and authorship (see discussion in Locke (1693: section 160, 214–215) and Bermingham (2000).

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12

WHERE ARE THE IRISH GIRLS?

Girlhood, Irishness, and LT Meade

Susan Cahill

In 1906, the Irish author LT Meade was dubbed "The Queen of Girls'-Book Makers"[1] by a scathing reviewer of four of her novels in *The Saturday Review* on 15 December, who asked "How is Mrs Meade possible?" because of her prodigious output and popularity with a young female readership. The review resulted in a plethora of letters to the editor in the following weeks, including an indignant reply from Meade herself and an impassioned letter of defense from a group of Dulwich schoolgirls who proclaimed: "We her girl-friends will not stop reading her books, the writer of the most thrilling stories, the stories which we all love." The editor's snarky and derisive comments under the girls' letter clearly state his perspective on Meade, asking the school to "try and set at least a tolerably high standard of reading" and aligning her with the provincial and the middle-class: "in Dulwich Mrs. Meade is a local celebrity, a thing loved of the suburban mind" (Hawkes-Smith 1907: 81) which prompted the teachers of the Dulwich High School for Girls to respond with a list of what would be thought of as the more appropriate literature that the girls had been reading at school, which included Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Scott. This did not placate the editor however, who responded on 2 February 1907, "Girls who read at school Ivanhoe and the Heroes … prefer "Turquoise and Ruby" [Meade's novel]. Does this look as though their teaching had as much effect as one might hope on these children's taste in reading?" (143). This very public spat about the suitability of Meade, her literary value, and the education of girls places Meade at the center of such debates and illustrates the presence of a girls' culture at odds with official ideas about what constitutes appropriate literature for girls. Importantly also, girls themselves were making their voices heard in the debates; the Dulwich girls who jumped to Meade's defense were thirteen years old.

Meade was beloved by girls and a popularizer of girls' cultures, and her output is an early example of a youth culture that is not understood and is disapproved of by the adult generation. In 1898, she

topped a poll run by the periodical *The Girl's Realm* to discover the favorite author among its readers, and her high position in a variety of other polls throughout the period testifies to her popularity among her young female audience; as Helen Bittel notes: "Meade's girls' novels … collectively enjoyed a wider circulation than the works of most Victorian writers for either 'general' or juveniles" (2006: para. 2). Largely credited with popularizing the school story, she was an extraordinarily prolific writer, writing somewhere near three hundred books in a range of genres including romance, crime fiction, and sensation, career, and supernatural novels, but she is best known for the girls' school story. However, by 1929 Wilson Library Bulletin had included her on a list of books "Not to be Circulated"—a list of children's books that public librarians were recommended to remove from their shelves because of their lack of literary value (Mitchell 1995). Meade's books are now long out of print, and she is rarely remembered in children's literature criticism, except as a footnote or brief mention, although in recent years she seems to be enjoying renewed critical interest.[2] However, what is important for the purposes of this chapter is Meade's popularity, combined with her status as an Irish writer for girls who often features Irish girls as narrators or significant characters.[3]

As historian Angela Woollacott recently argued, studying girlhood can reveal the dynamics of the structural aspects of colonialism since girls are often the most marginalized subjects of colonialism given their age and sex, often compounded by their nationality and class (Woollacott 2014). This chapter explores the popularity of stories about the Irish girl in the late nineteenth century alongside the significant number of Irish women writers, of whom Meade is perhaps the most popular, who wrote for a young female audience, and who, like Meade, are now largely forgotten. The chapter considers the importance of Meade's Irish girls within a conception of girlhood that is both intensely marketable and linked culturally to anxieties about consumerism and artificiality. Meade's work, I will argue, demonstrates assumptions about femininity, Irishness, girlhood, economics, and class (and their intersections) particular to the period, as well as the role that writing for girls is seen to have in the inculcation of such discourses. Such an examination—of a popular yet neglected writer—lays bare the gender bias of the Irish cultural imaginary to permit a rethinking of the structuring binaries that often govern Irish culture, while also demonstrating the ways in which the study of girlhoods can make such dynamics visible. A study of girls changes the story of early twentieth-century Ireland, enabling a more complex reading not just of gender dynamics, but of the narratives of the nation that circulated during this period, which were pre-

dominantly categorized in terms of nationalism and political unrest. To begin, I first outline briefly the apparent invisibility of girlhood in the Irish literary context and argue instead that the Irish girl emerges as a potent and salient figure when one turns to popular fiction of this period. The chapter then explores constructions of the Irish girl in the work of Meade, as the most popular of the writers who represent Irish girlhood, focusing on novels such as *Wild Kitty* (1897) as well as her editorial work for the girls' magazine *Atalanta*.

Irish novelists who wrote for girls, like Meade, were popular during their writing careers but have subsequently been forgotten and critically neglected, and their books are now long out of print.[4] It is likely that their popularity (and thus their association with popular or low culture) and their young female middle-class audiences account in a major way for their neglect. Furthermore, in an Irish context, this literature does not generally fit into the types of cultural nationalism popular toward the end of the nineteenth century. John Wilson Foster, in his recent study of the popular novel in Ireland during this period, argues that the disregard of such fiction in critical accounts owes much to orthodox histories of the Irish Literary Revival, in which popular novels that do not reflect the concerns of the revival are ignored.[5] The "Irish 'grand narrative,'" Foster writes, "is essentially a male narrative that does not require female novelists in order for it to be told, especially middle-class and upper middle-class novelists with a Victorian or Edwardian outlook and set of values" (2008: 26). Although the Irish writers of popular girls' fiction do not all share similar outlooks, politics, and sets of values, they all suffer from this gender and class bias among the critics, the result of which is an invisibility of Irish girls' culture and Irish girlhood in critical accounts of the period. This invisibility is symptomatic of a more general representative elision of girlhood in Irish culture.

Given a well-documented tendency in British colonial discourses to represent Ireland and the Irish in feminized, infantilized, or atavistic forms, Irish nationalist representations tended to stress hyper-masculine heroics, and often used the figure of the male child as an effective metaphor in the articulation of Ireland as a new and independent nation (Sisson 2004; Meaney 2006).[6] Kelly S. McGovern discusses the invisibility of girlhood in nationalist discourses, in which passive femininity is invoked in terms of maturity: the Irish woman is cast as mother, reproductive guarantor of the future of the nation (and this national child is invariably male), or she is depicted in symbolic terms, as an object, a representative of the nation (McGovern 2009). Girlhood is thus written out in national terms, in which the boy represents the ideal-

ized, heroic future of the nation and woman the passive producer of this future. Irish feminist critics have criticized this masculinist impulse of Irish studies, which articulates a self-birthing national subject that is based on and sustained by the erasure of the maternal body (Sullivan 2000, 2002, 2005). Personifications of the Irish nation that took female forms, such as Mother Ireland, Cathleen Ní Houlihan, and Róisín Dubh, serve to secure the female body as an object: she who sustains and nurtures the nation but has no place or subjectivity within it. The masculinist narrative of the Irish Literary Revival tends to be read in terms of a male genealogy, often an Oedipal conflict between father and son (Meaney 2006). Such dynamics offer little space for considerations of the Irish girl.

Catherine Driscoll's observation that girlhood "emerged as a way of understanding, positioning, and disciplining that period of transition" (2002: 59) between childhood and adulthood also helps to explain Irish studies' lack of interest in girlhood. As I argue elsewhere, the notions of an "unfinished, persistently in-process girlhood then, is of little use in terms of the Irish national subject (defined through masculinity) that is being articulated in the late nineteenth century" (Cahill 2014: 170), which further compounds an invisibility of girlhood in critical accounts of the period. However, while the Irish girl may not appear to be absent in cultural representations, the proliferation of fiction by Irish women writers aimed at girl readers and containing Irish female characters demonstrates instead her cultural presence. As I shall show, this has important ramifications for the rethinking and refiguring of the Irish national imaginary.

Despite a critical absence surrounding girls' literary culture in Ireland in this period, there were a significant number of Irish women writing children's books aimed at girls, particularly between 1870 and 1920. Stephen J. Brown, in *A Reader's Guide to Irish Fiction* (1910) dedicates a section to Stories for Girls, in which he includes Violet Finny's *A Daughter of Erin,* six novels by Rosa Mulholland, two by her sister Clara, several by Katharine Tynan, and one novel by E. O'Connor Morris.[7] To add to this catalog, from surveys of publisher lists and contemporary reviews I have compiled the following list of authors writing for and about Irish girls: May Crommelin (c. 1850–1930), Flora Shaw (1852–1929), Margaret Wolfe Hungerford (1855–1897), Josephine M. Callwell (c. 1858–1935), Winifred M. Letts (1882–1972), and Elizabeth Lysaght (fl. 1872).[8] Many of the novels by these writers were published by Blackie and Sons, a firm that printed a significant number of children's books and had opened a Dublin office by 1884 (Benson 2011). Irish writers feature strongly on their lists of children's books—in the endpapers of

Rosa Mulholland's *Giannetta: A Girl's Story of Herself,* published in 1889, books by JM Callwell, Katharine Tynan, Elizabeth J. Lysaght, and Violet G. Finny are all advertised under the heading Books for Girls, and they were still being advertised six years later in the endpapers of a book by popular English boys' writer GA Henty. Indeed, *Giannetta* was serialized in the *Sheffield Weekly Independent* in 1890 and reprinted into the 1920s. Such popularity is important when we are considering the books' role in projecting and thereby confirming stereotypes of Irishness in the popular imagination in Britain and beyond. Interestingly, the apparent invisibility of the Irish girl in Irish culture is matched by her hypervisibility in British culture.

In the late nineteenth century, the girl became the subject of much fretful debate in various British and American periodicals concerned by her growing independence and her connections to consumerism and to sexuality. Eliza Lynn Linton's diatribe against the "Girl of the Period," published anonymously in *The Saturday Review* in 1868, is a well-known example of this anxiety. Linton admonishes the girl of the period for what was seen to be her immoral investment in fashion, elaborate dress, artificial beauty, and consumerism, which, for Linton, brings the girl into dangerous alliance with overt sexuality and the commercial sphere. As Peter Stoneley remarks, "Linton suggested that the 'Girl' had adopted the extravagant dress of the prostitute, and that in doing so, she too had turned herself into a commodity" (2003: 31). Stoneley examines the ways in which the middle-class girl, her identity, agency, and development, become tied up in consumerism: "The process of buying into womanhood not only provides the ideological foundation for the girl's identity, but it also transforms her into something to be bought" (5). Girls' fiction also becomes part of this consumerist strategy, offering identities to be bought into and tapping into girls' budding consumer identity. As Michelle Smith notes in her discussion of advertising in *Girl's Own Paper,* the girl's "identity was being built not only as a reader, but also as a consumer" (2011: 34). But books and magazines aimed at girls also operate as commercial objects, and these contributed to moral anxieties about girls' reading, particularly evident in that heated debate surrounding Meade's suitability in *The Saturday Review.*[9]

In Ireland, commercialized fiction tended to become associated with Englishness, especially in the context of the Irish Literary Revival. In Douglas Hyde's famous polemic on de-Anglicizing Ireland, his appeal is that, "we … set our face sternly against penny dreadfuls, shilling shockers, and still more the garbage of vulgar English weeklies" (1894: 159). John Wilson Foster's recent book on the popular novel in Ireland reveals the complex ways in which nationality and popular fiction in-

tertwined in the period, not always articulating clear distinctions between Englishness and Irishness, in a way that was surely problematic to a revivalist sensibility aiming to create a distinct national literature (2008: 35). The combination of popularity, a female readership, and commercial interest—which looks to a broad readership and tends to blur national boundaries, as Foster points out: "British and Irish popular novelists shared much the same readership and nourished the same idea of what constituted the concerns and style of an effective novel" (34)—fuels numerous debates, placing fictional literature about the Irish girl at crucial junctures of social and cultural anxieties of the period. For the readership of a writer like Meade, oriented toward England, the Irish girl, as I argue, becomes a means through which such anxieties are negotiated and expelled beyond the borders of the nation.

Linton's girl of the period also brings ideas of nationality into play. Although the girl represents "a national madness," Linton insists that she has abandoned her Englishness: "Of late years we have changed the pattern, and have given to the world a race of women as utterly unlike the old insular ideal as if we had created another nation altogether" (1868: 340). Linton's persistent recourse to nationhood in the article illustrates the intimate conceptual relationship between this construct and gender. I would also argue that Meade's Irish girls take on the characteristics of the girl of the period and allow the English girls in the narratives, and, by extension, their English readers, a means of negotiating the desirable and undesirable attributes of commercial girlhood, while enabling these readers to remain sufficiently distant in terms of nationality.

The articulations of girlhood, nationality, and the commercial that emerge in Meade's work are complex, varied, and often contradictory. Irish girls populate many of Meade's novels, and their representations negotiate a range of assumptions and associations surrounding Irishness and girlhood in the period. The Irish girls in her school stories owe much to late-nineteenth-century stereotypes of Irishness, particularly Matthew Arnold's sentimental feminine Celt and the exaggerated brogue of stage Irishry. They are often wild, rebellious, frank in speech, unruly in manners, and overemotional, and their English counterparts in the stories are both attracted to and repelled by them for these reasons. Their Irishness also tends to present them as spectacles, as highly visible presences in the English schools through their choice of clothes, speech, accent, and stories told of home. Furthermore, these Irish girls are not always assimilated into the English schools they inhabit and disrupt.

Meade's books were consumed both in Britain and Ireland and specifically marketed in endpapers and publishers' catalogues as "suitable

for prizes and presentation," and their sumptuous production values attest to this: they are desirable objects with their gold and color blocking and illustrations. They bear a particular moral impulse as book prizes for good behavior, yet also appeal to a consumer market driven by spectacle and appearance. This coupling of spectacle with morality is important since Meade has the Irish girls in her novels function comparably.

Mitchell, in her study of a younger manifestation of the New Woman, cites Meade as a novelist for "the new girl," quoting Meade, who writes in an article on girls' schools: "girls, so trained, must surely be the New Women for whom we long" (Meade 1895: 463, quoted in Mitchell 1995: 22).[10] Many of Meade's novels are consciously marketed for the new girl, using the visual languages of tennis or golf (*The Lady of the Forest* (1889) features an image of a girl carrying a golf club on the cover, although the novel has no mention of the game in it), bicycles, and bobs. Furthermore, Meade's Irish girls in her later work, such as *Wild Kitty* (1897) and *The Rebel of the School* (1902), seem to speak back to debates circulating in the second half of the nineteenth century concerning the new girl's extravagance of dress, artificiality, and participation in consumer culture, and this showiness is also celebrated on the covers. Although Linton's article predates a book like *Wild Kitty* by some thirty years, the concerns she articulates persist throughout the century and, indeed, as far as 1922 when Linton's article is reprinted in *The Saturday Review* with the commentary: "Our own feeling is that it is just as necessary today as Mrs. Lynn Linton seems to have found it fifty years ago" (Anon. 1922: 250). Linton continued writing in similar terms throughout the 1890s, directing her attention toward the New Woman. What is notable about Meade's school stories is the way she negotiates the negative qualities ascribed to the girl of the period, associating them with Irishness instead of morality to offer a convenient distance for English readers.

The Irish girl in these novels portrays many of the traits of the girl of the period, particularly lavish dress. This is not the first time that extravagance, Irishness, and the girl of the period have been combined. Indeed, in an earlier short-lived publication, *The Girl of the Period Miscellany* (1869), which pokes light-hearted fun at its titular heroine in all her guises, three articles are devoted to Irish girls of the period—"Dublin Darlings," "Cork Coquettes," and "Limerick Lasses."[11] The girls from each region display slight variations, but they are marked in their difference from their English counterparts (framed as prototypes or originals) by the display of a certain excessiveness; the London girl plays a part, but the Dublin girl exhibits "a disarming candour, an overwhelm-

ing simplicity" (Anon. 1869a: 19). The Cork Coquette is even more so: "The Cork Coquette, let me whisper it in the smallest of types, *is a little extravagant.* She dresses in a far more sumptuous style than her Dublin sister. She has the latest affairs from Paris. No sooner, over there, do the women shape themselves so and so, than the Cork Coquette shapes herself so and so. And if I may write it, she shapes herself *more* so and so than the originals" (Anon. 1869b: 80). Her nationalist sympathies are laughed off as attractive fripperies: "What matter is it if the lovely traitor arms herself with a green scarf, a bouquet of shamrock, and emerald ribbons, and attacks our Government by cheering a Fenian? It won't hurt the British Constitution; and she must look so nice doing it" (Anon. 1869b: 82). She is also particularly shaped by her choice of light reading and is, "by consequence faintly tinged with the hand-squeezing romanticism which pervades the barley-sugar illustrations to the love of tales of our period" (81). Although fashioned by her reading matter, and even more fashionable than her London and Parisian counterparts, the Irish girl also seems inclined toward girl of the period characteristics. Her embodiment of risqué elements of nationalism, flirtatiousness, and dress are mediated and dissolved here through her lack of guile, affectation, and intellectual rigor; "the plague of blue fever," for example, "has never spoiled her" (80). The construction of these girls as naturally and unselfconsciously excessive offers an interesting relationship between nation and gender, gestured towards in Linton's piece. In the logic of these articles, English girls perform girl of the period characteristics, while Irish girls embody them; by implication, the articles offer the English girl a reassuring performative distance.

Meade's Irish girls function in a similar manner. *Wild Kitty* concerns the arrival of Kitty Malone, an Irish girl, at an English school, sent by her father to "be taught manners," for she is too wild. Kitty is described as "very pretty, very untidy, very overdressed" (1897: 12), and her extensive wardrobe of clothes is considered by the English girls and their mothers to be too showy and inappropriate for a girl of her age: "As Kitty spoke she pulled out a pink nun's-veiling, made up with innumerable ruffles and frills and laces and embroidery, a really very pretty dress for quite a gay party, but totally unsuitable for a schoolgirl of Kitty Malone's age" (22). Meade (and by implication the reader) seems to gain pleasure from sartorial descriptions as well as her narrating and noting of Kitty's excesses. Kitty is frank in speech, unruly, emotional, and vain, but very pretty. Meade does not seem to condemn her for these traits as Linton would, and nor does Kitty learn any manners in the course of the narrative; Kitty remains untamed, as she had predicted: "They call me the wild Irish girl at home, and the wild Irish girl

I'll be to the end of the chapter" (Meade 1897: 18). Kitty's declaration speaks to Meade's awareness of the wild Irish girl as a literary construction, directly referencing both Sydney Owenson's 1806 novel, *The Wild Irish Girl*, and *Harry Lorrequer* by Anglo-Irish writer Charles Lever.[12]

Kitty is very wealthy and has easy access to money, which stimulates the crisis in the plot since she lends money to Elma, a school friend less fortunate than herself—breaking the most important rule of the school. Within the moral economy of the novel, though, Kitty is not remonstrated for this lapse; rather, the blame falls on Elma for coveting money not rightfully hers. Kitty's consumerism becomes linked with her Irishness, which thus excuses her, and Dublin is constructed as a locus of fashionable goods not available to the English girls. The headmistress of the school, who, though despairing of Kitty's unruliness, lists her "talents" as possessing money, beauty, an attractive manner, and nice clothes, says: "You are pretty, and I am willing to admit it. Now, a bright face like yours, with an attractive manner, is a gift. Then, besides, you have—you will be astonished when I say this—lots of becoming dress, which adds to the charm of your appearance. Kitty, if you were all you might be—if you would use that money which God has given you, that beauty which God has given you, that attractive manner which God has given you, all for His service—why, you could do a great deal in the world" (Meade 1897: 108). In a way, an attractive appearance as a talent to be used in God's service links to the lavish production of Meade's novels as schoolbook prizes. To be a spectacle has moral value also, and indeed, it seems that Meade is concerned with visualizing the girl, with rendering her visible.

Beth Rodgers, in one of the few detailed engagements with Meade's work and its relationship to her Irishness, highlights the ways in which Meade structures Irishness as connected to notions of independence and the revolt against oppression. For Rodgers, when the Irish girl in *The Rebel of the School* (1902), Kathleen, sets up a secret society called The Wild Irish Girls for the girls in the lowest social strata of the school, it is Kathleen's nationality that becomes the means through which oppression can be articulated. As Rodgers writes, in the novel "Irishness becomes a tool with which to forge community amongst the fringes of society" (2013: 161). Furthermore, Rodgers argues that Meade's construction of her Wild Irish Girls as markedly different from their English counterparts serves to create attractive characters and her availing of popular stereotypes all "allow Meade to articulate and promote ideals about female independence, higher education, and campaigns against social injustice, which are in keeping with her journalistic interest in these topics" (162). Meade was a champion for girls' educational

and professional opportunities. *Atalanta*, the girls literary magazine founded and edited by Meade from 1887 to 1889, ran several articles on these subjects, including a series entitled "Girls who won success," which featured Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the first woman to obtain a medical degree in Britain and be included on the British medical register (Taylor 1888). *Atalanta* also ran monthly competitions for literary essays of which a young Evelyn Sharp (later a suffragette and children's writer) won several, and also awarded prizes for artwork.[13] *Atalanta* was involved in producing a community of girls as readers and scholars, but also as writers and visual artists.

For Helen Bittel, the inconsistencies in terms of feminist politics evident in Meade's novels for girls, decried by most critics, are instead worth exploring: "Particularly where they are most confusing or troubling, they reveal something significant about the complicated ways in which new ideas about gender were resisted, modified, negotiated, and assimilated in the 1890s" (2006: para. 3). This is important in a consideration of Meade as a figure. Yes, her plots and characters are stereotypical and often undermine the New Woman thrust of many of her narratives. Yes, she mass-produced popular fiction. But much of what Meade was concerned with was the cultural visibility of the girl, as a reader, writer, participant in education, consumer, spectacle, and as a disruptive presence. Importantly, that disruptive presence is most often an Irish girl who has become invisible in critical accounts of the Irish Literary Revival, which render women as emblems or passive producers of the nation. In this context, the critical invisibility of a writer like Meade, as a participant in a growing culture of visualizing girlhood, is ironic: though often conservative, conventional, and stereotypical, Meade's writing and editorial work produces girls as active participants in a critical and artistic culture and as presences that disrupt the norm, just as the intensely visible Irish girl disrupts the staid school. This visibility also functions for the English reader as a means by which contemporary anxieties concerning consumerism, extravagance in fashion and behavior, and rebellion can be projected onto the figure of the Irish girl.

Although Kitty is not tamed in the course of the narrative, that these anxieties can be assuaged in their association with this figure and her removal to Ireland at the end of the narrative recalls Linton's avowal that the girl of the period was "another nation altogether" (1868: 340). Meade, as Rodgers points out, constructs Ireland as an "idealised place of much greater possibility and opportunity" than the English school: Elma, the poor pupil who had broken the school's primary rule in borrowing money from Kitty, travels to Ireland with Kitty where "Elma's intelligence will be nurtured and she will be sent to Girton College,

irrespective of her poverty and class status" (2013: 160). Intriguingly, in Meade's work, Ireland here becomes the space of the girl of the period and the new girl, associated with consumerism and fashion as well as independence and education—and all of these elements come together in the material production of Meade's books. Although Irish girlhood appears invisible in cultural representation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when one examines literary production one instead finds a proliferation of Irish women writers producing fiction for girls and configuring Irish girlhood in ways that resonate both within and beyond the texts. Tina O'Toole's nuanced exploration of Meade's fiction in the context of New Woman writers concludes that Meade "gives her girl readers license to move, not only in a corporeal sense, but also in geographical and ideological terms" (2013: 66). The category crossing that Meade's work enacts through the figure of the girl—between Ireland and England, the commercial sphere and the moral sphere, economics and aesthetics, and the conservative and the liberal—demonstrates the ways in which girlhood studies can act as a transformative paradigm.

Focusing on an author like Meade and her celebration of Irish girls permits us to move away from the ideological constraints imposed by dominant representations of gender in Irish studies as outlined above— the national subject as a male supported by a maternal ground—that continue to have profound and negative effects on Ireland's political and social policies, which consistently insist on women's reproductive value. The complexities of Meade's girls, who participate in a consumer marketplace and function to assuage readers' anxieties about said consumerism yet also formulate communities of disruptive potential, offer numerous potential entry points for thinking differently about British/Irish relations, binaries between popular fiction and literature, and the gendered narratives that bolster constructions of Irish identity. Significantly then, in terms of this book's larger concerns and in line with Woollacott's argument about the importance of girlhood studies, a focus on girlhood reveals important biases relating to gender, age, class, and economics, which when applied to the context of Irish studies highlight a large body of work that troubles national narratives that erase girlhood or fix the girl's body in a reproductive function. That such narratives still desperately need to be troubled is evidenced by the recent case of a young Congolese asylum-seeker in Ireland, pregnant as a result of rape, who was forced to undergo a Caesarean section at twenty-five weeks because of Ireland's restrictive abortion laws. Although separated by a century from this case, Meade's representations of mobile and disruptive girls offer important paradigms for rethinking girlhood in twenty-first century Ireland. Meade's complexities (both in

terms of the girls she figures and her own status as a writer) enact a form of category crossing that can be mapped more generally on to constructions of transitional girlhood that are articulated in the period. The liminal status of girlhood simultaneously enables a critical exploration of another border crossing—the relationship of nation and gender in a trans-national Irish and English context. Thus, Meade's work, through the figure of the Irish girl, allows for an interrogation of both the colonial imagination (the wild Irish girl who embodies frivolous girlhood) and the nationalist masculinist narrative of early twentieth-century Irish culture.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. Meade is fifth-favorite in Constance Barnicoat's survey of colonial girls' reading in "The Reading of the Colonial Girl," published in *The Nineteenth Century* in December 1906. She is also fifth in Florence Low's "The Reading of the Modern Girl" in the same periodical in February 1906. See Bittel (2006).
2. See Reynolds (1990); Mitchell (1995); Norcia (2004); Bittel (2006); Miller (2006); Liggins (2007); Dawson (2009, 2013); Rodgers (2012, 2013, 2014); O'Toole (2013).
3. Meade was born in Bandon, County Cork, in 1844 and grew up in a rectory ten miles from the town. See O'Toole (2013).
4. These writers include Josephine M. Callwell (c. 1858–1935), May Crommelin (c. 1850–1930), Violet G. Finny (fl. 1892), Kathleen Fitzpatrick (1872–?), Margaret Wolfe Hungerford (1855–1897), Winifred M. Letts (1882–1972),

Elizabeth Lysaght (fl. 1872), Clara Mulholland (c. 1856–c. 1934), Rosa Mulholland (1841–1921), Flora Shaw (1852–1929), and Katharine Tynan (1861–1931).

5. The Irish Literary Revival describes a creative movement that flourished at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Its aim was to differentiate and define a distinctively Irish national literature, culture, and identity, however that might be articulated. The period is still subject to intense debate, particularly concerning the relationships between literary history, ideas surrounding national identity, and gender, and, much more recently, the role of children's literature.

6. Recent scholarship on Irish children's literature of this period has identified a profusion of nationalist and propagandist literature aimed at children and the ways in which Irish mythology was mobilized to inspire a sense of national heritage and identity (Hay 2005; Flanagan 2005; West 1994). However, this scholarship focuses almost exclusively on the reading practices and literary culture of boys. Literature for girls and female writers of children's literature are rarely, if ever, mentioned in the few surveys of Irish children's literature that exist.

7. Meade is not mentioned in this list but appears elsewhere in the publication under the heading "Stories of Present-Day Ireland (Peasantry)," along with Rosa Mulholland. It is notable that Meade appears only once in Brown's *Guide,* and perhaps her generic flexibility and the fact that her most popular school stories are set in English schools account for her lack of inclusion under the "Stories for Girls" heading.

8. See Loeber et al. (2006) for publication details for these authors.

9. See Flint (1993).

10. This new girl is coterminous with the New Woman, a term that emerged in this decade to denote perceived changes in femininity associated with a concern for "professional and educational opportunities for women and girls, advocacy for single women, and marriage reform" (Bittel 2006: para. 2).

11. See Moruzi (2009) for a detailed examination of the publication and its general tone.

12. The quotation references the lyrics of a song in *Harry Lorrequer,* a novel by Anglo-Irish writer Charles Lever. Beth Rodgers draws connections between Sydney Owenson's self-fashioning and both Meade's own "self-conscious performance of 'Celtic temperament'" (2013: 154) and her deployment of this performance through the Irish girls in her novels.

13. For Evelyn Sharp references see *Atalanta* 1887–1888, Volume 1. She is commended for essays in April and May and highly commended for work published in June, July, and September.

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🎵 13

"God Is a DJ"

Girls, Music, Performance, and Negotiating Space

Geraldine Bloustien

> DJs instill musical greatness. They select a series of exceptional recordings and use them to create a unique performance, improvised to precisely suit the time, the place and the people in front of them … A DJ's job is to channel the vast ocean of recorded sound into a single unforgettable evening.
> —Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*

> When I DJ it takes me away from the real life and gives me power of the crowd (helping control there emotions @ that time), like god has the power of the universe and it's a fantastic feeling to see what me as an individual can actually create with a few fantastic songs.
> —DJ Tuesday, email message to author

Female DJs and Gender Equity

Over the past two decades, two major and interrelated developments have had considerable impact on popular music practices: the development and accessibility of affordable, easy-to-use new digital technologies and the blurring of traditional boundaries between production and consumption, musicians and fans (Théberge 2004; Prior 2008, 2010). At the heart of these protean developments, we find the DJ often a self-sufficient amateur artist, musician, performer (Prior 2008, 2010), with the demonstrated ability to control and influence his experiential music community through his skills, knowledge, taste, and enthusiasm (Prior 2008; Herman 2006; Montano 2010). Yet the role that girls and young women can play in this world is still fraught with difficulties (Velosa 2012).[1] Male DJs still dominate the dance charts and appear as headline acts at music festivals (Gates 2013a). A March 2013 report on the status of women in the global music industries by Female Pressure, an international collective of female artists, noted that "in the past year only 10 percent of performers at music festivals around the world were female, and women comprised only 9.3 percent of artists listed on music label rosters" (Gates 2013a: n.p.).[2]

This chapter draws on two of my longitudinal ethnographic projects, *Girl Making* (Bloustien 2003) and *Playing for Life* (Bloustien and Peters 2011), as well as some more recent interviews (2012–2013) with several young female DJs from Australia, the U.K., the United States, and Germany. In all of these studies I have explored the processes of gendered selfhood, and particularly the seriousness of play (see Schechner 1995) that occurs particularly in the transition stage when girls move from childhood to adulthood. Using participatory video methodology that offers all the girls a video camera with which they can record their everyday lives, the resulting personal narratives have located the main sites where girls explore their developing sense of gendered self, including their engagement with popular music as consumers and, for some, as creators.

Here, I am focusing specifically on the significance of DJing, which for teenage girls, as Tuesday's comments above indicate, can be a powerful, transformative form of self-making. My investigation included the particular challenges girls face to become DJs and importantly, where these challenges take place, for "behavior and space are mutually dependent" (Ardener 1993: 2; see also Massey 1994). Because physical environments are always contradictory and gendered, "a sense of one's place" refers to both material and symbolic boundaries (Bourdieu 1991: 235). They shape the (self-)perception of which behaviors are considered appropriate or not in particular spaces (Massey 1994; Bloustien and Peters 2011). DJing has increasingly enabled girls to negotiate a variety of previously problematic spaces successfully so it is valuable to understand how girls learn to manage their experiential environments creatively and confidently.

Girls as "Produsers"

Music is now experienced though a multiple range of mobile devices iPods, computers, phone ringtones. In the process, it seems that more and more girls are becoming "produsers," (Bruns 2006) blurring the lines not only between places but also between consumer and creator. As musicologist Christopher Small reminds us, all music activities are participatory and interactive: "To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing … all contributing to the nature of the event that is a musical performance (2011: 23)." Extending Small's understanding of "musicking" as a participatory activity, I focus here specifically on the role and skills of the Disc Jockey (deejay or DJ). Being

an effective DJ is fundamentally about control and acquiring cultural capital (Herman 2006), for a DJ seeks to create and manage the mood of the audience on the dance floor (Brewster and Broughton 2006). A DJ demonstrates this power through musical knowledge, technical expertise, and networking skills (Poschardt 1998).

Tuesday epitomizes this determination and struggle in her own musical achievements. I first met Tuesday in 2001 when she was a teenage participant in my first international project *Girl Making* (Bloustien 2003). The study focused on how gendered subjectivity is negotiated and constituted through everyday social practices, including the main sites where girls explored their developing womanhood: through their bodies, through private and public spaces, and through their friendship groups. During the years, from the project's beginning in 2001 to today, Tuesday has pursued determinedly her earlier aspiration to be a DJ.[3]

The determination of young women to become DJs, across a range of musical genres and through a range of associated roles, strategizes a move "from bathrooms and dance floors to stages and studios" (Farrugia 2012: 5) that takes place in spite of significant embedded historical, material, and social barriers to their full participation (Rowley 2009; Hutchinson 2012; Wilson 2013). These barriers exist even though women have been influential throughout the history of electronic music, "as consumers and users of audio technologies" (Rodgers 2012: 482). As Farrugia noted, referring to Electronic Dance Music (EDM) in 1990s Detroit, "women were often distanced physically, and at times even aurally from the music and the technology so central to dance music and culture. For the most part they were relegated to the sidelines, encouraged to participate primarily as patrons on the dance floor" (2012: 17).

To understand the implication and significance of this struggle for many young female DJs today, it is useful to revisit briefly how the (gendered) meanings and status of DJ have evolved.

(Re)defining "DJ"

It is commonly argued that the term Disc Jockey was coined in 1935 by American radio commentator Walter Winchell to describe the ways radio announcer Martin Block simultaneously played the discs or vinyl records and operated the broadcasting equipment (Brewster and Broughton 2006). Because the records were used to create the illusion of live performances, the term Disc Jockey originally carried with it connotations of mistrust, disparagement, and manipulation—one who

"rides over the music with his voice" jockeying or hustling his place in the world (37).[4] A DJ was certainly regarded with suspicion by musicians, by advertisers, by the broader music industry, and even by the government, particularly in the United States (Fisher 2007).

As digital technology has developed, DJs have used different equipment and techniques for their music, often supplementing or replacing the use of vinyl records, traditional turntables, and record stores with CDs, laptop computers, and the internet, respectively, for sourcing, composing, and playing original music. These changes have, subsequently, generated shifts in the understandings and perceptions of DJ skills, essentially redefining the nature, production, and distribution platforms of the work (Farrugia 2012; Katz 2012; Montano 2010).

Today, a successful DJ might employ a range of composing and playback equipment, regardless of the medium or genre (Brewster and Broughton 2006; Katz 2012). She also needs to show that she is an archivist, demonstrating a thorough and intimate knowledge of her favorite genres, individual artists, and tracks, through her personal record collection. A DJ must also be a mentor, passing on this knowledge to others within her experiential community. Finally, a DJ must possess the requisite cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1993), or street cred (credibility), through a form of reflexive, embodied practice. Chris Shilling termed this "physical capital in situated action" (2004: 473; see, also, Shilling 2013). Paul Willis (1990) refers to such practice as symbolic creativity for it involves the collecting and archiving, sharing and reconstituting of music, clothing, and artwork. In other words, as Brewster and Broughton affirm, a DJ is part shaman, technician, collector, mentor, musician, and artist (2006: 19–20). The greatest DJs, they note, are "evangelists about music … driven by a burning need to share" (219).

Yet despite these developments, DJing is still seen predominantly as a male practice, as evidenced in the most recent report from the Australia Arts Council and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007).[5]

DJing as a Masculine Construct

On 28 October 2011, an article posted to *The Guardian* newspaper by British DJ Hanna Hanra asked "Why are there no female DJs on DJ Mag's top 100 list?" She went on to say, "As a female DJ I've had guys telling me how to use the decks and even changing the speed of my records for me so perhaps it's no surprise we've been left out of a list of best DJs" (Hanra 2011: n.p.; see also Hutchinson 2012). Mark Katz's study of the DJ battle cites the sociologist Michael Kimmel, in arguing

that much of DJing, especially in hip hop, replicated "the structure of many broader institutions … organized around attaining and demonstrating certain ideals of masculinity." Such practices thereby promote gender inequity by producing "a heroic model of masculinity" (2004: 583) which automatically marginalizes women. It has become, he argues, a cultural environment shaped by male technophilia.

Even the young people themselves frequently assume that women are not as interested, competent, or knowledgeable in the area of technology as men. One established male DJ suggested to me recently that this was because "more men than women listen to electronic music in their bedrooms." Even the skills necessary for record sourcing and collecting are seen as a marker of predominantly male strength, expertise, and connoisseurship (Belk and Wallendorf 1994; Straw 1997). Girls, it is argued, do not have the physical stamina to be DJs since such activity requires diving into huge bins to find, collect, and carry large numbers of records, as well as having to transport heavy equipment.

Significantly, girls often lack the opportunities for learning the necessary DJ skills in the first place. Young men usually acquire and hone their technical skills of turntabling/drumming, guitar-playing/breakdancing through their informal networks. They practice their art with their friends in bedrooms or in youth clubs where, again, the space is assumed to be a masculine terrain. As Katz points out, "While these networks are not necessarily discriminatory, they tend to perpetuate the underrepresentation of women, who might not feel comfortable spending time alone with groups of male DJs in the bedrooms and basements where they usually gather" (2006: 585). Those women who have learned these skills typically have had to develop them outside these networks, and thus without the considerable benefits they provide. The unwritten masculine culture of some clubs or workshops can result in the boys dominating the time, equipment, or the physical space even when the written policies of these institutions assert they are equally welcoming to girls and boys (Cohen and Baker 2007; Bloustien and Peters 2011).

Technophilia as a Masculine Attribute

Such restricted access is sometimes further justified by the active construction of technological expertise as a masculine attribute (Cockburn 1985; Farrugia 2004, 2012). Posts online by many female DJs, singers, and musicians often highlight the assumptions by male sound technicians, fellow band members, and even audience members that women know nothing about the technical equipment.

Magda Albrecht (see Bloustien and Peters 2011) is the lead singer of German-based band Totally Stressed. On her Facebook page, she posted a link to a website called Dick Party,[6] forwarded from the Riot Grrrl community in Berlin. Here young women collect and post examples of the sexist things said to them when they are performing on stage, including references to their assumed technological incompetence, their supposed lack of musical talent, and their status as little more than decorative or sexy objects on stage, girlfriends, or groupies. In her own response to the link Magda affirmed that she too had experienced such comments, stating, "Sadly it's all true."

Although many men in the music community, including some male DJs, express a wish to see more female DJs participate in the scene, it has been argued that this can also be a strategy to reinforce the appearance of normative heterosexuality. As Katz notes, "[H]omosociality is often thought to suggest homosexuality," so that many male DJs feel that having a few token women included in the scene demonstrates that the group is not exclusively a male zone. It helps to normalize their male friendships and emphasize the fact that the men are "not, in fact, queer" (2006: 282).

Posts on YouTube in response to videos of female DJs often mitigate any praise for their musical skills with crude comments about their anatomy. For example, typical responses to the duo performance of Killa-Jewel, a female Canadian DJ, producer, and composer, and well-known male DJ D-Styles cutting at *Soul Mechanics DJ School*, were sexist and patronizing:

> Both Sctrach Djs [*sic*] did real well, Killa Jewels stabs were nice! D-Styles kuts were real clean and I love how he's technical and rides with the music at the same time. He's got soul on his scratches. Real awesome record handle movement. I liked Killa jewels tearz. IMO [in my opinion] she may need to work on more patters, but she did real well. (DJ A-Bzzy, posted 9 July 2012).

> Her boobs are so big she doesn't have to be good at anything. (pmely88, posted 10 June 2012).[7]

Times, They Are A-Changin'

However, certain strategies and developments seem to be gradually mitigating the discriminatory hurdles that young women face in becoming performers, producers, and creators in their chosen musical field. The following section examines three of these: the greater visibility of female role models and mentors, the effect of technological

developments, and the increase of alternative spaces for learning, networking, and distribution for female musical artists and performers.

Noisy Girls: Mentors, Role Models, and Activists

Originating in the world of business, professional mentoring is now widely recognized as vital to successful career development in many professional workplace contexts (Allen 2003; Ambrosetti and Dekkers 2010). Described as "both a relationship and a process" (Kwan and Lopez-Real 2005: 276) successful mentoring is based on vital and authentic interconnectedness, underpinned by the explicit discourse of support, collaboration, and inclusivity. Traditionally, and sometimes problematically, the literature describes mentors as being older and more experienced persons than their younger, less experienced, protégés or mentees (Allen and Elby 2007; Cox 2005). However, a more contemporary view of successful mentoring notes the importance of peers, someone equal in status or age (Parker, Kram, and Hall 2014). Role models, who may also be mentors, provide the inspiration to young people, demonstrating that such ambitions are both legitimate and possible. The power of mentoring and role modeling cannot be underestimated, both being considered essential discourses underpinning the music industry. For example, *Music Industry Inside Out*, an Australian membership-based online music industry professional development education resource, features in-depth video tutorials with successful working music industry professionals, as both mentors and role models.[8] Today, there are demonstrably far more successful women in the music industry who, as active mentors, are supporting emerging artists. With this increase in numbers they are gaining new levels of visibility via social networking sites. Several high-profile female rap artists and DJs, especially those from Indigenous and African-American backgrounds, have been among the first groups to break through some of the gender, ethnic, and class stereotypes.

Sydney-based artist Rachel Phillips, aka DJ Minx, was winner of the inaugural She Can DJ competition, which highlights and introduces the best top Australian female DJs to a wider audience (Halliwell 2012), while Sharline Bezzina (aka Spice), of Maltese descent, was "the first woman to record a hip hop track in Australia in 1988 and is still active as a graffiti artist and youth worker at the age of 41" (Mitchell 2013: n.p.). DJ Kuttin Kandi from Queens, one of the most respected DJs in the world of hip hop, is also a well-respected community activist. The aforementioned DJ Killa-Jewel, another successful DJ, producer, com-

poser, and actress, has performed as a hip hop DJ in a range of musical genres across Canada, the United States, Europe, Asia, and Australia.

The work and knowledge of these feminist activists is easily accessible to young aspiring female DJs, musicians, and other cultural artists, and is deliberately and thoughtfully disseminated through social network sites. Such role models, as Los Angeles-based DJ and producer Jack (Jacqueline) Novak explains, "inspire other women and girls to go out and realize they can DJ without having to DJ in their bra. That they can go out and make their own music and make their own beats and don't have to have anyone do it for them" (cited in Gates 2013b: n.p.). All the participants in my own research gratefully acknowledged their own local mentors and role models, who are not always female. DJ Tuesday, for example, talks of the support she gained from her uncle, who was a professional musician ("He played with Sting"). He provided her first set of decks, on which she honed her skills under his guidance. Then when she started to venture into local venues, especially in the early stages of her career, her uncle was her *minder* (keeping the rougher element of her audience at bay as she performed). He also acted as her crew and gave technical support; he helped to carry the record collection, and fixed the microphone or the decks if they broke down mid-set, as they often did. He helped to guide her music choices as she scoured the local record shops for appropriate tracks until she felt confident enough to make her own decisions.

DJ Tuesday reflected that apart from her uncle, and her followers, her greatest female inspirations were singers Ms Dynamite[9] and Lily Allen[10]: "I loved there stuff so I would mix a lot of there stuff and hope one day I could of been up there with them. I did play in the same venue as Ms Dynamite many times."[11] In contrast to Tuesday's experience, the female DJs I interviewed who entered the industry during the past decade considered themselves lucky to have acquired their skills in a relatively supportive climate for women. DJ Betty (twenty-seven) from Adelaide, for example, started learning turntablism only six years ago. While acquiring skills at home on the turntable borrowed from a male friend, she said she immediately received requests to perform in public because people "wanted to see how well a girl could DJ." Like Betty, Lauren Rose, also from Adelaide, got her first opportunity to DJ through a male friend; she said, "[He] gave me the initial opportunity, and [from] the owner of Sugar [night club]) who let me practice on the club's equipment." Another Australian DJ, Deejay Sheba (twenty-four), has been DJing only since late 2010. She said that her mentors, both locally and internationally, have been "people who have put their faith

in me over the years and allowed me to play at their venues and their events and given me the experience and opportunity to grow as an artist." Australian DJ Alley Oop (twenty-four), now working in Berlin, also got her first opportunity through a male friend, "who couldn't make it to a gig at short notice and [she] covered for him."

All the female DJs in their twenties also acknowledged that, ironically, it was their sex that played a major part in their initial success. As DJ Lauren put it: "I am not oblivious to the fact that I have scored a lot of gigs purely because I am a woman. This may not seem like a hurdle at first glance but it really makes it harder to be taken seriously by your peers when you are offered a job because of your looks rather than your merit." DJ Alley Oop put it similarly: "Women get great opportunities to play shows, because we are still in the minority and people like that balance of having a woman on the bill of a party." DJ Flynn's (thirty-two) observations are even more concerning: "I know there have been a couple of big-name commercial clubs in Adelaide who have picked out some girls from modeling agencies and 'taught' them how to DJ which seems an unusual way to go about things!"

New Technologies

As indicated above, a second development has been the new technological advances that have produced lighter and less expensive digital equipment. One example is the creation of a digital turntable that uses CDs as opposed to the traditional vinyl records for scratching and mixing. It allows DJs to manipulate sound through a simulated record deck. The advantages to DJs more generally are the lower cost of sourcing music (through downloads from the internet as opposed to physically sourcing vinyl records) and the easier maintenance of the players.

Another technological development is an interface that links laptops to a traditional player. This means that instead of using commercially released vinyl records, the DJ can use two specially made discs. As Katz points out, these two new types of technologies are not only "bringing turntablism into the digital era," but hold some promise to effect women's access to public performance since "these technologies have the potential to reduce the importance of two activities connected with turntablism that have long been seen as stereotypically masculine: record collecting and equipment repair" (2006: 593–594).[12]

Tuesday has made use of both of these technological developments: "I sold my old turntables and bought new turntables which were cd run rather than records and a program called Serato that works through your laptop into your mixer, from your mixer into your cd decks (pio-

neer 1000s) from your cd decks back into your mixer and then through your speakers. That was so much easier than carrying 100s of records around as all you needed was your lap top as most clubs would have the relevant equipment:) so life became easier and I made up for the money I spent. But to be fair it cost me around £2000 for everything."

While the younger female DJs all state their preference for CDs' flexibility and ease of use (some having only learned initially to mix using new digital forms of technology), all note the need to adjust the platform to the particular venue and audience. As DJ Alley Oop put it, "Being able to take a mix of vinyl and digital saves time, the back ache from lugging around a heavy bag, not to mention the excess baggage on flights. It also gives me more freedom and ability to react to the crowd better as I can have so much more music at my fingertips." In line with the views of many others, DJ Betty also notes that while she appreciates being able to access her music from the internet far less expensively, she also feels vinyl still connotes authenticity and superior knowledge of music (see also Kozinn 2013). She therefore uses vinyl when she wants to demonstrate her knowledge (as an archivist) and skills to an audience that appreciates a particular track or technique. DJ Alley Oop, too, is pleased that she has "access to both old and new technologies," but notes what she uses depends on the venue and the system: she says, "Some places have beautifully tuned systems where vinyl sounds amazing, to these I'd take more records, where as other places only have CDs." However, as a younger DJ, Deejay Sheba has only ever used CDs: "I have personally never learnt vinyl as it is quite a hard skill to master… CDJ's are a little easier, [though] you have to be able to count music, know your music and understand the trends."

Alternative Spaces for Learning and Networking

As noted above, a number of key female DJs are not only role models through their performances but also because they create new opportunities to help aspiring female musicians acquire the necessary skills. Over the past decade, more schools and organizations have opened up around the world to teach these skills, particularly the arts of DJing, rapping, and breakdancing in environments more conducive to women's needs. Scratch Academy, which opened in New York in 2002, is arguably one of the best known. Here, workshops are public and therefore seen by many as a more appropriate option for girls than private bedrooms.[13]

In the United States in 1997, DJ Kuttin Kandi, mentioned above, formed Anomalies, a collective of female DJs to support and mentor

women. It represents women throughout hip hop, its mission being feminist and activist. Other initiatives, such as Females Wit Funk,[14] established in 2005, and Female Pressure,[15] are virtual communities, using social networking sites to demonstrate female solidarity and offering support, education, and training, generating exposure, business, and respect for women performers around the globe.

Several of the young DJs I met in London found their local support at community-based, not-for-profit organizations like WAC,[16] or Bigga fish.[17] Many of their mentors were professional female musicians who demanded high standards of their pupils in rehearsal and performance. All the classes were deliberately structured to be welcoming to girls, providing access to production and recording equipment with excellent free or heavily subsidized tuition and also ongoing career opportunities through networking, workshops, and public performance.

Of course, it is not simply the spaces for learning that can be concerning for girls and young women but the perceived safety and the appropriateness of performance venues. DJ Betty reflected on the difficulties of performing in certain clubs or pubs: "A lot of people expected me to be a party girl—drinking, hanging out, taking drugs rather than focusing on the music. They didn't take my music seriously." DJ Lauren also reflected on the issue: "Off the top of my head I can think of at least four instances where I have been asked to deejay at a venue, sometimes permanently and other times as part of a one-off 'girls' night,' purely because I am a woman. Venue owners have said to me 'I only want girls deejaying at my club' or, '[O]n this night we're only going to have girls deejaying.' I can only assume that this is either because women look good behind a deejay booth, or because club owners are genuinely trying to create a gender balance in the field. Sadly, I think it is the former."

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have outlined some of the hurdles that young female DJs face and how the increasing move towards what is becoming known as *produsage* in all areas of life (Bruns 2006) is providing opportunities for success, through new sites for collaborative learning, higher visibility of female role models, and new forms of technology for creation and distribution of music. All of these factors have opened up new possibilities for girls, providing "greater access to all aspects of DJ culture" (Farrugia and Swiss 2005: 36), while enhancing distribution and exposure of their art.

From my earliest work on developing girlhood (Bloustien 2003) to later, though related, work on constituting subjectivities in other communities, both real and virtual (Bloustien and Peters 2011; Bloustien 2012; Bloustien and Wood 2013), I have argued that music is central to both the materiality of social context and the symbolism of the self. It is powerful because it brings together the experience of the intensively subjective and personal with the external, cultural, and collective. Now ten years on from that original study, we can see new ways in which girls and young women are taking up the challenges of being active and being seen through their music in greater numbers. The problems are still there, but girls and young women are clearly gaining the confidence and opportunities to take a greater role in creating, managing, and controlling spaces in the public sphere. How delightful to have it confirmed that "God is a DJ," and she is increasingly spreading her influence around the globe![18]

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Notes

1. I am using the terms girls and young women interchangeably in this chapter to refer to both age and attitude. My 2014 female research participants are now in their early twenties to early thirties.
2. For a full report see www.femalepressure.net/PDFs/fempressreport-03-2013.pdf.
3. One of the privileges of my research being deliberately participatory is that most of the young people I work with continue to voluntarily correspond with me (via email and Facebook) years after the projects officially finish.
4. Block called his popular radio show *Make Believe Ballroom*.

5. *The Survey of Work in Selected Culture and Leisure Activities 2007* was conducted throughout Australia as part of the Monthly Population Survey (MPS) of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). It was previously conducted in 1993, 1997, 2001, and 2004. The report found that while 24 percent of women and 19 percent of men aged fifteen years and over worked in a culture or leisure field, the participation rates for paid involvement were similar for males and females (7 percent). Brown (1996) learned that in 1993 women still had a higher rate of unpaid involvement than their male counterparts with 17 percent of females (1.4 million) having unpaid involvement only, compared with 12 percent of males (1 million). On the ground, anecdotally and discursively, similar figures are confirmed by both male and female DJs I interviewed in Australia, U.K., Europe, and the United States in 2013.

6. dickparty.tumblr.com

7. http://youtube/ZCCAyxowIwQ

8. See www.musicindustryinsideout.com.au

9. http://www.theguardian.com/music/ms-dynamite

10. http://www.lilyallenmusic.com.

11. All the quoted extracts from here on in this chapter have been taken from emails received in 2013 from my own research participants. As with earlier extracts, I have left all these unedited.

12. The smaller amount of disposable income available to women globally because of personal and social factors is well-documented. It inevitably affects their ability to succeed here, too, since women are expected to be able to have access to a large music collection and maintain their equipment, either by themselves or by paying for technical assistance.

13. See www.scratch.com/ Although no records seem to have been published on the relative number of female to male enrolments, the website itself seems to highlight increasingly the names and biographies of successful female DJs alongside their male counterparts.

14. www.femaleswitfunk.com

15. www.femalepressure.net

16. www.wacarts.co.uk

17. www.biggafish.com

18. This chapter was inspired by the lyrics of "God is a DJ," a song by the popular singer, Pink.

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14

CREATING AND REGULATING IDENTITY IN ONLINE SPACES
Girlhood, Social Networking, and Avatars

Connie Morrison

Claiming identity is a complicated, fluid, and complex process. For girls, it often means actively taking up or denying popular discourses around feminine ideals, to some extent at least, or blindly following along without much consideration of such issues at all. Either way, how girls negotiate identity in online places is as diverse and varied as the individuals[1] themselves, their economic and material locations, and their shifting purpose for engaging with technology. But the options on offer to girls as they construct avatar self-images are less fluid. Among the locations in which girlhood identity is being constructed socially and culturally, personalized avatar sites designed for the online creation and sharing of avatars on social networking sites promise a space for the cultivation of uniqueness and individuality. When girls are asked to create an avatar self-likeness—what might be conceived of as a form of visual self-narrative situated within commercially designed online spaces—and when they are asked to discuss their creative decisions among themselves by way of critically reflecting on their choices of representation, a cultural politics involving multiple relational power structures is uncovered. The personalized avatars constructed online reveal that normative discourses of girlhood and the media-generated beauty myth not only reside in cyberspaces, they also discipline and regulate these self-representations. Even within a symbolic economy in a virtual space, dominant discourses assign power to notions of idealized beauty and brand loyalty. And for the girls claiming identity here, indeed, claiming a space of belonging in this space, it is no more straightforward in an online context than it is in the hallways of high school.

In this chapter I endeavor to explore how even in an online world where girls have claimed a vital space, the construction of personalized avatars and the girls' reflective comments about them serve as evidence of a greater understanding for both the girls and, by extension, for me

as researcher, of the power structures (still) residing within girlhood. I will begin by exploring notions of girlhood identity, especially as it relates to style as a kind of social skin, and I will draw from scholarship on alter-ego forms of avatars as a way of positioning this work and distinguishing it from earlier work in this area. I acknowledge work by scholars conducting identity work with youth, for whom the connection between virtual and real worlds is mutually constitutive (Kafai et al. 2007; Valentine and Holloway 2002). In this work, *place* is conceived of as a widely mediated electronic space, and I employ Foucault's (1967) notion of *heterotopia* (a placeless place in which one can see oneself where one is not) to describe the social networking spaces these girls occupy.

Next, this chapter will explore how teenage girls at once regulate themselves and others through the construction of their personalized avatars and what they consider to be the social implications of sharing personalized avatars in social networking spaces. The domain of policing is not limited to the girls' creative decisions during the construction of their avatars, however, since the sites that invite the construction of such self-images also contribute to the regulation of girlhood representations. Finally, this chapter offers an opportunity to hear and learn from a group of teenage girls about how they experience the cultural politics of identity construction and how a placeless place influences who they are and who they want to be in this context.

The teen years are a critical time for the development of identity. Pinar tells us that "in studying the politics of identity, we find that who we are is invariably related to who others are, as well as to whom we have been and want to become" (2004: 30). The focus of this chapter is on these relational identities, some deliberately considered (as with self-monitoring by peer groups on social networking sites) and some ubiquitous but subtle (as with lifelong hegemonic gender codes of popular culture). More specifically, it will include the voices of a group of girls who provide guidance to a broader understanding of the politics of identity representation. Before turning to the research findings, I first position this work within the scholarship on girlhood identity generally and on avatar identity in particular.

A Placeless Place: Locating This Work

A range of scholarship in girlhood studies makes clear that identity making and concomitant social relationships emerge fluidly through a collaborative engagement with popular culture and a negotiation of

complex and often conflicted notions of belonging, desire, and fantasy (Currie and Kelly 2006; Mazzarella 2005; Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2008; Pomerantz 2006; Poyntz 2006; Stern 2007). While teenage girls are often interested in claiming a coherent identity, rarely are their conceptions of their self-representations straightforward. The implications of this relational nature of identity become salient as the girls in my study present avatar images layered with their embodied dreams. Scholarship in girlhood identity has found that brand possession and girlhood style have the potential to act as currency in the market of peer acceptance (Driscoll 2002; Jiwani et al. 2005). Moreover, when girls' subject positions are repeatedly located within discourse that values a Western ideal of feminine beauty (Levin and Kilbourne 2008) across multiple genres and multiple cultural representations (for example, music video, television, and magazines), then these positions are more readily accepted and taken up as normative (Gilbert 1989).

Furthermore, a cultural currency resides in online sites' promise of an opportunity to construct a unique self-representation. That which is considered cool is often manifested as an object of desire that can be purchased as a gateway to peer acceptance and belonging. And cool is often marketed as the ability to express a unique look—the infinite humanist promise that individuality *can* reside in spaces where subjectivities are claimed and represented. As a result, despite a belief that they have the capacity to represent themselves through forms of individual creativity, the girls in these spaces become unwitting victims of a kind of identity conformity. These social discourses are mixed, however, and are confusing in that they come from competing regimes. MTV, for example, offers a barrage of sexualized themes promoting scantily clad girls and young women as the objects of heterosexual male fantasy and desire, while conservative political agendas remind girls of the virtues of innocence and wholesomeness (Dines 2011). Even the once-wholesome images of the youthful innocence of Disney's stars are confounded as they (Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, and Miley Cyrus) morph their charming schoolgirl choreography into raunchy soft porn gyrations.

Creating a WeeMee

In my research (Morrison 2010, 2011), the term personalized avatar is used to describe the avatars created on the weeworld.com site and to differentiate them from those in fantasy genres and online gaming in which alter-ego and role-playing identities are encouraged. The word avatar, derived from Sanskrit, means descended from the gods. From

this definition, avatars might be conceived of as hyperbolic representations (Butler 2005) of subjectivity where idealized bodies should be anticipated. Thomas (2007) suggests that the close and selective editing involved in creating an avatar is literally rewritten or traced over by desire, not to mention its being deliberately posed or performed as a statement of identity. For Thomas, children and youth are more likely to exaggerate their identity in avatars through gender performance rather than engaging in what Turkle (2005) refers to as the kind of gender-swapping that is commonly reported with adult experiments online. However, the weeworld.com site is designed for users to create a *unique* WeeMee. In fact, as their name implies, WeeMees are intended to be autobiographical. They are designed for use within the ever-developing virtual WeeWorld site, but also as a form of digital image signature in multiple online interactions such as social networking sites and instant messaging. In fact, there are options built into the WeeMee site to export an individual's WeeMee to just about any computer, tablet, or phone screen.

Over a decade ago, Kolko (1999) debunked the once-popular belief that the physical self is separate from the self of online representation. She found that identity play in graphic virtual reality (GVR) games like *Second Life* allowed experimentation, empathetic identifications, virtual border crossings, and a sense of the non-unitary nature of identity. She also noted that markers of identity such as gender or race are not within the sole control of the users creating the avatars; she argues that the author of an avatar is masked behind the producer of the program that allows its construction—a significant point explored in depth by the girls in my study.

More recently, Kafai et al. (2007) found that when tweens construct avatars in the context of a virtual world called Whyville.net—a large scale multi-user GVR—avatars become a form of complex self-exploration in what can be described as a kind of identity workshop. Drawing from Donna Haraway's (2003) seminal cyborg manifesto and the notion that feminist coalitions ought to be made more on the basis of affinity than on identity, Thomas found that one of the most important aspects of how girls' identities are shaped online relates to a sense of community belonging or "coalition of affinity" (2007: 23). This was in accord with her earlier findings (2004) that the avatar images girls produced were either consistent with ideals of Western femininity and beauty or else they were statements of resistance and rebellion. Her findings demonstrate how cyber bodies are often encoded representations of fantasy and desire. As one participant in Thomas's later study puts it: "It's me minus the things I don't like about me" (2007: 9).

Creating a Contemporary Paradigm for Girlhood Research

The method of research employed in this project recognizes an inherent tension between attempting to be true to lived experience and being aware that the nature of experience and any representation of it are always partial and always political (Fiske 1996; Saukko 2003). As a form of new ethnography, it employs a cultural studies methodology to examine everyday lived experience, and it does so in the context of its natural (or as natural as can be possible) existence. A feminist poststructuralist lens is employed with both modesty and reflexivity (Britzman 2000) to make visible dominant and regulating discourses and social power as these relate to avatar graphics, in order to make sense of how girls understood themselves and others in this context.

The ten girls who participated in my study came from across Canada, although they only ever met in a secure online space during the summer of 2009. Their ages ranged from thirteen to sixteen years, with six being fifteen or sixteen and four being thirteen or fourteen. By design, the project recruited the girls from Facebook, where they were invited to create an avatar as part of a study. From here, the study moved to a secure forum site where they assumed pseudonyms (which are used below), shared their avatars, and discussed their creative choices with other participants. In this space I acted as a facilitator while the girls directed the line of questions they found relevant about their creative intentions. Eventually, and since the avatars they created were designed for use in multiple forms of digital communication, the girls were asked to discuss whether or not they would post their avatars on Facebook as their profile pictures.

Styling a Unique Avatar—One Just Like Everybody Else Has

Long before having to consider the social implications of posting an avatar as a profile picture on a social networking site, the girls were asked to describe their avatars. My intention (Morrison 2011) was to see which part of their descriptions would be given primacy. Their responses relied heavily on physical description and on claims of being unique. Often they described the avatars by saying, "It's so me!" While attending to physical details like skin tone, eye color, and hair color for their avatars, descriptions of their clothes and hairstyles occupied a significant part of their discussions. Their elaborate descriptions of style choices should not be surprising, since scholarship in girlhood culture reminds us that girls are already schooled in the expectations of

shopping for clothing, trying on outfits, and discussing style in spaces where girls forge bonds of friendship and connection (Driscoll 2002; Levin and Kilbourne 2008). Even in virtual space, style functioned as a powerful social marker (Pomerantz 2006). There is also an understanding that these kinds of practices might allow for taking risks and trying on clothes that would never be worn in public. When these behaviors are theoretically conceived within a virtual space, WeeMee avatars allow for a virtual reproduction of these girlhood practices. While these avatars do not actively woo members into hegemonic or patriarchal discourses, their work is much more subtle. They prey on a desire to belong, to be cool, all while promising the effect of being unique.

As something always in progress, dependent on context and forever relational, performances of identity, as I found, relied at times on what Davies (1992) called "forced choices" (46), or what I came to describe as a sutured identity. On several occasions, the lack of accumulated points[2] combined with the limited options on the WeeWorld site meant that normative discourses available to the girls served as structural restraints in shaping the way they constructed their WeeMees. Like Kolko (1999) had observed years earlier, the girls' avatars were masked behind the limits of WeeWorld. Cutie-Pi articulated the challenge the girls experienced when they could not find the attire, accessories, or objects of affiliation that they wanted: "[We] try to express it as best we can but are confined to the options that the program offers." Theoretically, if style is conceived of as a kind of social skin and as an embodied subjectivity, it can also be understood as a form of agency for the girls. Seen this way, the WeeMee site both promises uniqueness and denies agency at the same time. Pomerantz explains: "Agency is related to the decisions we make and actions we take *within,* and not outside of, discourse's effect. In other words, girls make decisions within a range of possibilities. This way of thinking about agency suggests that girls' choices of style are not without limitation; they are not entirely 'free' choices." (2008: 66) Questionmark explains her navigation through the process of finding the desired clothing for her avatar in a way that demonstrates this kind of agency. Her self representation is limited, but still within a range of other possibilities: "I had trouble choosing the shirt because I had seen a plain shirt with a white blazer over it, *but it cost 500 points, which I didn't have!* When I chose a different shirt that was free, I had trouble choosing a colour. It took me a long time to choose shoes, because *the checker flats that I wanted also cost points, and I didn't really like any of the other shoes.*" On the surface, it might appear to be not very important that a girl cannot find the shoes she wants for her avatar. In terms of identity creation, it is not, by itself, a significant

factor. However, when taken in combination with other socially limiting discursive practices over multiple media platforms, the effect over time is significant for it contributes to a larger hegemonic cultural ethos. In another episode, Questionmark's self-narrative is silenced in a more profound way. She explains: "I broke my leg: I tried to find crutches or a cast for my WeeMee but they had none." Because of her broken leg, she would not be playing volleyball or figure skating, yet this self-narrative is impossible, and she opted instead to represent herself in a manner authorized by the WeeWorld site. The absence of options such as a cast or crutches (or wheelchairs, for that matter) functions as a semiotic restraint by limiting her represented identity. In her quest to construct an accurate representation of herself, Questionmark made a second avatar. It (she) is dressed neatly, standing at a school locker with a volleyball at its (her) feet. Questionmark revealed that, even with multiple avatars, she did not get to share her interest in acting, writing, and other sports. Even though she had to settle for a makeshift skating dress, no sports jersey, and no crutches, she was satisfied enough with this example of a sutured identity.

As the study progressed, a more complex understanding of the girls' subjectivity emerged as they discovered that, at best, their personalized avatars could capture only a limited self-narrative. This began with a revelation that the avatar might not be able to provide the kind of accurate self-representation it promised. The girls began with an expectation (and even a promise) that they would be able to represent the self in a manner that is physically (if not stylistically) accurate. They soon learned the difference. One of the key ideological ploys of identity is that we are coaxed into claiming a singular identity: "this process involves recruiting subjects to the specific meanings and values constituted within a particular discourse and encouraging identification" (Weedon 2004: 19).

Cherrytree articulates this best. Because she opts to represent herself as a singer, a number of other self-narratives are not possible:

> My avatar doesn't show that there are other things I love besides music
> & clothes, such as, family & friends & theatre & movies & more.
> It doesn't show that I enjoy school, & that I'm an honour student.
> It doesn't show that I am very soft-hearted, & would do anything for my
> family.
> It doesn't say that I am stubborn at times, or that I worry a lot.
> It doesn't show that I'm a people person, & very good with kids.
> There are many things that the avatar doesn't show, but it's just like me.
> If you look at me, you probably wouldn't be able to see these things either.

Her observation demonstrates a keen awareness that what you see, whether in person or in avatar form, presents a limited image of identity. It also demonstrates that Cherrytree is not willing to buy into her WeeMee as a unified self-image.

Regulating the Online Self: Being Judged on Style

The five older girls in my study (Cherrytree, Princess, Butterflye, Livie, and Shorty) all described the social scene at their high schools and revealed the existing tensions and complex negotiations around peer groups, popularity, symbolic meanings, and social power. Much of the tension they felt reflected conflicting positions around the clothing they wore and how they anticipated being judged by others. Cherrytree explained that in real life, "[k]nowing you may be judged by what you wear definitely influences the things you wear." Princess, too, acknowledged the power of this symbolic economy. "Sometimes, and it's a shame, people judge you by the way you look. Most times people don't want to get to know you before [they] decide if you are a nice or good person or not, they just look at your outfit [or in this case a picture] and if you don't look like someone they would be friends with, then they just pass you in the hallway." The ubiquitous nature of online social networking places girls (and their images) into the surveillance culture, where, like living in Foucault's (1977) panopticon, they are under the objectified gaze of peers and suspicious adults. Even when this gaze does not fall directly upon them, girls often regulate their representations according to the discourses of that gaze until eventually they begin to participate in discourses that invite it. The result is a constant insecurity and questioning of their bodies, their clothing, their complexions, their hairstyles, and their sex appeal. In the anticipation of the gaze they regulate their representations. One of the most revealing findings of this study was that girls felt the weight of judgmental gaze upon them even in terms of their cartoon self-images. Given the cultural currency and pervasive nature of social networking, the girls engaged in a kind of pre-emptive censorship born of a deep awareness that their peers would judge them based on the way their avatars looked. Butterflye explains: "I'd like to think that people don't judge us based on our looks, but I know that it happens often. That's why I think it's important to choose a picture that represents you, not what society says you are." Cherrytree was even more specific about who was applying the social pressure. She wrote, "A lot of girls judge other girls by what they wear."

And Cherrytree must have felt the weight of that gaze upon her when she vigorously defended her avatar with its midriff-baring top.

> My avatar may come off as 'skanky' because of the belly top,
> but that is not what my avatar is saying about me.

Before long, she provided insight into the high stakes of cultural codes and hegemonic assumptions: she was the first to ask if she could make a second avatar. Perhaps the belly top represented a risk that she later reconsidered. It was clear that Cherrytree was worried that she had performed her girlhood identity incorrectly, and she was eager to dissociate herself from the undesirable social code implied by the belly top. She explained, "Even though you should be able to wear what you want & not care what people think, it is hard sometimes when people [in] society are cruel & make fun of others or make assumptions about the type of person they are. I think this may apply to people when choosing style for their avatars." Cutie-Pi also wrote about how audience perceptions added pressure to girls to present an image that conformed to social expectations. She makes reference to feeling pressure from "the whole school society," and admits to constructing her online self-images in order to gain social approval from her peer group.

The Cultural Politics of Class

The girls in my study are surrounded by popular media discourses that afford social status to those who wear trendy clothes and who own lots of material possessions. From the time they are young, girls are schooled in the notion that they are what they wear, and such ideas have colonized their play for generations. For over fifty years young girls have learned that Barbie's identity is defined by what she wears and what she owns (Steinberg and Kincheloe 1998). More recently, discourses of idealized Western beauty have been complicated by the popularity of Bratz dolls. These dolls do not abide by standard notions of Western beauty, but they have sexy clothes and accessories that demand attention (Levin and Kilbourne 2008). In both cases, clothing and style suture identity to discourses of femininity and material wealth. Walkerdine (1997) found that the promise and desire for upward class mobility led young girls to believe in narratives that promised fame and riches, even in their early forms of play.

A similar illusion can be sustained on the WeeWorld site, where girls are able to mobilize common signifiers of wealth, even though they do not have the economic means to do so in real life. They can still have

virtual designer clothes and handbags; they can position their personalized avatars in exotic virtual places; and they can be affiliated with objects of their desire. In a consumer culture, spending and possessing material things contributes to the illusion that one belongs to a class for which such items are readily accessible. In nearly every case, the girls constructed their WeeMees to include highly valued virtual material items (or what the girls called bling), and combined this with positioning their avatars in exotic backgrounds (like Paris or on a tropical beach). This provided the girls with a kind of virtual cultural capital that might not be available to them in their real lives.

Popular culture positions girls as flawed in comparison to images of idealized beauty. The WeeWorld site does not position them as ugly or lacking; it does the opposite. Any possibility for users to be positioned as imperfect is removed, while opportunities abound for them to present themselves as ideal. The message on the WeeWorld site is clear: girls are encouraged to position themselves according to discourses of consumer culture and emphasized femininity. Economic barriers that might exist in the real world are removed in this virtual site with a promise to represent the *real* self. It is the compelling lure of an idealized identity.

Regulation in Cultural Discourses: Identity Not of Our Making

Signifiers of social/cultural resistance such as tattoos or body piercings may be gaining mainstream popularity, but no such symbolic forms of resistance existed as options on WeeWorld at the time of this study (Morrison 2011). Neither were signifiers of visible disability such as casts, crutches, or wheelchairs (though the latter two options exist now). Indeed, the option to construct a fat avatar did not exist either (aside from the small belly option that male avatars could choose), confirming observations by Cooper (2007) and Thomas (2004) about the absence of real body types in cyberspace. Perhaps creating idealized representations conjures a desire to represent the self in an idealized form, or it may reflect a social reality mirrored in commercial and entertainment culture. It might also reflect a desire to reject or turn away from these pop cultural codes.

Avatars as Profile Pictures

With an awareness of the social pressures in their online spaces, the girls engaged in a debate about whether they preferred to use avatars

or photographs as profile pictures on Facebook (conceived of here as an affinity space). At issue was the importance of posting something that would not only be an accurate self-representation but also a public statement of identity. Most agreed that with an avatar they could project their wishes, dreams, and fantasy lives more than they could with a photograph. However, the girls told me that the pressure that came from gaining social acceptance in their peer group meant that the stakes were higher in terms of the first impressions these representations would make. Making a wrong first impression could be a disaster. Butterflye explained the utopian promise and regressive pull embedded in this choice: "Profile pictures should reflect who you are, not who society tells us you should be. First impressions are everything, and if someone gets the wrong impression of who you are, because of your avatar or profile picture, it can be everything from embarrassing to downright dangerous." Shorty added another dimension that considers the unintended audiences of these avatars or other forms of self-representation: "I agree with Butterflye about first impressions. They are very important and you only get to make them once. The way we represent ourselves on the Internet may seem harmless until a teacher or a future employer stumbles across your Facebook page and some inappropriate photos … I think accuracy is important and you should represent yourself truthfully but you don't need to display every part of your private life." Overall, the girls expressed a general lack of enthusiasm for using their avatars as profile pictures, betraying an apparent contradiction. The girls observed that their avatars were able to represent them accurately with the exception of a few (albeit sometimes significant) limitations. Yet when asked if they would be willing to use these avatars as their profile pictures on social networking sites, they all agreed that they preferred to use photographs. Perhaps this contradiction reflects the complex nature of girlhood and the cultural politics of representation in these sites. Another explanation for their reluctance to use avatars might speak more to the fact that digital photographs have more currency in their world. Social networking sites in many ways depend on the uploading and sharing of digital photographs. The rapid uptake of non-gaming avatars in other locations (Korea, for example) might indicate a global trend toward personalized avatars as a form of online identity representation, but while WeeWorld has an interest in becoming the standard in personalized online and mobile identity creation in North America and Europe, these avatars may not yet have become common currency in a youth market in Canada. Posting an avatar as a profile picture for these girls might require taking a social risk that they are not yet (or ever) willing to take. In the end, when the

girls were asked if any of them would be willing to use either of her avatars as her profile picture on Facebook, the answer was that they would not.

Conclusion

The girls initially believed that they could construct an accurate cartoon self-image. However, what unfolded was an understanding of how contrived, socially constructed, and commercially influenced versions of girlhood are, not just in this space, but everywhere. One of the most significant findings from this study came about because the girls were unable to represent themselves accurately. They came to an understanding about the non-unitary nature of identity and of the unrealistic promise of uniqueness. And they found that they often had to settle for a sutured identity where the options for representation were weighted heavily in the domain of emphasized femininity. Despite the illusion of choice provided by contemporary consumer culture, Buckingham (2003) reminds us that identity is socially and culturally assigned, made available and made possible with language and through media discourses, which increasingly includes social media. This phenomenon is seen in the very limited choices available on the WeeWorld site when users have no accumulated points or if they are unwilling to pay for the virtual items. The highly valued (and heavily promoted) items the girls could choose for their avatars extol the virtue of owning more things as part of an ever-changing fashion market that values the latest trends, even online. This is in no way intended as a criticism of WeeWorld specifically; this site is not unique in its positioning of girlhood identity in these terms.

The girls in my study told me that they feel this pressure just as strongly in online networking spaces, and especially where they use any kind of self-images. The study demonstrated the mobilization of already sanctioned codes such as for clothing styles, hairstyles, makeup, and body piercing work to signify compliance or resistance to normative discourses in pursuit of girlhood identity (Driscoll 2002). More than providing a visible code for identification in real-life locations, they also exist in the symbolic economy that governs their digital spaces where group membership is defined and where girls can be included or segregated as members of particular groups in online spaces (Thomas 2007). Pomerantz argues that nowhere do girls feel the social repercussions of style more acutely than in school: "for girls—particularly in school— social visibility depends upon style; girls' identities are contingent

upon it" (2006: 176). I would offer that even with personalized avatars, the hallway repercussions line cyberspace as well.

Connie Morrison has conducted research on avatars and the cultural politics of online girlhood identity. She has designed and taught undergraduate and graduate courses in English language arts methods, curriculum teaching and learning, critical media literacy, and popular culture. Her work is grounded in pedagogies of social justice and critical literacy. She was the co-editor of *English Quarterly,* and the author of *Who Do They Think They Are? Teenage Girls and Their Avatars in Spaces of Social Online Communication* (2010).

Notes

1. I have used pseudonyms throughout this chapter.
2. According to a response to a query directed to the WeeMee site by Kupka-keLuvX3, "[t]here are many ways to earn green and gold points, but you can also buy them with a credit card, Paypal, or just send in cash to pay for gold or green points. If you don't have the money, or want to use your money on something else, you can earn them. To earn gold points you can go to the 'Earn free gold' button under 'Get Gold' and earn them by watching videos, completing offers, and filling out surveys. You can earn green points by buying stuff for your WeeMee or Room(s), chatting with friends online, sending messages, completing quests, and so on. There are also video ads that pop up every once in a while. If you watch them you can earn 1-5 green points." http://www.weeworld.com/home/KupkakeLuvX3/blog/blogentry .aspx?id=9436155.

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STUDYING THE SPACES OF GIRLS' ACTIVISM

15

Making Activism Accessible
Exploring Girls' Blogs as Sites of Contemporary Feminist Activism

Jessalynn Keller

On Saturday, 10 November 2012, *CNN.com* published an article asking: "Where are all the millennial feminists?" The article, written by college student and former CNN intern Hannah Weinberger, grapples with the supposed disavowal of feminism by young women today. And while Weinberger does include the voices of young feminists such as twenty-year-old author and blogger Julie Zeilinger, the author's prognosis for feminism is uncertain at best in her portrayal of a movement hampered by the resistance of too many young women to be truly revolutionary today.

This all-too-common narrative is often employed in mainstream media to suggest that feminism is no longer relevant to girls and young women—a dominant discourse of postfeminist media culture that has been documented and analyzed by several feminist researchers (Gill 2007; McRobbie 2009; Negra 2009; Zaslow 2009; Gill and Scharff 2011; Scharff 2012). However, despite this excellent body of scholarship that critiques postfeminism, there has been little empirical research that disputes its claims and documents *how* girls are actually participating in feminist activism. I suspect that this may be because girls' activism can be difficult to locate, because, in part, of the unique forms that it takes. Consequently, girls' activism is too often made invisible to adult researchers looking for more traditional activist practices that feminists have used historically, such as public demonstrations, legal challenges, and commercial boycotts.

In this chapter I suggest that girls' marginalization from traditional places of activism—the public street, the voting booth, or the town hall, for example—has resulted in the creation by some girls of alternative spaces where they can perform activist identities and engage in projects of social change. Here I focus specifically on blogs as a mediated space that girls are actively *producing* as a way to participate in contemporary feminism. Through my analysis of qualitative data from in-

depth interviews with US-based girl bloggers[1] and a discursive textual analysis of girl-produced feminist blogs, I argue that we need to take seriously the feminist activist strategies that girls are employing in the spaces of their blogs and understand these practices as *accessible* activist strategies based upon their social positioning as *girls*.[2] This ultimately requires girls' studies researchers to decenter our own conceptions of feminism and understand activism from the perspective of girls, whose lives are often situated within particular material, social, and political constraints.

Mapping a History of (Girls') Activism

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide an in-depth discussion of the history of academic scholarship on activism, it remains important to note how dominant academic and public conceptions of activism have reflected the experiences of *adults*, and often white, middle-class, male adults in particular (Inglehart and Norris 2003). For example, traditional activist practices like voting, lobbying politicians, and running for office privilege a public participation from which girls are excluded because of their minor status, and also maintain a public/private divide that equates activism with the public sphere. Even what Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris call "civic activism" (2003: 639) characterized by participation in voluntary organizations, community associations, and social movements and often including more women participants, privileges a model of public engagement informed by highly visible practices such as demonstrations, boycotts, and petitions. It is worth highlighting that even these more informal activist practices hinge on the assumption that politics happen in easily identifiable places that are often created and occupied by adults, such as the Occupy Wall Street camp set up in lower Manhattan's Zuccotti Park in September 2011.[3]

When what counts as political is framed around a narrow set of practices, it is little surprise that girls are often characterized as apolitical, reflecting larger traditional gendered binaries that position the public sphere of politics and activism as a masculine domain (Harris 2008a). Even within the realm of feminist politics, girls, as "'the other' of feminism's womanhood" (Currie, Kelly, and Pomerantz 2009: 4), have been regarded as not sufficiently feminist. As Jessica Taft argues, "Girl activists' ideas, stories, and theoretical contributions thus remain largely hidden from view. They continue to appear in both the public and academic domain only as occasional images—as visual objects rather than as intelligent and intelligible political subjects" (2011: 5).

This is especially true of girl-driven activist initiatives that do not involve adults. For example, both Anita Harris (2008b) and Jessica Taft (2011) argue that adult-centric notions of what activism should be and where it should occur will often dismiss girls' activisms as generational rebellion rather than serious, meaningful political action, or will problematize girls' actions as dangerous or inappropriate. Harris writes,

> Often, 'good participation' is defined as young people's membership, taking part, or sharing decision-making in pre-existent programs, forums, bodies and activities that have been crafted by adults, such as youth roundtables, liaison with government representatives, and involvement in local council initiatives. Young people's participation in activities with one another, outside adult control, is often trivialized and/or problematized. … Similarly, the decision of many young people not to participate in conventional civic and political activities is frequently constructed as apathy and cynicism that can be corrected through education and access, rather than as a rational choice to dissociate themselves from alienating and impotent institutions (2008b: 484).

In order to understand girls' political engagements, we must then look beyond normative expressions of political participation as defined by adults. Cultural studies scholarship has provided a useful model with which to do so and has been central to understanding youth cultural practices, including the production and consumption of fashion, music, and zines as representing oppositional politics and activist potential (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979). As Mary Celeste Kearney (2006) maintains, it is within these subcultural spaces that we can see girls producing their own meanings of what it means to be feminist and activist. For example, Kearney argues that girls' participation in the 1970s punk subculture provided a space for girls to exercise feminist agency through cultural production, in addition to their consumer roles that sustain punk's alternative economy. Kearney notes that this was particularly significant, as girls were able to create their own feminist and activist identities outside of the mainstream women's movement that many girls found alienating because of their age, race, class, and sexuality. Thus, punk became a space for girls to resist both normative feminine and feminist identities, while often exercising political critiques that were, indeed, feminist.

Despite the clear influence of cultural studies on the formation of girls' studies as an academic field, I am suggesting that girlhood studies scholars have yet to fully interrogate the contemporary cultural practices of girls as political, and more specifically, feminist and activist (for exceptions see Kearney 2006; Caron 2011; Taft 2011; Keller 2012). Thus, I attempt to begin this process here by focusing the remainder of this

chapter on the ways in which girls engage in activism through the practice of feminist blogging. In doing so I hope to articulate the ways in which understanding girls' feminist blogging as a practice of politics and activism challenges established ideas about the places where politics happen and opens up the potential for multiple girlhood spaces to be politically generative.

Blogging as Accessible Activism

The term blog is an abbreviation of weblog, which refers to a frequently updated website that is organized by reverse-chronological written entries, usually focused on a particular topic or issue. Over the past decade blogging has become an increasingly popular practice among Internet users—especially middle-class girls. According to a Pew Internet Research study from 2008, American teenage girls outnumber their male counterparts as bloggers, with 41 percent of girls ages fifteen to seventeen claiming to have a blog (Lenhardt et al. 2008). The popularity of blogging among girls must also be considered in relation to other writing practices historically prevalent in girls' culture, such as diary writing. Thus, while blogging appears to be a *new* kind of activism, I am advocating for contextualizing it historically in order to better understand how girls' feminist blogging may indeed incorporate feminist strategies from the past, despite being dismissed by some feminists (McRobbie 2009; Steiner 2012).

Based upon the popularity of blogging and the use of other web 2.0 platforms such as Facebook and Twitter in tandem with blogs, it is perhaps unsurprising that girls may choose blogging as a practice in which they can perform various identities, including what Butler (1990) thinks of as feminist and activist identities. Indeed, my conversations with the girl feminist bloggers I interviewed for this project revealed that many of them began adopting an activist identity only once they began to blog. Jacqueline, a nineteen-year-old college sophomore who lives in a large east coast city explains, "I think of myself as a somewhat reluctant activist. Before I started blogging, I never really thought of myself as a leader or really as somebody terribly involved in 'causes.' I identified as a feminist of course but that came more from a place of trying to describe my ideologies and finding a community than actively trying to change policies. It was through blogging that I realized changing policies isn't the only way to define activism—I think activism is also about changing hearts and minds, which is what I do (or try to do) when I blog." In this sense the activist label was made intelligible for Jacque-

line through the practice of blogging about feminist issues, encouraging her to think about how activism could flexibly fit into her everyday life as a teenage girl rather than as merely a practice of policy change.

This point is key to understanding why blogging is a popular way for teenage girls to practice feminist activism, as my conversations with bloggers revealed that girls choose to engage in feminist blogging for very practical reasons. For example, several of my study participants described blogging as an activist practice that is accessible to them in their everyday lives, making it a desirable way to participate in feminism. Rory, an eighteen-year-old from a small city on the west coast explains: "For those of us who can't drive two hours to protest an anti-choice bill or whip out $100 whenever a worthy feminist charity comes along, blogging is the next best thing. Specifically, blogging about feminism shows that the movement is still alive and kicking, and gives hope to those who may feel alone in their struggle. I can only hope that *my* blog reaches other young people and shows them that feminism is important, that feminism is empowering, and that feminism is *certainly* not dead." Like Jacqueline's interest in "changing hearts and minds," Rory's comments reflect an understanding of feminist activism that allows her to participate through communicating with her peers online, an activity that she can do from her bedroom with the technology and skills she already possesses.

The idea that the bedroom functions as a place for creativity and cultural consumption for girls has been foundational to girls' and cultural studies since it was articulated by Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber (1991) in their study of postwar girlhood in Britain. However, it is Kearney's (2007) important critique of bedroom culture, which called for the recognition of the bedroom as a site for girls' cultural *production* rather just consumption, that is particularly pertinent to my own interest in feminist girl bloggers. I aim to extend Kearney's logic in this chapter by suggesting that not only do girls' bedrooms function as a place for media production but also as a place for *activism* that is facilitated through practices such as blogging.

Kristie, a high school senior from the Midwest, said, "Blogging is the only kind of activism I've had access to over the past three years … Hopefully you can do outreach in person at some point but [blogging] is good for those of us that … live in communities where there is no other way to participate." Kristie has wanted to volunteer at Planned Parenthood because of her interest in reproductive rights and sex education but the closest clinic to her family's home in rural Indiana is a half hour's drive away; this prevents her from volunteering because of her lack of transportation to and from the clinic. This has been frus-

trating to her because she wants to expand her feminist activism but is limited by her rural location and positioning as a young person who lacks financial resources: "I see all these protests happening all over the country and I'm like, 'I wish I could go!'" She is excited about next fall, when she will move to a larger urban center to attend college, and plans to participate in feminist groups on campus.

Rory's and Kristie's comments highlight how important blogging is as an accessible way for girls with limited resources—often because of age, but also perhaps gender, class, race, location, and ability—to participate in activism. This point is crucial and is often overlooked by adults who have significantly more freedom and personal income than girls do, allowing them to participate in a wider variety of activist practices that may not be accessible to girls still living with their parents and often with limited finances and transportation. Girls' activist practices, in other words, are shaped by their social location as girls.

But while blogging is an accessible activist strategy for many girls, it is not accessible to everyone. For example, the ability to blog requires regular access to not only a computer but also to expensive broadband or DSL Internet access. Girls must also have some disposable leisure time in which to create and maintain a blog, which can be a time-consuming process. For example, the bloggers I interviewed reported spending between five and fourteen hours a week researching, writing, and editing posts. Because many working-class and poor girls work part-time jobs to help support their families or care for younger siblings while their parents work, some may lack the leisure time and/ or the computer/Internet access necessary to blogging. Consequently, while framing blogging as an accessible activist practice for girls, it is imperative to remember that some girls remain excluded from this practice.

Since I am suggesting that we must consider blogging as an accessible practice of feminist activism for some girls, it is necessary to better understand exactly how blogging *works* as activism so I will now turn to discuss the ways in which girls use the space of their blogs to engage in three key and interrelated activist practices I have identified: education, community building, and making feminism visible.

A Feminist Education Online

One of the most important activist practices in which girl bloggers engage is educating their peers about feminist issues and feminism itself. "There's a lot of kinds of activism that goes on online, like online pro-

tests, signing petitions, organizing, but I think if we were going to look at the number one thing that comes out of online activism, it would be education," Mackenzie, a nineteen-year-old college student who has been blogging for four years tells me one day on the phone. Indeed, other participants echo Mackenzie's insistence on the importance of using blog spaces to educate peers on what feminism is, the history of the movement, and the benefits of feminism in order to debunk harmful stereotypes and misconceptions about feminism. Education, in this sense, is understood by bloggers as necessary for feminist social change and is best practiced through blogging and other online platforms.

Charlotte, at twenty-one, the oldest blogger I interviewed, was one of the more outspoken participants about the importance of education as an activist practice. She has been active for the past two years on her blogspot and Tumblr blogs and views her ability to spread information via her participation on these platforms, as well as on Facebook, as a significant part of her activism. While it is easy to assume that feminist bloggers are merely preaching to the converted, Charlotte maintains that this is not the case, especially since her friends who do not identify as feminists often keep up with her Tumblr or view her status updates on their Facebook feeds. Charlotte explains that she believes that sharing feminist information online is activism: "I hear back from a lot of my friends who do get involved or do learn something from what I write and share. It makes me feel that even though I'm just doing something simple that I'm getting other people involved and interested and hopefully they'll go out and do the same—spread the good word of feminism!"

Likewise, Mackenzie views her blog on Tumblr as a tool to educate people who are just learning about feminism. "That's who I try to hit, people who are hesitant—I don't try and water things down because I don't believe in watering things down for people who are hesitant—but [I try to keep the blog] sort of informational." For example, Mackenzie's blog has recently been an excellent source of information on reproductive rights legislation, especially in her home state of Michigan. She also offers useful information about feminism more generally, such as an extensive list of feminist women throughout history. Mackenzie's idea of teaching readers about feminism implies that many girl bloggers aim to educate other young people specifically, rather than educate adults. And indeed, most girl bloggers tell me that this is who they are speaking to when they blog. For example, Rory says, "I imagine that 99% of the people that are coming to my blog are going to be girls. … So I imagine that I'm talking to that teenage girl, or that tween girl who is on her laptop at midnight just browsing around and she's heard about

this feminism thing, but she doesn't know what it is and she's trying to do a little research."

Education for girl bloggers, however, isn't necessarily a one-way flow of correct information, but instead is characterized by the participatory nature of the web (Jenkins 2006). For example, instead of posting what she herself deems important, Mackenzie utilizes the question function on her Tumblr blog to encourage questions from readers, which she then answers. She receives as many as fifteen questions a day about everything from white privilege to how to deal with sexist messages online. And while Mackenzie has the power to refuse to respond to certain questions, the question function allows readers to engage with the content in an immediate way that is impossible to do with most other media forms.

In her ethnographic research on girl anti-globalization activists, Taft found that education was also a significant part of girls' political practices—often because, in part, of girls' identities as students—and girls often designed events and activities with this goal in mind. However, Taft maintains that education involves "not only creating spaces for sharing facts, discussing solutions to problems, and developing philosophies, theories, and vocabularies but also developing dissident feelings, intuitions, and desires" (2011: 115). According to Taft, this *feeling production* is a significant, yet often overlooked goal of education as an activist practice, and must be acknowledged as legitimate. Indeed, feeling production is certainly evident in many of the images and much of the information circulated by girl bloggers.

For example, about a month before the US presidential election in November 2012, Kristie circulated an image on her Facebook profile that reads "92 Years Ago, Women Gained the Right to Vote. This Year, Make Sure You Use It. GOTTAREGISTER.COM." The accompanying images show a black-and-white photo of suffragettes protesting and then a color photo of contemporary women cheering at what looks like an Obama political rally (see Figure 15.1).

Figure 15.1. Education as activism, author screen shot from author's Facebook account.

Not only does the image educate Kristie's Facebook friends about suffrage and the fact that women have had voting rights in the United States for a relatively short time, it calls upon the viewer to act by registering to vote and then getting out to the ballot box. Perhaps most importantly, though, the image circulates feelings of power, strength, progress, and even excitement, suggesting that women have political agency and an important responsibility to participate in this election. It is this feeling production that arguably makes the act of circulating this image on one's Facebook profile educational. An image such as this posted to someone's Facebook wall may or may not lead her to actually act (in this case, vote) but it generates important feelings that benefit young women—such as a sense of political agency and community. Seeking a direct tangible and measurable effect of activism ignores results like the production of feeling. That it is women and girls whose activism often involves this emotional labor is not a coincidence; it reveals the gendered way in which we often still talk about activism (Taft 2011).

The Activist Potential of Communities

Community building is another primary activist practice that girls perform through blogging. Indeed, I was struck by the ways in which girl bloggers described how fostering a coalition of young feminist bloggers was viewed as activist, in part because it resists dominant discourses of individualism, which are foundational to our neoliberal cultural context. Thus, while community building as an activist practice is not distinctive to feminist girl bloggers, it remains a significant practice to acknowledge and analyze, given the characterization of the web as a space that privileges the individual as entrepreneur and brand (Banet-Weiser 2012). For example, when I ask Rory why she thinks that it is important to view blogging as a form of activism, she says, "I think everybody's voice is important. If you can go online and find this mass of feminist bloggers, it's inspiring to the next generation—it just shows you're not alone." To Rory, finding a community is necessary in order to sustain feminism. Participating in this community then ensures its continuation, functioning as activism by motivating oneself and others to continue the struggle. Similarly, Charlotte says that being part of a larger feminist community and actively maintaining these ties allow her to be an activist because she feels supported and knows that there are others to back her up if she needs it. While she tells me that it is probably possible to be an "individual activist," she doesn't see how

feminism can achieve anything without "women and girls coming together as a community." In this sense, community is less about bonds created through shared physical places and more about shared identities and political goals that coalesce through virtual spaces.

Girl bloggers create community through a variety of means, including the promotion of other blogs through blogrolls and post features, sharing other girls' stories through reposting/reblogging, inviting contributions from other girl bloggers, and participating on comment boards. Interestingly, while all of the bloggers spoke about engaging in such community-building practices, most described this as happening "unconsciously." In other words, community-building work was viewed by the bloggers as *just a part of having a feminist blog,* rather than an additional voluntary task. This may have to do with the participatory culture fostered by web 2.0 platforms, which functions through the sharing and circulation of content via community networks (Jenkins 2006).

To bloggers, community building and education are not isolated but are related practices that mutually reinforce one another. Charlotte explains that sharing feminist information through social media "makes the [feminist] community stronger because there's more people involved and invested." She gives the example of the 2011 SlutWalk phenomenon, which she claims would never have happened without the social media to connect women and girls all over the world.[4] While SlutWalks educated the public about rape culture both through online conversations as well as the walks themselves, the online discourse also built new feminist communities through this education, motivating diverse girls and women (and their allies) to organize.

Furthermore, the communities built through SlutWalk function to circulate or spread the movement globally; in this case, from its inception in Toronto to cities such as Dallas, London, Berlin, Cape Town, and New Delhi (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013). In this sense, blogging communities transform the concept of place-based activism (say, the initial SlutWalk march in Toronto in response to a local police officer's comments) to a much more fluid practice that does not necessarily even require physically attending a SlutWalk event. Indeed, several of the bloggers I interviewed were unable to attend a SlutWalk because they did not live close to a scheduled march, yet they felt part of the movement because of their participation in the blogging communities that made SlutWalk possible. Many of these communities have continued long after the actual SlutWalk march (the most publicly visible part of the activism since we often do not see the organizing around such events), generating several other feminist campaigns in which girls have been a part, including #FBRape and Sexism Spotted.

My participants' commitment to community building continues a lengthy tradition of this practice within feminist movements, including through the use of digital media technologies. For example, Doreen Piano describes how online feminist distros in the late 1990s "create[d] feminist pockets or zones in cyberspace" (2002: para.18) serving to connect feminist zine producers and consumers and build communities based on an alternative economic model antithetical to commercial, male-dominated, and for-profit spaces. This type of community building then serves as an activist practice by challenging dominant capitalist logic and extending a gendered, racial, and class-based critique to economics. Consequently, I am advocating for understanding girl bloggers' community-building practices not as new because of digital culture, but instead as modifying a longstanding feminist activist practice by incorporating it into a changing media environment. As girls studies scholars, we must recognize these historical connections as significant in order to foster the intergenerational connections we are often told are absent from postfeminist media culture.

Making Feminism Visible

I was surprised to discover how invested my participants are in making feminists and feminism visible online in order to challenge what Christina Scharff calls the "trope of the feminist" (2012: 5) as unfeminine, man-hating, and lesbian. In this sense, bloggers alluded to the idea that being a feminist publicly was in itself an activist strategy, a type of public relations mission with the goal of getting more young people involved in the movement. For example, Rory says, "By simply calling yourself a feminist you get others into the conversation. Kids at school, people who read your blog (if you have one), friends, and family members … once you're a feminist, you're like a little stone that upsets everything around you with a ripple effect. First, it's little ripples. But over time they get bigger and bigger and people start recognizing you for your strong beliefs." This strategy can be seen in Rory's "Faces of Feminism" project in which she put out a call on her blog for invited self-identified feminists to send in pictures of themselves. Rory then posted the images she collected on her blog, the post functioning as a feminist coming out for a range of people representing different genders, ages, races, ethnicities, abilities, and nationalities. By making a diversity of feminists *literally* visible on her blog, Rory positions a feminist identity as something desirable and accessible to everyone, inviting others to identify with the movement in the hope of its growth (see Figure 15.2).

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2011

THE FACES OF FEMINISM

What does a *feminist* look like?

(Scroll down to find out.)

I can't believe this day has finally come - I'm proud to present *The Faces of Feminism!* This project is the product of many months of planning, advertising, and worst of all *waiting*, but it turned out better than I'd hoped. I set out to collect at least 100 photographs of "self-proclaimed feminists" and by joe, I've done it!

I've said this in the past, but I'll say it again: sometimes identifying as a feminist can be tough when there are so many people in this world dead-set on tearing you down. **This post is for any feminist who's ever felt alone in their struggle. The 100+ people pictured below are here to tell you that you're not alone.**

Feminists: We're out there. Everywhere.

Figure 15.2. The faces of feminism, author screen shot from participant's blog.

In her 2012 book, *A Little F'd Up: Why Feminism Is Not a Dirty Word*, twenty-year-old Julie Zeilinger, founder and editor of the teenage blogging community the *FBomb*, puts forth a similar argument, suggesting that publicly living as a self-identified young feminist is a necessary strategy to keep the movement growing.[5] In her book chapter titled "Please Stop Calling Me a Feminazi (Or Houston, We Have a PR Problem)," she argues,

> Feminists have been so preoccupied with trying to make the world a better place (silly us) that we've kind of forgotten about effectively combating negative stereotypes and projecting positive images of ourselves, in the media and in the world at large. And the thing is that while we can tell ourselves that the way other people view us doesn't matter, it really does. I'm not saying we should change what we are as a movement be-

cause some people reject it. I'm not saying we should let those negative stereotypes impact us, or that we should bend over backward to make people like us. No, I'm saying we need to better package and present who we *are* and who we have *always* been. The product is there. (Hello, world-wide equality? Who wouldn't buy that?) We just need to sell it better (79).

I quote from Zeilinger's book at length because I find the language she uses fascinating: "images" of feminism, feminism as a "product," and feminists needing to "sell" it to a mainstream crowd relies on the neo-liberal language of branding and marketing consultants to promote a complex, collectivist social movement. I want to be critical of this neo-liberal discourse because I believe that, potentially, it could frame feminism as a series of easily digestible images, dangerously close to the ways in which postfeminism privileges empowered feminine visibility, display, and a circulation of images (Harris 2004; McRobbie 2009). The language of neoliberalism risks emptying the politics out of Zeilinger's feminism in the hope of making it easily digestible to a mainstream public.

However, it is not surprising that girl activists may be drawn to construct feminism in such terms. The young feminists I discuss here have grown up in a neoliberal cultural climate that emphasizes social change and resistance within the confines of a commercial consumer culture, a reality that we, as girls' studies scholars who may have come of age within different cultural contexts, must recognize as Mukherjee and Banet-Weiser (2012) point out. A key part of this neoliberal culture consists of the branding practices that "produce sets of images and immaterial symbolic values in and through which individuals negotiate the world *at the same time* as they work to contain and direct the expressive, meaning-making capacities of social actors in definite self-advantaging way, shaping markets and controlling competition" (Hearn 2012: 27). While I am certainly not suggesting that Zeilinger is advocating a glossy postfeminist future, her use of marketing discourse produces a discursive slippage that raises questions about the ideal positioning of feminism within contemporary commercial popular culture.

The strategy of making feminism visible that I have been discussing relies less on mobilizing for specific, tangible changes on particular issues as emblematic of the women's liberation movement, and more on what Nancy Fraser (1997) describes as a recognition feminism that emphasizes the cultural and symbolic as sites of social change. Third-wave feminists have been particularly invested in recognition feminism through their attention to representations, communication, fluid shifting identities, and cultural production (Harris 2008a; Zaslow 2009). Furthermore, it is worthwhile to remember, also, that young people

have a lengthy history of engaging with politics through culture, as demonstrated by foundational cultural studies scholarship (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 1979). As a result, it makes sense for teenage bloggers like Rory and Julie Zeilinger to be thinking about how feminism is perceived in popular culture and how they may intervene to change feminism's cultural status since the cultural arena is a significant space for their own performances of feminism as teenagers.

However, it is necessary to recognize that this practice did not originate in the third wave and that feminists have always been interested in making their movement visible in the public sphere. For example, some feminists in the women's liberation movement emphasized the importance of participating in mainstream commercial culture in order to broaden the appeal of feminism to a diversity of women, some of whom may not consider themselves feminist or even political. Amy Erdman Farrell documents how *Ms. Magazine* was developed in the early 1970s with this mission in mind by promoting what she calls a "popular feminism" (1998: 5). This popular feminism, according to Farrell, refers to a "shared, widely held cultural and political commitment to improving women's lives and to ending gender domination that is both articulated and represented within popular culture" (196). Because popular culture often intersects with commercial culture, *Ms.*'s founders envisioned popular feminism as reaching a wide audience through the commercial women's magazine industry.

In part, feminists' desire to ensure their public visibility is related to women's historical exclusion from the public sphere and relegation to the private sphere of the home. In this sense, making feminism visible is a necessary feminist strategy to secure a public voice by expanding the acceptable places for feminist discourse. Additionally, Farrell emphasizes that many feminists envisioned a commercial feminist magazine as potentially "weaken[ing] women's resistance to feminism and [making] them rethink the stereotypical images they had previously known in mainstream media" (1998: 16). Interestingly, this goal is markedly similar to Zeilinger's investment in improving feminism's "PR problem" and Rory's desire to "get others into the conversation." While different language may be employed by contemporary bloggers, the goal remains the same—to make feminism appealing to more girls and women in order to spark a feminist consciousness.

It is important to recognize that this strategy of mainstreaming has always been controversial among activists. Indeed, Farrell notes how not all feminists in the 1970s endorsed the commercial strategy that *Ms. Magazine* embraced. Similarly, I have offered a critique of this strategy in relation to contemporary bloggers, warning that their rhetoric of

selling feminism is informed by neoliberal discourses. Consequently, it is imperative to recognize both the opportunities and limitations of making feminism visible with a critical lens on the cultural context and movement goals. Moreover, we can see that while girl feminist bloggers' strategy of making feminism visible appears new, it actually has a lengthy history within feminism that may provide important lessons for today's girl bloggers.

Conclusions: Toward a Girl-Centered Approach to Activism

The girl-centered approach to activism that I have described here allows us to see how education, community building, and making feminism visible function as key activist practices that girls engage in through blogging. In describing this approach, I argue that blogging must be understood as an accessible activist practice in itself, related to girl bloggers' own social context and positioning as girls. This emphasis on accessibility is particularly important to recognize as we embark on research projects with girls who often lack the material, social, and political resources that we take for granted as adults.

Furthermore, as digital media have become an increasingly significant part of daily life for many people globally, it is essential for girlhood studies scholars to recognize the spaces that girls are producing online as legitimate and valuable spaces for feminist activism—often one of the only places in which they can engage in such practices. Thus, I am suggesting that we avoid reproducing problematic binaries that pit online activism as less than real (presumably offline) activism and instead recognize the complexity of these spaces and the innovative ways in which girls are producing online media to make their own voices as activists heard in a particular space. This may require a rethinking of our own ideas about what constitutes both activism and feminism, as well as a reconsideration of the places, which exist beyond the physical, visible, and public and in which we may expect to see such political mobilization.

Additionally, I am suggesting that this project also necessitates a closer examination of feminist history in order to better theorize both continuities and ruptures between girls' feminist blogging and feminism's past activist strategies. I have shown here that there may be more similarities than are often acknowledged in both scholarship and public discourse. Since web 2.0 platforms are constantly in flux and online media production opportunities always expanding, this will remain a rich area for further scholarly inquiry and necessary intellectual

work if we are to challenge the postfeminist discourses that suggest that girls do not want to be feminist activists.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. I specifically sought female study participants between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one years of age. I employ the term girl based upon my use of feminist poststructuralist theory, which theorizes girlhood as discursively produced through cultural, historical, and social contexts rather than a static and biological age-based category in which females *age out* after their eighteenth birthday (Driscoll 2002; Eisenhauer 2004; Pomerantz 2009).
2. Much of the analysis in this chapter is derived from my Ph.D. dissertation, "'Still Alive and Kicking': Girl Bloggers and Feminist Politics in a 'Postfeminist' Age," available as an unpublished manuscript online through the University of Texas at Austin library.
3. Occupy Wall Street activists used Zuccotti Park as a staging ground for their activism, with the camp becoming symbolic of the movement, which saw multiple Occupy camps erected in cities globally. I mention this example here since it reflects the ways in which activism is often still associated with

identifiable, physical places. These places are often not accessible or safe for girls, as demonstrated by several reported sexual assaults in Occupy camps.

4. SlutWalk began after a Toronto police officer told a group of York University students that women should "avoid dressing like sluts" if they do not want to get assaulted. The comments inspired the first SlutWalk march in Toronto on 3 April 2011. Motivated by the events in Toronto, girls and women in cities across the world began organizing (often through their online networks) their own local SlutWalks to highlight the problem of rape culture and *slut shaming* that remains a significant problem globally.

5. Zeilinger was nineteen when the book was published.

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16

"Ain't No Justice ... It's Just Us"

Girls Organizing against Sexual and Carceral Violence

Lena Palacios

This chapter seeks to interrogate normative notions of at-risk girlhood and violence, offering a roadmap for a broader terminology and reconceptualization of gender in girlhood studies. I argue that studying the knowledge produced by girl-driven activist organizations enables activist-scholars to rethink what constitutes girlhood from a perspective critical of how criminalized, homeless and street-involved, and incarcerated girls and gender non-conforming youth[1] have been disciplined, managed, corrected, and punished as prisoners, patients, mothers, and victims of multiple, interconnected forms of violence through imprisonment, medicalization, and secure care. By showcasing case studies of anti-violence and abolitionist activism that contest sexual violence, colonial state control, and carceral state violence undertaken by girls whose identities stretch far beyond normative gender and racial binaries, I aim to frame a transnational discussion of girls' community activism within and against exclusionary notions of what constitutes girlhood and girls' social justice activism.

Specifically, I showcase how girls organizing to represent the communities on whom interlocking forms of interpersonal and state violence in Canada and the United States have the most impact are at the forefront of developing transformative justice models that conceptualize what it means to bridge social movements organizing against racial, sexual, and gender violence—both at the individual and institutional levels. The Young Women's Empowerment Project, Chicago (YWEP) and Sista II Sista, Brooklyn (SIIS) are autonomous community organizations that seek not only to take power but to make power by building community accountability structures that are not reliant on criminal legal and punishment systems, state funding, private foundations, or professionalized social services.[2] Transformative justice is an umbrella term used to define "any strategy to address violence, abuse or harm that creates safety, justice, reparations, and healing without relying on police, prisons … or any other state systems" (Chen, Dulani, and Piepzna-

Samarasinha 2011: xxiii). After highlighting two of these girl-driven collectives' transformative justice work, I focus briefly on how girls are mentored and trained to become "radical bridge builders" (Sudbury 2003: 134) who engage in intersectional, inter-movement praxis in their organizational contexts.

These aims necessitate an interdisciplinary analysis and methodology to interrogate the social constructs of girls and girlhood since social science research centered on girls assumes that gendered developmental categories are fixed and neutral, rather than invented and elastic signifiers. My primary approach was the collection and textual analysis of various organizational and movement documents produced by the YWEP and the SIIS collectives. I obtained these materials largely through my participation at movement building conferences where these organizations and their participants led workshops and presented on panels.[3] I analyzed these texts to examine the organizations' agendas and used them to provide background and context for the girls' political engagements and practices. Both collectives have co-authored and published critiques of their own organizational dynamics and transformative justice processes, incorporating this process into their documentation (see Sista II Sista 2006; Burrowes et al. 2007; Russo and Spatz 2007). I also use their own critiques of their work to address the conflicts that occur in organizing. In this way, I read their documentation as authentic co-publications, rather than emblematic or tokenistic forms of activist knowledge production. I also approach their documented critiques as forms of truth telling that they engage in the context of their activist work.

By describing some of the concrete pedagogical activities girl activists develop and the questions of politics and process with which they grapple, this chapter amplifies the dynamic process whereby girls learn how to maneuver strategically within their own organizations and between and among different anti-violence movements. To this end, I pose the following questions: How do girls who face as much interpersonal violence as they do institutional and structural violence understand and represent where the carceral state ends and the so-called benevolent community begins? How do intimate, interpersonal forms of violence interlock with structural and state forms of violence in the girls' own understanding of their daily lives? How do they strategize to disentangle themselves from the expanding prison regime and other systems of state-sponsored control when patterns of dependency, medicalization, and infantilization persist in the surveillance of girls labeled at risk? What places are left for them to go to?

For criminalized Indigenous and racialized girls who have spent the majority of their lives under some form of state control, the bound-

aries that separate intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and mass incarceration are porous at best, and nonexistent at worst. I approach violence against girls and their organized resistance to it from multiple intersections: as a queer mixed-race Chicana from an urban, working-class background; as a survivor of sexual violence and incarceration; and with an anti-violence activist and prison abolitionist perspective. I aim to denaturalize intimate and interpersonal violence and its state-supported structures by refusing any neat distinctions between personal and state forms of violence, proposing instead a more layered analysis of intersecting structures of oppression and privilege and the social relations they foster.

By drawing on frameworks developed by critical race feminists, my analysis of girls' activism interrogates how they represent the raced-gendered logics through which sexual and structural violence operate, and the role violence plays in producing *differently* gendered, raced, and classed subjects. Girls' activism demonstrates how prison abolitionist and anti-sexual violence movement participation requires us to move outside of the geographical and psychological boundaries set by the carceral state and its affective economies. The courts, federal and state legislation, therapeutic models, and even some domestic violence shelters presume that violence against women is synonymous with domestic violence and that it affects all girls and women equally and in the same ways (Richie 2012). In order to understand violence against girls as a fundamentally heterogeneous phenomenon that requires a heterogeneity of interventions, it is essential to go beyond such universalizing constructs of interpersonal partner violence to consider how sexual, institutional, and structural violence work together.

Additionally, heteronormative, Euro-Western white perspectives of girlhood constitute another form of violent confinement from which criminalized girl activists must free themselves. The transformative justice processes and community accountability strategies generated by girl activists to disrupt interlocking forms of violence under the carceral state alert us to their complex and contradictory relationship to what constitutes girlhood and what it means to be a girl, potentially offering a means of rejecting exclusionary notions of girlhood in order to escape the category's analytic limitations.

Spaces of Subjectivity and Subjection

Barbara Cruikshank argues that we must not separate "subjectivity from subjection in order to imagine political resistance" (1999: 120).

The interpersonal, sexual, and state violence targeting Indigenous and racialized girls is located within the geographical and political boundaries of white settler societies. In her influential paper on the brutal murder of Pamela George, a young Indigenous woman in Canada, Sherene Razack (2002) argues that gendered and sexualized violence against racialized others and specifically against Indigenous girls and women is a defining hallmark of *all* white settler societies.

In North America, Indigenous and racialized girls have historically been the primary targets of law enforcement violence and are overrepresented in the adult prison and juvenile detention systems. Since the late 1990s in Canada, Indigenous girls' and women's rates of imprisonment have doubled; they are five times more likely to be victims of femicide than are non-Indigenous girls and women, and many experience sexual victimization at the hands of police (see Human Rights Watch 2013). Not only has the carceral state historically criminalized girls' sexual behavior, it has widened the net to include criminalizing non-heteronormative and racially marginalized girls as violent predators (Richie 2005; Schaffner 2006). Even so-called benevolent alternatives to punishment such as gender responsive training, educational and therapeutic programs inside girls' facilities, and healing lodges for incarcerated Indigenous women (see Hayman 2006) expand and deepen the intrusive reach of punitive carceral controls into the everyday lives and onto the marked bodies of criminalized girls. Anke Allspach (2010) argues that these controls are transcarceral, forming beyond the permeable walls of prisons and constituting a reconfinement of women after their release. Dominique Moran (2013) furthers this analysis by arguing that transcarceral spaces exist alongside an embodied sense of the carceral that similarly moves beyond prison walls through the corporeal reinscription of formerly incarcerated women. The transcarceral continuum manifests itself primarily under the guise of localized mental health agencies, welfare and child protective services, professionalized social services, as well as in individualizing, pathologizing, and self-responsibilizing educational and therapeutic projects. This continuum blurs the boundary between the prison's outside and inside, extending its control through stigmatization and the embodied markers of imprisonment of criminalized girls who have spent the majority of their lives under some form of state control.

As targets of state regulation and containment, the girls I discuss in this chapter are deemed deserving of discipline and punishment but not worthy of legal protection. These girls would be, as Lisa Cacho argues, "*ineligible for personhood*—as populations subjected to laws but refused the legal means to contest those laws as well as denied both the

political legitimacy and moral credibility necessary to question them" (2012: 6). Because they are subjected to laws based on their illegal status, these girls are unable to comply with the rule of law since, as Cacho explains, the North American legal system targets their very being—but not their behavior—for legal elimination and social death (2012: 6). Given that the law neither protects nor defends these girls, they experience enforcement violence by local and state police and immigrant detention systems. While the discourse around police violence excludes the girls' experiences, Andrea Ritchie argues that racialized girls in particular "are sexually assaulted, raped, brutally strip-searched, beaten, shot, and killed by law enforcement with alarming frequency, experiencing many of the same forms of law enforcement violence as men of color, as well as gender- and race-specific forms of police misconduct and abuse" (2006: 139). As Canadian organizations like the youth-led Native Youth Sexual Health Network and the intergenerational Families of Sisters in Spirit have recently documented in their "Police (In) Justice" collaborative statement and resource guide (2013), violence by state bodies extends far beyond police and border enforcement (Bhattacharjee 2002). These youth-led and intergenerational Indigenous collectives underscore how transcarceration and enforcement violence have historically permeated the culture of many institutions in white settler societies.

Throughout this chapter, in addition to the concepts discussed above, I use the terms *carceral state* and *prison regime* interchangeably. I use the term carceral state to highlight the multiple intersecting state agencies and institutions that punish and effectively regulate poor communities. In order to discuss how the carceral state emerges, functions, and reproduces itself, the concept of the prison regime, as that which "possesses and constitutes the state," rather than the other way around, is also useful here (Rodriguez 2006: 43). Both concepts point to how the logic of punishment itself shapes civil society and the State. This framework brings attention to how the cultural and institutional site of the prison is no longer a place "outside and apart from our everyday lives, but [is] instead [one that] shape[s] and deform[s] our identities, communities, and modes of social interaction" (Rodriguez 2010: 9), uncovering the affective economies set by the prison regime. Emotions are an economy in that they do not just affect individuals; they actually bind people and drive interactions that serve to either bolster or dismantle the prison regime.

Because this regime is an increasingly integrated system, prison abolition is a necessarily expansive project that articulates with the holistic anti-violence agendas engendered most centrally by Indigenous and

race-radical women of color feminists (Sudbury 2003). An abolition-ist project is a positive rather than a negative project (Davis 2003). As panelist Andrea Smith argued, prison abolition is "not simply about tearing down prison walls, but it's about building alternative forma-tions that actually protect people from violence, that crowd out the criminalization regime" (Critical Resistance 2008a: 5). In short, it is a political vision with the goal of eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance—and the ideological structures of white suprema-cist capitalist hetero-patriarchy that shape institutional violence—and creating lasting alternatives to the carceral state. One such alternative is transformative justice, which seeks to develop strategies to address intimate, interpersonal, community, and structural violence from a po-litical organizing perspective in order to move beyond state-imposed, institutionalized criminal legal and punishment systems. Within our current carceral landscape, abolition and transformative justice praxis emerge as essential epistemic and organizing tools utilized by girl-led feminist of color collectives.

Resisting Enforcement Violence: YWEP

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence has been instrumental in identifying and challenging multiple intersecting forms of violence. IN-CITE! was founded as "a national activist organization of radical fem-inists of color advancing a movement to end violence against women of color and their communities through direct action, critical dialogue, and grassroots organizing" (2006: 3). Instead of establishing a hierarchi-cal structure that might lead toward co-optation by the nonprofit sec-tor, members of INCITE! conceptualize it as a movement that emerges out of grassroots struggle. In 1998 and again in 2001, members of IN-CITE! and Critical Resistance—a national organization dedicated to abolishing the prison regime and building genuine and durable forms of justice and security—came together to write an action statement challenging both gender violence and carceral state violence (Critical Resistance 2008b). The statement was a bold articulation of critical race feminist politics about the intersections of gendered and racialized vio-lence against Indigenous and racialized girls, women, queer, and trans people. Moreover, it has helped anti-violence activists and advocates move beyond concerns regarding overreliance on the prison regime.

According to Mimi Kim (2010b) of Oakland's Generation FIVE and Creative Interventions, the INCITE! and Critical Resistance collectives have inspired other organizations to move beyond the language of reli-

ance to challenge the liberal notion of the State as a viable partner in the struggle against violence against women and children. In particular, the statement calls on social justice movements concerned with ending violence to develop community accountability models that respond to intimate violence without ceding girls' ability to hold their abusers accountable to the prison regime. The possibility for engagement with the perpetrator of violence is by no means a necessary component of this organizing model; it is considered just one of many possible options for individuals or communities that have been harmed. Many collectives like Creative Interventions, SIIS, and the YWEP also challenge the primacy of individualistic and state-based remedies, noting that, for the girls on whom interlocking forms of violence have the most impact, the possibility of individual safety is a myth or a luxury afforded to the privileged few (Creative Interventions 2008; Kim 2010a). Their work is anchored in the belief that resistance to intimate and community-based violence, sexual assault, and enforcement violence are inseparable.

At a workshop held at the 2011 Allied Media Conference in Detroit, one sixteen-year-old sex worker, single parent, and lead organizer for the Chicago-based YWEP, who has been in and out of child protective services and juvenile facilities for most of her life, bluntly stated, "Cops, teachers, and social workers have hurt me worse than any pimp has." The workshop identified enforcement and transcarceral state violence as a problem for girls of color and encouraged them to broaden their definitions of violence and to mobilize their peers in a community-driven resistance movement against it.

Chicago's YWEP is a youth leadership organization grounded in harm reduction and social justice organized by and for girls and trans youth of color (aged twelve to twenty-three) who self-identify as sex workers—"people doing what we have to do to survive"—and those who have been trafficked into sex work and other forms of labor in the street economy. As experts in their own lives, YWEP organizers are at the forefront of developing a harm reduction approach for girls in the sex trade at the same time as they create collective community-driven strategies to hold accountable both people and institutions that have done harm. Promoting a movement- and capacity-building approach, YWEP's current campaign is based on the findings from their youth-led participatory action research project entitled "Girls Do What They Have to Do to Survive: Illuminating Methods Used by Girls in the Sex Trade and Street Economy to Fight Back and Heal: A Participatory Action Research Study of Resilience and Resistance" (Iman et al. 2009). The project found that the individual violence that girls experience at the hands of boyfriends, johns, pimps, family members, and foster care

families is exacerbated by the institutional violence that they experience from systems and services. Enforcement violence carried out by doctors, government officials, social workers, therapists, and foster care workers included emotional, verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, as well as exclusion from access to services.

On the heels of this report, YWEP members created a "Street Youth Rise Up!" campaign that focused on building the autonomy, self-determination, and resilience of street-involved girls. Their campaign includes an anonymous "Bad Encounter Line" for girls to fill out if they have been denied help from a social service worker, doctor, or police officer (a follow-up to their "Bad Date Line" created by sex workers to share incident reports on violent clients) and a "Street Youth Bill of Rights" aimed at training professionalized service providers and educating street-involved youth about their legal rights when interacting with schools, health and social service providers, and the police.

In addition, through their long-term "Healing in Action" program, YWEP embraces a radical harm reduction and reproductive justice approach that does not presume how street-involved girls should live, but provides tips on how they can ensure their own safety, however defined. For example, in their zine, *Toolkit to Owning Your Own Life*, collective members provide information on how to conduct self-examinations including pap smears and breast exams, how to stitch oneself up after a bad date without going to the hospital, and how to self-cut, squat, turn tricks, panhandle, inject drugs, and smoke crack in safer ways.

Lastly, collective members feel that many of the decriminalization or legalization strategies proffered by sex worker rights organizations presume that these workers are adults without considering the particular vulnerabilities faced by youths. When girls are forced to call the police, the latter never actually arrest traffickers or pimps; they simply criminalize girls and trans youth of color, making it more difficult for them (and their children) to survive. As Emi Koyama (2013) explains in her essay "Rescue is for Kittens," anti-trafficking policies that "rescue" youth in the sex trade actually translate into involuntary detainment of minor victims by the police. Although some jurisdictions in the United States have passed safe harbor laws that abolish prostitution charges against minors, young people are still often arrested under some other criminal charge, then forcibly sent back to the families or institutions that they had run away from in the first place (see also INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence 2011).

YWEP offers a more complex analysis than the dangerously simplistic framing of child sex trafficking, which paints all girls as victims in

need of rescue by the State. YWEP members understand that the de-criminalization of prostitution will not end transcarceral state violence against them. Instead, it has been sex workers organizing among themselves who have challenged and transformed exploitative and abusive working conditions, not police officers, social service providers, or politicians. Given the reality of enforcement violence in street youths' lives and the fact that many youths in the sex trade are pimped by family, friends, partners, and community members, YWEP members develop sustainable transformative justice strategies to hold social service providers, family members, and loved ones accountable for the harm inflicted upon girls.

For many currently or formerly incarcerated and street-involved girls struggling with enforcement, domestic, interpersonal, and sexual violence, support centers and shelters are also complicit in this transcarceral continuum. Organizations like YWEP expose the abuse of genderqueer and trans, racialized, poor, and working-class survivors within the domestic violence shelter system. In many communities, lack of access is embedded into program practices and policies, such as screening processes designed to exclude clients who are deemed difficult or nonconforming (Kim 2010a). Because they are not recognized by the State as either rights-bearing citizens or as *good* or *innocent* (read multiply normative) girls, street-involved girls are not protected by the paternalistic enforcement agencies and domestic violence support services that speak and act on their behalf. While the anti-sexual/domestic violence movements have been vital in disrupting the silence around intimate and interpersonal violence against girls, these movements have been co-opted by the State and are reluctant to address sexual and domestic violence within the larger context of the carceral and enforcement violence. Unlike these organizations, YWEP advocates alternative community accountability and radical harm reduction approaches that would not require survivors to act like model citizens in order to receive support, but would recognize, interrogate, and work within the conditions in which girls actually live.

Transformative Justice: SIIS and Sistas Liberated Ground (SLG)

Instead of legitimizing a liberal, rights-based politics of recognition, girl-driven organizations are inspired by militant, race-radical, and Indigenous movements for sovereignty and by various women of color–led prison abolitionist movements. Their organizations reimagine what

it would mean to turn their gaze away from the carceral state and focus their reflection inward in order to build what Glen Coulthard calls a politics "fashioned toward our own on-the-ground practices of freedom" (2007: 456). Instead of framing overresearched girls as belonging to deficit, depleted, and damaged communities ravaged by intimate and institutional violence, these collectives counter "damage-centered" (Tuck 2009: 409) narratives and research by showcasing how girls can become organizers rather than merely passive academic research subjects or the clientele of social services. Unlike the mainstream anti-violence movement, this movement demands *and* expects accountability.

Located in Brooklyn, New York, SLG is a community-based accountability and transformative justice project of the SIIS collective aimed at creating violence- and harm-free zones for girls in their community without relying on the State, cops, or courts. Early on in their organizing work, SIIS asked the following questions: "What if we said a section of Bushwick, Brooklyn, was a no-go zone for rape and partner abuse? What if we sat on the stoop, talked to folks on the block where our office was, and began weaving a web of folks who agreed to try something other than calling the police when it came to violence?" (Chen, Dulani, and Piepzna-Samarasinha 2011: xxv). This intergenerational collective of working-class black and Latina women wanted their own community to stand up against racialized and gendered violence in ways that no longer depended on the police. Sparked by the sexual assault and murder of two teen girls of color in Bushwick by two police officers, young women identified both interpersonal and law enforcement violence against girls in Bushwick as their main area of organizing work. They created SLG as a local alternative to the police. Since then, they have declared their territorial zone as a space where violence and harm against girls, women, and gender non-conforming people are not tolerated, where girls and women can turn to each other for help. As a part of the SLG project, Sista Circles were created to serve as transformative justice support and intervention networks among groups of girls who are friends, neighbors, and coworkers. SIIS members learn transformative justice strategies as they go and experiment with sustainable community accountability strategies to address community members' abusive behavior, creating a process for them to account for their actions and transform their behavior. In addition to providing immediate safety, shelter, and support to people who have been harmed, SIIS members are also committed to the ongoing development of the community itself in order to transform oppressive conditions and violent structures. These girls learn about and train new members in the principles of transformative justice as a long-term process.

In 2001, SIIS focused their youth-led participatory action research project on girls' experiences of violence in Brooklyn. They conducted a community survey of four hundred girls and produced a video documentary entitled *You Have the Right to Break the Silence.* Out of the four hundred young women surveyed, 57 percent had been raped or knew someone who had been. In 90 percent of those cases, the girls were not helped by the police or by service agencies. The video project included interviews with young women from the community about physical violence and sexual harassment by the police. SIIS screened the documentary at a community speak-out to transform the survey data into a tool for building coalitions with community activists and neighborhood youth, as well as regularly performed skits about sexual harassment throughout New York. SIIS argued that documenting the experiences of racialized girls victimized by law enforcement was just as important as monitoring police brutality against young men of color. On Action Day, they organized a well-publicized street fair at which girls performed spoken word and guerilla theater about police harassment, surveillance, and brutality, and projected the video on a large wall across the street from the local police precinct. Their political organizing work against enforcement violence made them and their allies a target for heightened police surveillance in the wake of 9/11.

SIIS members were undeterred, however, and continued recruiting new members through their daily organizing work and by creating freedom schools. These girl-led popular educational programs provided political education from an integrated mind-body-spirit framework that trains girls and transgender youth to become activists on their own behalf. Like their sista circles, freedom schools focus on building leadership capacity by collectively engaging in transformative justice. Through their dedication to community accountability processes, SIIS remains process-oriented rather than result-driven, practicing ongoing critical reflection rather than assuming that there is a moment of finishing or arriving. By rooting itself in the principle of self-determination and remaining a volunteer-run collective, SIIS has resisted becoming co-opted like other anti-violence organizations beholden to the criminal injustice system (Sista II Sista 2005, 2006; Burrowes et al. 2007; INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence 2009; Smith 2010). Organizations like SIIS engage in "a kind of seemingly impossible political project that is not only attainable but has deeply transformative potential" (Spade 2011: 197). They continue to engage in the interconnected processes of knowledge production and informal learning in the everyday world of abolitionist movement-building in order to address harm while resisting exile as a solution.

Reconceptualizing Girlhood and Girlhood Studies in Carceral Societies

By centering case studies of anti-violence and abolitionist activism that contest colonial state control and surveillance undertaken by girls, I trouble the very notion of girl and girlhood as a colonial legacy that privileges white, upper-/middle-class, heterosexual, able bodies via Euro-Western theories of normative child development that were and continue to be violently imposed upon Indigenous and racialized girls. Girlhood studies scholars assert that girlhood is an invented construct that has everything to do with race, class, ability, sexuality, and settler society contexts (Jiwani, Steenbergen, and Mitchell 2006). As Erica Meiners argues, within our current carceral landscape, constructions of "*the child* can get us all into trouble, including those bodies that qualify as children." Inspired by Meiners's influential analysis of how the "influx artifact" (2013: 3) of the child gets invoked in political work across the carceral landscape—both by proponents and opponents of carceral state expansion—I am interested in how deconstructing normative constructions of the *girl*-child can work in the service of abolitionist, decarceral praxis.

To contribute to a more politicized and inclusive girlhood studies in an era of increasing carceral state violence, we must better account for and conceptualize the work that girls who are criminalized, incarcerated, and street-involved do; the risks of *not* doing so are high. Normative constructions of girlhood bolster the broader racialized logic that drives the transcarceral continuum. In the contemporary carceral state, very few Indigenous and racialized girls have privileged access to the racialized and hetero-gendered production of innocence, sentience, respectability, personhood, and full humanity. Making a case for the centrality of girls and girlhood to North American racial formations starting in the nineteenth century, Robin Bernstein argues that "childhood innocence—itself raced white, itself characterized by the ability to retain racial meanings but hide them under claims of holy obliviousness—secured the unmarked status of whiteness, and the power derived from that status" (2011: 8). In stark contrast to the "angelic white girl," black girls were defined "out of innocence and therefore out of childhood itself" (16).

Not only are (white) innocence, consent, and protection at the center of discussions about girls, they are also the foundation of our criminal legal and punishment systems. Throughout North America, the carceral state is at the forefront of reshaping the boundaries of girlhood;

it has historically appropriated and channeled the idea of girls in need of protection. This protection of the girl centers sexual violence, while obscuring state violence and the ties that suture these together. For Indigenous girls—deemed by the white colonial welfare State as primitive, unreachable, and beyond reform—protection has historically meant increased rates of incarceration in residential boarding schools and prisons (see Ross 1998; Smith 2005).

In an expanding prison regime in which racially marginalized and gender non-conforming girls are still targeted for containment and sexual surveillance, it matters, urgently, who is viewed as valuable or disposable. Girlhood studies scholars need to continue to deconstruct the normative, universalizing category of girlhood in white settler societies in order to promote thought about the necessity of engaging in radical structural and systematic change in solidarity with the girls whose activism is showcased here.

Instead of organizing collectively to become better democratic subjects or "citizens in the making" (Gordon 2010: 8), criminalized Indigenous and racialized girls at the forefront of anti-sexual violence and prison abolitionist movement-building proudly embody what Soo Ah Kwon calls "uncivil youth" (2013: 130). Because of their identity as "uncivil subjects" and their "ineligibility for personhood", SIIS and YWEP organizers possess an acute understanding that "legal recognition is not and cannot be a viable solution for racialized exploitation, violence, and poverty" (Cacho 2012: 8). Their collective movement work proposes a model of mutual responsibility and accountability not based in calls for recognition from the State as the perpetrator of violence, a stance that challenges the politics of visibility and recognition upon which so many settler-identified and State-centered political models depend. Their activism necessitates a reconceptualization in girlhood studies of what constitutes the political when girls organize resistance.

The groups profiled here do not arrive at the forefront of transformative justice activism by choice but out of necessity. Marked as devalued and unworthy subjects of care, these girls participate in transformative justice praxis because there is no other viable option available to them to confront intersecting forms of violence without being subject to further criminalization and surveillance. Their empowerment is not contingent on taking political power, securing small legal victories, or winning the next big private foundation grant. As Cacho argues, "in the spaces of social death, empowerment … comes from deciding that the outcome of struggle doesn't matter as much as the decision to struggle" (2012: 32). For these young activists, the stakes couldn't get much higher.

Lena Palacios, as a Postdoctoral Researcher/Visiting Scholar (2014–2015) conducted participatory action research with the Third Eye Collective, a Montreal-based transformative justice and community accountability collective, led by female-identified people of Black/African origins, dedicated to healing from and organizing against sexual and state violence. As an Assistant Professor in the Departments of Gender, Women & Sexuality Studies and Chicano & Latino Studies (University of Minnesota–Twin Cities), her research and teaching focuses on transnational feminist prison studies; Indigenous, Black, Chicana and Latina feminisms; critical race feminisms; girls' and girlhood studies; transformative justice and community accountability; media justice; and research justice. She is also an experimental and documentary filmmaker.

Notes

1. This chapter focuses specifically on Indigenous girls and racialized girls of color who self-identify as women, queer, Two-Spirit, lesbian, bisexual, genderqueer, or gender non-conforming. My research works to purposefully disrupt white heteronormative scripts that erase the identities and bodies of non-normative raced and gendered subjects.
2. Both SIIS and YWEP share certain key principles for structuring their work to be participatory and centered in racial and economic justice, and to resist many of the tropes of non-profitization. Dylan Rodríguez defines the non-profit industrial complex (NPIC) as a "set of symbiotic relationships that link political and financial technologies of state and owning class control with surveillance over public political ideology, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements, since about the mid-1970s" (2007: 21–22). Rodríguez argues that the NPIC is symbiotic with the policing of multiply marginalized communities. SIIS became aware of this symbiotic relationship between the NPIC and the carceral state when their foundation funding was slashed after their collective started the SLG project, which directly challenged carceral and imperialist state violence at home and abroad. SIIS was able to transition from being a non-profit organization chasing after foundation grants back to being a volunteer-run, non-hierarchal collective in the wake of 9/11 (see Burrowes et al. 2007).
3. I participated in workshops led by SIIS and YWEP organizers from 2007 onwards at the Allied Media Conference (Detroit), the Critical Ethnic Studies Association Conference (Chicago), and the United States Social Forum (Atlanta and Detroit), and community-based activist trainings throughout Canada and the United States.

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From the Playing Field to the Policy Table

Stakeholders' Responses to Rwandan Schoolgirls' Photographs on Physical Activity and Sport in Secondary Schools

Lysanne Rivard

This chapter explores the use of visual participatory methods to integrate girls' voices into the decision-making processes that shape their experiences of physical activity and sport in secondary schools in Rwanda. It draws on a study in which girls in Rwandan secondary schools, using the visual participatory method, Photovoice, photographed their feedback and their suggestions on how to improve their lived experiences of physical activity and sport in school. Anchored in girlhood studies and participatory methodology, the objective of the study was to ensure that program implementers, experts, and policy makers would actively discuss and reflect upon girls' issues of concern. The girls' photographs and captions served as the basis for interviews with their physical education teachers, gender and physical education experts, and personnel in three ministries. Starting with a brief introduction to the current debate on girls and sport in the Global South and the justifications for selecting Rwanda as a case study, the rationale for an adapted participatory approach is presented, followed by a description of the data collection process. Results are divided into two categories: (1) issues raised by the girls demonstrating their understanding of key concerns currently being debated, and (2) issues raised by the girls highlighting their original contributions to the debate, and responses to the girls' feedback. The chapter concludes with a reflection on integrating key decision makers directly into an adapted participatory research process.

Girls and Sport in the Global South: A Debate Transitioning from "Where Are the Girls?" to "What about Girls' Voices?"

Over the past fifteen years, significant headway has been made in identifying and breaking down barriers to girls' participation in sport and physical education in the Global South. The recurring barriers are the

following: domestic chores (Meier 2005; Pelak 2005; Saavedra 2005, 2009), safety issues (Meier 2005; Saavedra 2005, 2009), the lack of female role models (Meier 2005), the obligation to wear skirts (Elliot and Lemaire 2007[1]), the lack of skills and the belief that girls cannot play (Pelak 2005; Elliot and Lemaire 2007; Saavedra 2009), and poverty (Hardman and Marshall 2005; Meier 2005; Pelak 2005; Saavedra 2005). In addition, the masculinization of sport and physical education is a strong deterrent for many girls who are reluctant to challenge gender norms (Brady 2005; Meier 2005; Saavedra 2005; Larkin, Razack, and Moola 2007; Kay 2009).

Although considerable work still remains to be done in addressing these barriers in various settings, a notable increase in access to sports and physical education programming has enabled critics to turn their attention to the quality of girls' experiences of such programming. Drawing on postcolonial and feminist theoretical frameworks, scholars argue for the rights of beneficiaries to take part in sport and physical education programs, and policy development and implementation, and are thus calling for the use of innovative research methodologies that will enable recipients' active involvement in this process (Guest 2009; Nicholls, Giles, and Sethna 2010; Darnell and Hayhurst 2011; Kirk 2012; Rivard and Mitchell 2013). In support of this approach to research, a 2012 UNESCO advocacy brief on physical education and sport for girls in the Global South calls for methodologies that not only work with "girl-led action" (Kirk 2012: 10), but also directly involve "the three broad levels of policy and strategy, on the professional and institutional, and on the personal and social levels" (9) in order to transform girls' experiences of physical education and sport. Drawing on these studies, this research seeks to answer the following questions: How can girls' voices be integrated into the decision-making process concerning the improvement of the physical activity and sport programming they experience? How successfully does Photovoice provide this opportunity for girls? The objective is to ensure that girls have access to a political space in which they can not only voice their concerns and solutions, but can also be heard, in a timely manner, by relevant and targeted decision makers who can have a direct impact on their lived experiences of this sport programming.

A Rwandan Case Study

I selected Rwanda because it represents an interesting case for both sport programming in the community, and physical education for girls.

Until recently, girls and women were excluded from participating in physical activity because of what is known as precolonial Rwandan body culture;[2] the formal Belgian colonial schooling system and a Westernized sport culture were originally developed to train elite young boys from noble families to defend the country (Bale 1996). This has meant that physical activity and sport are regarded as being primarily meant for boys and men (Huggins and Randell 2007). Following the 1994 civil war and genocide, Rwandan civil society and its social fabric underwent significant changes. An overhaul of major policies pertaining to all sections of society was realized as part of the peace and reconstruction efforts, including gender equality and education. Indeed, the Ministry of Education developed a new physical education curriculum based on the 1978 UNESCO charter (Ministry of Education 1997, 1998), a girls' education policy, and is working toward meeting United Nations Millennium Development Goals 2 (universal education) and 3 (gender equality and women's empowerment).[3] Furthermore, the Association of Kigali Women in Sports, which is the first sport organization for women and girls in Rwanda, has been spearheading programming for girls at the community level since 1997. As for physical education, a bachelor's degree in Physical Education and Sport has been available at the Kigali Institute of Education since 2003, and the number of graduates, both male and female, is increasing every year. Starting with 11 graduates (all men) in 2006, there were 100 graduates (seven women) and 134 students (ten women) enrolled in the program in 2012. The Ministry of Education is also implementing nationwide measures, including a television campaign, to encourage girls' participation in physical education at the secondary school level. Thus, the social and policy climate is ripe for addressing girls' experiences of community sport and physical education in Rwanda and for finding ways to ensure that girls' voices are heard and integrated into the ongoing process of program development and implementation.

Methodological Approach: Bridging the Gap between and among Girls, Teachers, Experts, and Ministries

Feminist Participatory Methodology

Feminist participatory approaches draw on theoretical frameworks and methodologies to gather and bring forward the voices of marginalized populations. Methods, such as the visual participatory method Photovoice implemented in this study (Wang and Burris 1997), are designed to collect rich qualitative, personalized, and context-specific data that

foregrounds the heterogeneity of women and girls' lived experiences and concerns (Cornwall 2003; Reid, Tom, and Frisby 2006; Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2009). Typically involving small groups of participants, participatory methods can require several sessions of activities over an extended period of time during which participants actively define, lead, and implement the research agenda (Maguire 1987; Lykes 1997; Yoshihama and Carr 2002; Frisby et al. 2005). Although they are successful at gathering multiple voices, the difficulties of implementing these methods, for both researchers and participants, are well documented. For example, in an effort to dig deeper and to highlight heterogeneity, activities can be labor-intensive and time-consuming. While context-specificity can offer a grounded understanding of a critical issue, it can then become difficult to reach various levels of decision makers and stakeholders (Reid and Frisby 2008). Furthermore, isolating small groups of participants can even be seen to be exclusionary in certain sociocultural contexts. Various feminist scholars working with participatory methodologies have reported the difficulties of transferring research results from an individual/local scale to larger segments of society (Reid and Frisby 2008) and have sought to adapt data gathering processes to respect participants' constraints and concerns while reaching out to decision makers (Gervais and Rivard 2013). Nevertheless, researchers are given strong warnings against tokenistic participation and are encouraged to work with smaller groups of participants in order to meet their various needs, even though this can lead to difficulties in linking personal concerns to larger structures. By seeking to both gather girls' lived experiences and to reach directly targeted levels of stakeholders, this research attempts to find a balance between a participatory approach grounded in individual experiences and having an impact on broader social structures responsible for the development and implementation of programming.

A "Middle of the Road" Approach: Balancing Participatory Objectives with Broader Social Impact

The research model I developed for this study sought to respect the local school context and the various constraints of the participants. As such, it contributes to the literature on innovative context-specific approaches to bridging the gap between girls and decision makers (Kirk and Garrow 2003; Sajan Virgi and Mitchell 2011; Thompson, Folifac, and Gaskin 2011; DeJaeghere 2012). Working with girls at secondary school level attending boarding schools, I faced particular time and mobility constraints since the girls had to follow strict school sched-

ules and regulations. Furthermore, with a very low secondary school completion rate of only 2.8 percent, girls are pressured to study and succeed in school, so that most of their free time is dedicated to academic activities (Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion n.d.). Thus, what might be deemed a tokenistic short-term participation approach can, in this context and with this particular population, offer the advantage of greatly reducing the personal risks and costs normally associated with extended activities and interventions. However, in order to increase the potential impact of short-term participation and a shorter time period there is a need to counterbalance these conditions with a significant number of participants and a pretargeted and relevant audience. In other words, I make the case for working with larger numbers of participants grouped in a heterogeneous collective voice to reach, and have an impact on, various levels of decision makers, thereby helping to bridge the gap between individual concerns and larger social structures. Because the research approach is grounded in the participatory method, Photovoice, girls' personal experiences and suggestions remain the primary data collected in order to improve physical activity programming. This approach respects Reid and Frisby's (2008) recommendation of building programs on life experiences and on what the participants hope to achieve.

Photovoice

In the Photovoice method, originally developed by Wang and Burris (1997), participants photograph their issues of concern and, with the help of their photographic documentation, collectively engage in critical discussions on the issues raised. The photographs then serve as evidence to present policymakers with the participants' priorities, their expertise, and their suggested solutions. For this study, Photovoice was specifically adapted to better address the concerns listed above, while actively engaging girls in the data collection process. First, in order for a greater number of girls to participate, the Photovoice session was adapted to a larger group of participants (twenty-five), curious onlookers were invited and integrated into the activities, and two sessions working with two different groups took place in each participating school, for a total of ten groups in five schools. Second, to respect girls' limited free time (school authorities allowed sessions to take place only during weekends and on Wednesday afternoons when there are no scheduled classes), only one Photovoice session took place per group, and it was structured to last approximately three hours. To adapt to this time constraint and to work within an activity structure that is familiar

to schoolgirls in the Rwandan context, I, as the researcher, asked three predetermined but open-ended questions and girls worked in teams of three to six per camera to photograph their answers to the questions. Finally, a colored PowerPoint document of the girls' photographs with headings similar to an exhibit served as the basis for semi-structured interviews with the girls' physical education teachers, experts, and personnel from the relevant ministries. This ensured that girls' feedback, issues of concern, and suggestions for improvement were not only seen but also discussed by key decision makers.

Data Collection: Combining Photovoice with Girls and Interviews with Key Stakeholders

Phase 1: Capturing Girls' Voices

I conducted the study in five secondary schools on the outskirts of Kigali with 196 girls of eleven to eighteen years of age. The girls were asked to respond, through taking photographs, to the following questions.

1. What do girls like about physical activity and sports in school?
2. What difficulties do girls face when doing physical activity and sports in school that boys do not face?
3. What can be done to improve girls' experiences of physical activity and sports in school?

Before they took their photographs, the topic and the questions were introduced to the girls by local facilitators, who ensured that the girls understood the activity and signed the consent forms. Then, in their small groups, the girls brainstormed responses to the three questions and went out into the school grounds to take their photographs. One photograph in response to each question per group was printed onsite using a portable battery-operated photo printer. The girls then made small photo-posters by gluing their photographs onto construction paper and writing a short caption beneath each. A representative of each small group presented their posters and shared their ideas with the rest of the participants. The girls kept their photo-posters.

Phase 2: Reaching Local Stakeholders and Policymakers with Girls' Photographs and Captions

The following section describes how the girls' photo-posters and issues of concern were brought directly to key targeted stakeholders in order for girls' voices to be heard.

Transforming photo-posters into interview and dissemination tools. Afterwards, I grouped the photographs and captions into recurring issues, ranging from most to least recurring. A PowerPoint presentation was then prepared with the top five answers to each question. The issue of concern was inserted as the title of the slide with six photographs illustrating the ideas being conveyed. Each stakeholder received a color-printed copy, which guided the semi-structured interview. The teachers received a paper copy of the presentation and a preliminary report of the research with the top answers of their own schools, while the experts and ministries received a presentation and a preliminary report with the top answers of all of the schools combined. The interviewees kept the documents to share with their colleagues and their superiors (Rivard 2013).

Conducting interviews. The following stakeholders and policymakers were interviewed: girls' Sports Masters (physical education teachers, one per school for a total of five, all men), a gender and education expert from the Forum of African Women Educationalists (a woman), the Sports Master and a Physical Education and Sport professor at the Kigali Institute of Education (both men), a gender specialist from the Canadian International Development Agency (a woman), the Sport and Culture in Education Expert at the Ministry of Education, the Acting Director of Sport at the Ministry of Sports and Culture, and the Adviser to the Minister of Gender and Family Promotion (all men). One interview was held with each person, lasting on average ninety minutes. After a brief introduction to the research and a few questions gathering programming and training information, the entire interview focused solely on the girls' feedback. Stakeholders were handed the PowerPoint presentation of the girls' photographs. On each page, there is the question asked, an answer to that question (taken from the captions), and six photographs demonstrating that particular answer. The stakeholders were told that the photographs represented the girls' feedback and suggestions. They looked at the document at their leisure and controlled the pace of the interview and the discussion. Some of the interviewees skimmed the photographs and looked mostly at the captions, while others paid close attention to the details of the photographs. Whereas some looked at each page and caption and discussed the issues raised at great length before turning the page, others looked at the entire document, made passing comments, and then reflipped through the document to make more detailed remarks and observations. Generally, the stakeholders responded with contextual information, agreement or disagreement with what the girls said, opinions, perspectives, and exam-

ples based on their experiences in other contexts and situations, and so on. Woven into the discussions were questions on their suggestions and challenges for improving girls' experiences of programming in relation to their position and organization. Questions addressed to experts and ministries also touched upon issues raised by the Sports Masters.

A significant strength of this interview format was that the starting point of each discussion was anchored in and stemmed from girls' voices, while still allowing for stakeholders to provide their own feedback and perspectives. In other words, through their photographs and captions, girls figuratively participated in a discussion at the policy and program development level by framing and structuring the discussion with key decision makers around their issues of concern, thereby creating a political space and opening a dialogue centered on what they have to say. Although after discussing an issue raised, the teachers, experts, and ministries could sidetrack onto other issues, by flipping the page and seeing another issue raised by the girls, the discussion was always brought back to girls' concerns, and as such, followed and respected the agenda set by the girls.

Results: Girls Contributing to the Debate with Key Stakeholders

Sports Masters, experts, and ministry officials reacted positively to the girls' photographs documenting their experiences, their issues of concern, and their suggested solutions. The results highlight girls' understanding of and original contributions to key concerns currently being debated.

Question One: What Do Girls Like about Physical Activity and Sports in School?

The girls' response—"to relax, freshen the mind and reduce stress in order to study well"— demonstrates their understanding of a contentious issue concerning their participation in physical education programming. Examples of photographs include two girls looking relaxed and feeling at ease and one girl sitting at a desk reading a book, concentrating, and studying well.

Girls' perspectives. Girls reported that participating in physical activity and sport at school enabled them to de-stress, to relax, to reduce tensions, and to sleep better, which in return increased their ability to focus

and to concentrate. They reported an overall feeling of well-being that helped them to study better. Because of this, they recommended increasing the time and requirements allocated to physical activity at school.

Stakeholders' perspectives. Sports Masters and the Ministry of Education fully agree with the girls on this point. Sports Masters list helping students to relax through physical activity in order to study well as part of their programming objectives. However, both Sports Masters and the Ministry said that girls' participation in physical activity and sport in a school context, whether as part of official programming or as an extracurricular activity, is a very contentious issue with parents and school authorities. The latter strongly believe that physical activity and sport are distractions that take time away from academic lessons and encourage students to neglect their studies. Indeed, the programs implemented in the schools taking part in the study were direct reflections of the school authorities' personal views on physical education. The Sports Master at the Kigali Institute of Education explained, "It's true, in our schools and universities, if the authority does not know sports, if they have never done it themselves, they say, 'What is sport? Why is it necessary?' And therefore sport is not promoted in that institution. If the authority believes in it, sport is implemented at the school." Indeed, the lack of educational value attributed to physical education resulting in crippling programming cuts or removal from the curriculum is a global trend (Shehu 1998; Hardman and Marshall 2005; UNESCO 2012).

Added to this lack of recognition and investment in physical education are extra difficulties for girls who face high dropout rates and gender norms masculinizing sport and physical activity. This creates a triple barrier in the school context: physical education is not valued as an activity beneficial to academic success, girls are put under extra pressure to succeed academically, and gender norms maintain that these activities are for boys. Indeed, the gender and education expert interviewed recalled her own experiences as a female secondary student who had to hide her participation in tennis competitions, including her medals and trophies, from her parents and other family members since they continually discouraged her participation in sports for fear that she would neglect her studies and would develop muscular and "masculine" arms. She confirmed that these beliefs are still very strong today and so ingrained that even she, as a gender and education expert and former athlete, admitted to never having thought of asking the role models who are invited to speak to the girls at the all-girl school to speak about their own participation in physical activity and

sport in their daily lives. The Ministry of Education confirmed that it was currently working on a national television campaign showing secondary school girls taking part in physical activity and sports in school in order to demonstrate that girls can take part in these activities and that they contribute to their academic success and overall social and physical health and well-being.

Girls also contributed an original perspective to the debate, with the most popular response to this question being "to lose weight and keep a good figure." Examples of photographs are: (A) a larger girl stands next to and points to her skinnier friend in order to highlight the latter's thinness and the larger girl's desire to achieve it (see Figure 17.1); (B) two slim girls on the right-hand side are wearing sportswear.

Figure 17.1. Untitled.

The first one is holding onto her shorts pulling them forward to indicate that her participation in physical activity plays a role in her slim figure, while the second girl next to her with her arms stretched out and leaning back indicates her freedom and ease of movement. The two other girls on the left-hand side are not wearing sportswear and are trying to slim down their waists by placing their hands on their hips, indicating that they are larger than the girls who participate in sports and have the desire to slim down.

Girls' perspectives. Girls' response that they wished to lose weight and have a slim figure through physical activity was closely followed by "to have good health." The fact that they were provided as separate answers indicates that the objective of losing weight is for perceived aesthetic purposes rather than for health benefits.

Stakeholders' perspectives. Stakeholders reacted with surprise when seeing these photographs and then mentioned that girls do tend to be bigger than the boys at this age and that they tend to want to lose weight. Indeed, the postgenocide generation to which these girls belong is exposed to beauty ideals defined by slimness. These ideals can easily be identified in advertising across the capital city, as well as in Westernized music culture and beauty contests, such as Miss Rwanda. Interestingly, although sport is heavily masculinized and adolescent girls are deterred from becoming too masculine and muscular, girls report that their main motivation to participate in physical activity and sport is to help them attain a feminine ideal of slimness in order to be more attractive to boys. This objective of femininity and sexual attractiveness through physical activity and sport runs seemingly counter to the masculinization of sports. Furthermore, it adds another element to girls' desire to take part in these activities since this issue is not included in the current "sports for girls as empowerment" discourse promoted by organizations seeking to increase girls' participation. By participating in physical activity and sport with the reported primary objective of losing weight, girls reappropriate the meaning of their participation in these activities.

Question Two: What Difficulties Do Girls Face When Doing Physical Activity and Sports in School that Boys Do Not Face?

The most popular reply to this question was "weakness, less endurance, tiredness, laziness, more easily hurt" and "some activities are harder for girls." In several photographs, girls are leaning over to indicate that they are tired, some are holding body parts (knee, back, etc.) to indicate injury and pain, and all have general facial expressions of strain and difficulty (see Figure 17.2). This is a major concern affecting girls' experiences of physical education programming.

Girls' perspectives. Although girl-specific difficulties were also highlighted, such as menstruation and having breasts, the most popular answer was girls' lack of physical ability in comparison to the boys. Other than an extreme minority of girls who are good at sports and physical

Figure 17.2. Untitled.

activity, the girls' fitness levels, for the most part, are not at the level of the majority of boys'. As a result, girls reported that they had more difficulty keeping up with the physical activities and sports currently available at their school and recommended the implementation of a variety of easier non-sports-based physical activities adapted to their level of fitness.

Stakeholders' perspectives. All stakeholders, except for one, agreed that physical activity is generally harder for girls than it is for boys and that they generally have less ability and are less fit than boys. Sports Masters commented that it is generally harder to motivate girls to participate and that it takes significant effort on their part to get them to participate in the activities that are heavily sports-based. An important contribution to this problem is the fact that the majority of primary schools do not offer physical education, physical activity, or sports. Since gender norms maintain that these activities are for boys, they are exposed to sport culture at a much younger age than girls. As a result, when girls do take part in these activities at the secondary school level, it is often their first experience, which makes it much more difficult for them to keep up with the boys who are more knowledgeable about sport rules and regulations and have more experience playing. The Ministry of Ed-

ucation and the Physical Education and Sport professor confirmed that adaptations to the curriculum were currently being made in order to integrate non-sports-based physical activities that can be more easily adapted to girls' level of fitness.

Question Three: What Can Be Done to Improve Girls' Experiences of Physical Activity and Sports in School?

A popular and original response from the girls was the suggestion to "create sports clubs, organize competitions for girls, and give prizes and trophies to the winners." In one photograph, for example, three girls are lined up next to one another, facing the camera. The first girl on the left is holding her arms up in a victory sign to indicate that girls are winners of competitions, the girl in the middle is making a peace sign to indicate her desire to participate in more friendly matches, and the girl on the right is pointing to her watch to symbolize her request to spend more time playing through the creation of clubs. In another photograph, a group of girls is standing in a circle and holding the camera case to represent prizes won at a competition.

Girls' perspectives. Girls report wanting opportunities to be part of teams, clubs, and competitions adapted to their level of ability and the chance of winning interesting prizes and trophies as reward for and recognition of their hard work and success.

Stakeholders' perspectives. The Physical Education and Sport professor explained that schools train only elite teams to represent the school at regional and national competitions and that the rest of the students are "forgotten." Furthermore, since the annual national tournament occurs at the beginning of the school year, once the school team is eliminated from the competition, it stops participating. As a result, very few students have opportunities to participate in matches and competitions. According to the professor, "The suggestion to create clubs and to give prizes I agree with, I admire this and support this. We need to create amateur clubs instead of only elite clubs so that girls can participate, can make new friends and be together, when they see that they can participate and have a chance to play, their confidence will grow." The Ministry of Education is currently developing and implementing a "sports for all" model of competition and sports clubs at the school level in order to give more students access to competitions and allow them to join teams. However, this is not implemented in the majority of schools, and teachers are left with very few opportunities to create teams and

organize matches with other schools. A Sports Master pointed to the significant lack of athletic facilities and playing fields as an obstacle to the organization of clubs and competitions. He also believes that increasing the quantity and quality of playgrounds would encourage and give a chance to the girls who do not make the sports teams to play as well. Currently, the only option available to these girls is jogging over weekends. He added that there had been one cross-country competition organized by a local church and sponsored by a national company in which some of his students participated and won prizes, but that this had been a once off tournament.

Discussion

The results described above demonstrate that girls are aware of, understand, and can contribute, through an adapted participatory process, to a discussion on key issues that can have an impact on the development and implementation of the physical activity and sport programming they experience in schools. One Sports Master commented that, although he was generally aware of many of the issues presented by the girls, the girls never directly approached him or discussed these issues with him. Consequently, because the photographs and captions were gathered through a participatory manner with a larger group of girls, they not only served as evidence of how the girls were currently experiencing the programming and how they would like to improve it, but also served as a captivating tool to share with authorities and parents in order to better inform them and to raise support and funding. As for the experts, they generally agreed with the issues raised by the girls. Through further discussion bringing together concerns and ideas raised by the girls and by the Sports Masters, experts saw the potential that aerobics classes have to motivate girls to participate in a way that is fun and relatively easy, and that respects both traditional gender norms and strict financial constraints, since playing fields and equipment are not required. The girls' requests confirmed the Ministry of Education's current push for a "sports for all" model of physical activity in schools, while the concerns they raised indicated to the Ministry of Sports and Culture that, although many girls do enjoy sports, gender barriers are still present and need to be addressed at the school level if female athletes are to be further developed and encouraged. As for the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, the Adviser to the Minister confirmed that girls' and women's participation in physical activity and sport had previously not been an issue of concern for this ministry.

At the same time, as a feminist researcher, I acknowledge that I need to be reflexive about my interpretation of the data and even my presence in the data collection process. For example, what does it mean to occupy the status of a young-looking *muzungu* (outsider white woman) who is physically active and who has the privilege of pursuing her studies? Because they assumed I was in my early twenties and therefore closer in age to them (I am in my early thirties), both the girls in the secondary schools and the university students acting as facilitators interacted with me in a friendly and relaxed manner. The experts interviewed, although also assuming that I was in my early twenties, commented on my status in pursuing a prestigious and advanced degree (Ph.D.), and this may have counteracted some of the disadvantages of being a young-looking woman interviewing members of an older generation. Finally, the one female expert interviewed was impressed by the fact that I was educated, physically fit, and also feminine. She explained that this represented a different conceptualization of sports for girls in Rwanda, where it is assumed that girls cannot be successful in school if they are interested in sports and that girls will become masculinized if they participate in too many sport activities. As a result, my personal commitment to higher education and an active lifestyle shaped my interactions with the participants in this study. However, because I worked within a participatory framework, facilitators, participants, and stakeholders were at the forefront throughout the research process. I was an observer while the facilitators led the Photovoice sessions and interacted with the girls once the session was over, and throughout the interviews, the subject matter discussed centered on and was guided by the girls' photographs and captions.

Conclusion

Although feminist scholars readily acknowledge the myriad barriers and difficulties in implementing participatory methods and obtaining concrete and action-based results (Reid and Frisby 2008), small groups of participants, long-term projects, and multiple activities are the ideals to be achieved as much as possible by both researchers and participants. However, in the face of many challenges and difficulties, I contribute to the debate that explores different combinations of tools that bring together and provide platforms for both speakers and targeted listeners within the same research process, rather than as an afterthought or procedure developed once the research activities are completed. When seeking to bring together various levels of participants and stakeholders

in a targeted, timely, inexpensive, context-specific, constraint-respectful, and productive manner, the potential strengths of shorter-term and larger-scale participatory projects that might otherwise be regarded as tokenistic on the one hand but offer other advantages on the other, also need to be further explored and debated.

Lysanne Rivard is an independent consultant in Education, Gender and Development. Her academic experience includes research, policy analysis, and working with local decision-makers in Sri Lanka and Rwanda in the areas of early childhood education, girls' education, sport for development and peace, and physical education. Her expertise lies in developing and implementing innovative participatory visual methods as practical and inexpensive consultation tools to help bridge the gap between program beneficiaries and key local decision-makers in Education and Agriculture. Lysanne has assisted in conducting several consultative field studies in Rwanda and Burkina Faso, and has worked with women in agriculture and women farmers to improve poverty reduction strategies.

Notes

1. Elliot, Dominic, and Isabelle Lemaire, facilitors/editors. 2007. *Girls that Play.* Association of Kigali Women Footballers, Insight UK, and Nike Corporate Social Responsibility, Rwanda. Participatory Video, 10:01. http://insight share.org/watch/video/girls-play.
2. Precolonial Rwandan body culture, dating back to the sixteenth century, was composed of non-competitive and ritualistic customs and activities practiced by young men at the royal court as part of their training to become "competent soldiers and athletes" (Bale 2002: 34). The activities included "poetry, panegyrics, dancing, self-defense, self-control, fighting, spear throwing, running and gusimbuka," (35) a form of high jumping, as well as "foot racing, archery, and dancing" (37).
3. For more information, see http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/.

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18

GIRLS, CONDOMS, TRADITION, AND ABSTINENCE

Making Sense of HIV Prevention Discourses
in Rural South Africa

Katie MacEntee

HIV and Girls in South Africa

In South Africa, 5.1 million people are living with HIV or AIDS (UN-AIDS 2012); an estimated 2.1 million are adolescents (between the ages of ten and nineteen years), and adolescent women make up 60 percent of this cohort (Kasedde et al. 2013). There is a critical need to address the reasons why women under the age of twenty in South African contexts are eight times more likely than their male counterparts to contract HIV (Abdool Karim 2013). Factors that contribute to girls' increased risk are gender-based violence and sexual coercion; poverty; a tendency for young women to have older, sexually experienced male partners; the gendered inequality of sexual relationships, which makes it difficult for women to choose safer sex practices; the susceptibility of younger female bodies to HIV infection; and low risk perception (Mavedzenge et al. 2011; Kasedde et al. 2013). Statistical reports illustrating the extent of the HIV epidemic among young South Africans are important. However, qualitative research has identified that "[i]t is through more nuanced micro-level research, in particular, that we can start to deconstruct the categorical gender variable used in quantitative research and open up a dynamic theoretical and social space to engage with the construction of gender and sexual identities … [with] the potential to inform us how the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa has been conspicuously gendered" (Reddy and Dunne 2007: 161). Recognizing the disproportionate effects of HIV on girls and young women points to the need to better understand why and how this is happening in different contexts.

The Study

In 2010 I worked with a group of grade eight high school students (nine girls and two boys, all fourteen years old) in a rural district of Kwa-

Zulu-Natal, South Africa.[1] We used digital story making to explore how young people understood HIV and AIDS. In this chapter I focus on one of three digital stories made during the research intervention, and present it, along with its images, its text, and some of the points that arose out of the focus group discussion I had with the participants about the story. What makes this digital story unique is its representation of girls' sexuality, their responses to the risk of contracting HIV, and how they feel about HIV prevention. I begin my reflection on this story by presenting the research context, describing the digital story workshop, and the methodology I employed, as well as outlining my method of analysis. Along with the reproduced images of the story, I provide an account of the story itself and a discussion of the key themes that emerged during a discussion of the visual data with the research participants. Through this analysis I then present, with some discussion, the participants' construction of adolescent female sexual desire and the complexities of how these young people interpret and make sense of HIV prevention practices in their rural context. The findings presented here raise issues associated with the complexities of HIV education and prevention and the need to work continually with young people to ensure that prevention methods are synchronized to take into consideration the crucially significant specifics of place, beliefs, and understandings.

Methodology

Context

I conducted my field research at a Vulindlela district public secondary school. This region is approximately 150 kilometers from Durban and twenty kilometers from Pietermaritzburg (the provincial capital) and has a population of around four hundred thousand. The Vulindlela region is highly affected by HIV and AIDS and has high unemployment and low per capita income (MacQueen and Abdool Karim 2007). HIV and AIDS as a social problem in this district has been widely documented from epidemiological and public health perspectives (see, e.g., MacQueen and Abdool Karim 2007; Young et al. 2010). Many of the households in this area depend on government grants for survival. Despite economic struggle, school enrollment is high, which suggests that, in theory, children and youth growing up in Vulindlela have access to basic education (Mitchell et al. 2005) and are exposed to the South Africa Department of Education Life Orientation (LO) curriculum, which

covers HIV prevention and awareness as well as dispensing information about sexual health practices from public media campaigns (Pettifor et al. 2005).

Workshop Synopsis

In consultation with my participants, I organized three three-hour workshops held during school hours. I co-facilitated the workshops with my colleague, Lukas Labacher, another Canadian. We both have extensive experience conducting HIV and AIDS prevention programs for youth using a variety of participatory and arts-based methodologies. Participants worked in three single-sex groups (this grouping was decided on by the participants) to create one digital story per group. All the participants agreed to make their digital stories available for research analysis and presentation. The digital storymaking process is discussed below. Alongside the digital story process, during the workshop I presented information about HIV transmission, condom use, and living with HIV and AIDS through lecture-format presentations, condom demonstrations, and group discussions with the participants.

Digital Storymaking Process

A community-based participatory visual research methodology, digital story making strives to be participant-centered and to promote community-based dialogue and solutions to social and public health issues (Gubrium 2009). The visual method allows for participants to explore research themes using a range of verbal, artistic, and embodied modalities. The method and prompt used for this project needed to be malleable and open to interpretation by the participants to allow them to express their opinions and their vision about the relationship of HIV and AIDS to their everyday lives. The prompt, "Youth and HIV in My Community," was presented to the participants to help guide their digital stories and promote critical reflection on how young people understand themselves in relation to HIV and to their community.

Following the workshop instructions, the participants brainstormed themes, topics, and ideas they associated with the prompt. The groups then decided on a general story idea and developed the idea in a visual storyboard format (Labacher et al. 2012). The digital story I focus on here was produced by the Girl Group.[2] The story is titled "The People's Who Does Not Wear Condom get HIV/AIDS" and is composed of six images. The other two groups involved in the research re-enacted their storyboard sketches and took photos of themselves role-playing the dif-

ferent characters in their stories, which focused on the need to address HIV-related stigma in their community. The Girl Group decided to take photos of their storyboard drawings and use these as the main images in the telling of their story. Their story is distinct in its portrayal of young people's sexual activity in relation to HIV prevention, and, as mentioned above, for its graphic depiction of young people engaging in sexual activity. Using Microsoft PowerPoint the researchers helped the group members to transfer each image into a presentation slide that was overlaid with a short caption that helped describe each drawing. The girls used a voiceover recording of the caption for each slide. The completed story was presented on a laptop to the larger workshop group, and it, along with the other stories that were presented, was discussed. The researchers and the participants questioned the group members so as to learn more about what they were trying to convey in their digital stories. This discussion was audio recorded and later transcribed. Conducting a close reading of the Girl Group digital story and the audio recordings of the discussion about it offers a unique opportunity to see how a group of girls represent sexual activity and what they deem important to tell in a story about youth and HIV in a rural Zulu community.

Method of Analysis

I used Rose's visual methodology framework, *Discourse Analysis I*, to analyze the images, text, and participant discussions in relation to this digital story. This methodology centers on the idea that discourse is articulated through a variety of images and verbally based texts. Hinging on the work of Foucault, Rose's method defines discourse as "a group of statements which structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act based on that thinking" (2001: 136). Rose emphasizes the way discourses are endowed with power, construct particular aspects of the social world, and are meant to be persuasive. While persuasive, they are also often naturalized or taken for granted and invisible. In an effort to identify the discourses at work in the digital story, I looked at the images, text, and related recorded focus group discussion with what Rose calls "fresh eyes" (150). Attempting to set preconceptions aside, I scrutinized the material for ideas and representations that had been missed or overlooked. Following this step, I grouped quotations and aspects of the images thematically, identifying recurring ideas and descriptions across the different data sets (visual, text, and discussion transcripts). I then reviewed the material, and the themes adapted with each revision many times, allowing new connections and ideas to come to light. Keeping in mind the work of discourse to persuade, I also critiqued how the girls

used and described their story to articulate claims of truth or natural fact. Finally, I considered the data in terms of what might be missing or absent.

The Digital Story

In this section I present a close reading of "The People's Who Does Not Wear Condom get HIV/AIDS" (see Figures 18.1 and 18.2). Working in a participatory manner, the Girl Group took the pictures included in their digital story. The students were somewhat unfamiliar with operating digital cameras, and some of the images in the story are rather unclear, so I provide a description of the six images to help clarify the difficult-to-reproduce pictures. Nevertheless, I think it is important to include the original version of the story to reflect the realities of using this methodology and because, even with a few blurry pictures, the Girl Group was successful in producing a powerful and informative text.

The first image is the only photograph of a girl and a boy with arms linked behind their backs, and the caption reads, "we are talking."[3] The boy and girl stand with their backs against a brown painted wall covered with graffiti. There is a large square-shaped hole in the wall where it is presumed a light switch used to be. The boy is pulling a face, stretching his neck towards the camera with a big smile. The girl
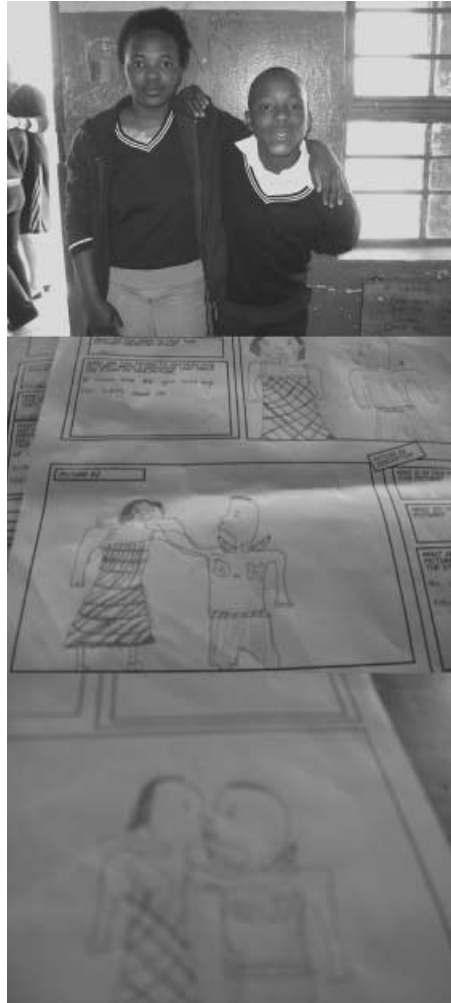
Figure 18.1. Images 1 to 3 of "The People's Who Does Not Wear Condom get HIV/AIDS."

appears more reserved, standing straight, shoulders back, also facing the camera. Her lips are turned up into a demure smile. This is the only photographic image in the story and it helps display the general state of the rural school. The graffiti and the missing electrical switch suggest a level of poverty or neglect.

The second image is a black-and-white pencil outline of a boy and girl on a white background. The girl, wearing a dress, is pictured face-on; the boy, in profile, with puckered lips, is turned toward the image of the girl. He is wearing shorts and a shirt. Each has an arm wrapped around the other's shoulder. The caption for this image reads: "they are touching each other."

The third image is out of focus, but one can still make out the pencil drawing of two faces—the boy and girl, this time both in profile with their lips pressed together in a kiss. Both characters still have an arm wrapped around the other's shoulder. Short and to the point, the caption reads: "they are kissing."
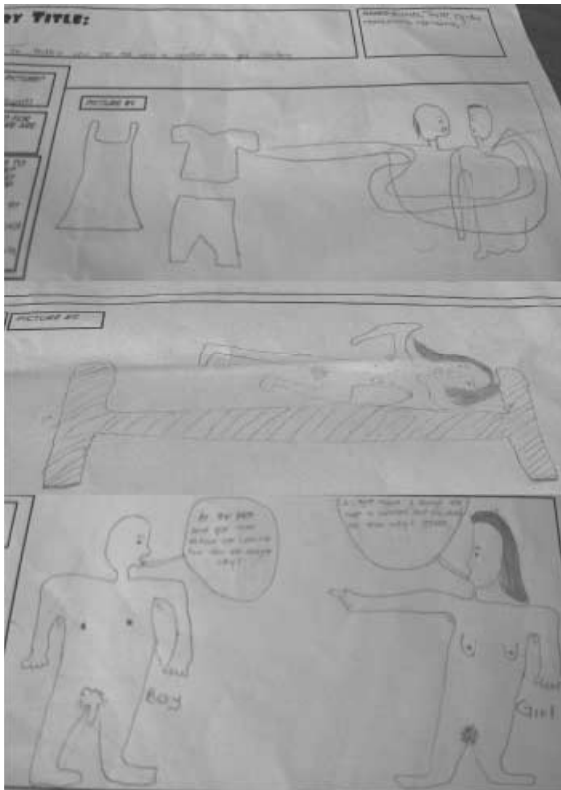
Figure 18.2. Images 4 to 6 of "The People's Who Does Not Wear Condom get HIV/AIDS."

The fourth image is more abstract; the figures are not fully drawn but are, rather, just two heads, thin necks, and a widening mass of what are presumably their bodies vaguely sketched in. They stand close and are looking at each other. Extending from the two bodies are long arms. The girl's arm loops around the boy's body in an embrace, and the boy's arm snakes in front of the girl, across the page, and ends at the outline of the girl's dress and the boy's shirt and shorts. The caption reads: "clothes are off."

The fifth image shows the girl naked and lying on a couch or a bed. The boy is not drawn, and the change in perspective from the previous images suggests that the viewer is seeing through the eyes of the boy looking down at the girl from above. Her left leg is slightly bent, while her straight right leg extends away from her body at a slight angle. The result is a clearly displayed vagina. There is shading around the vagina, which looks like pubic hair, and here an X is drawn.[4] Two U-shaped breasts with nipples are also clearly visible, as well as some hair under her arms. Her dark hair frames her face, her eyes are open, and her lips are drawn with a prominent divot/procheilon at the top center. The caption reads: "the girl is waiting for a boy."

The final image of the story shows the girl and boy both standing naked. Despite the clearly drawn vagina and penis, the artist(s) have written labels ("boy" and "girl") beside the characters. The boy and the girl are looking at each other. The boy is saying to the girl: "why are you saying no, you said you were going to sleep with me." The girl's right arm is extended and pointing at the boy and she is saying: "you said you had a condom but you don't. I won't have sex with you without a condom." The caption at the bottom of the image reads: "the girl is shouting at the boy." This is the end of the digital story.

Reflecting on my Role

Since the participatory aspect of the digital story making asks the participants to reflect on their understandings of sexual health, condoms, and gender roles in their community, it is also necessary that I reflect on my role in the research process before I present my analysis. Shefer and Strebel (2012) remind us that as researchers working on gender and sexuality we need to interrogate our own gendered constructions and address how our research can challenge or reinforce normative patterns.

With this in mind, I reflect on my own journey during this research process. This data was collected during the second of many trips I have made between Canada, my country of birth, and South Africa, to con-

duct doctoral research on participatory visual methodologies and HIV prevention with youth. It was a project I developed while working in collaboration with the Centre for Visual Methodologies for Social Change at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and my contacts at two high schools in the Vulindlela district. I am now in my thirties, I come from a white, middle-class, Irish Catholic background and I have lived my whole life in cities. There are many differences between Zulu young women raised in rural postapartheid South Africa and me. These differences made the research difficult at times, especially since I do not speak isiZulu—the local language—and some of the youth participants had limited skills in speaking English. During the recorded focus group discussions, I noticed for this project in particular long moments of silence as participants struggled to find the words to express themselves in English, and at times I felt that the language barrier led me to ask more prompting questions than I would normally have done. Details and nuances of experience were difficult to communicate for all of us at times, and clearly the work would have benefited from a translator. This was also my first time working in a research context with youth younger than sixteen.

Analysis

The story stands alone as a succinct narrative. At the same time, discussions with the participants throughout the research process illuminated the contested and contrasting elements of the story. The findings seem to reinforce Harrison's observations from her work, also with rural KwaZulu-Natal youth, on the topic of sexuality. She writes, "[A]lthough young people's own understandings of their sexual ideology was clear, their approach to relationships and prevention was rife with paradoxes and contradictions" (2008: 185). I analyzed the seemingly conflicting elements in the research data on my own without further input from my participants. Through this analysis I identified four key themes, each of which I explore in this section: moments of positive girl sexuality; barriers to condom use; a context for abstinence; and condoms and culturally appropriate HIV prevention.

Moments of Positive Girl Sexuality

The beginning of the story—the first four images—depicts an active and sexualized female character. Through the images and in the focus group discussion, the participants explain that both the girl and boy

characters are willing participants in the mounting sexual activity. Two participants explain; the first says, "[T]he girl was thinking that the boy had the condom" and the second adds, "[T]he boy telling the girl, 'go to sleep and having sex, I have a condom.'" We can see that the boy was initiating this encounter, and the girl was agreeing to the terms. The girl's sexual desire is indicated through her smiles and embraces, which show how she participates in the increasing intimacy.

Representations of girls voluntarily participating in sexual activity are sometimes overshadowed in the media and in sexual health curricula. More common are depictions of the girl as victim or as passive to the sexual advance of men and boys, and sexual education often ignores or vilifies female sexual desire. The LO curriculum, taught throughout the public school system in South Africa at the time of this study, as mentioned earlier, has been criticized for using metaphors of danger and disease in connection with girls' sexuality (MacLeod 2009). Although it is indubitable that their overrepresentation as victims of gender-based violence means that girls experience an increased risk of HIV infection, as Weckesser argues, the "gendered focus [in the academic and development literature] represents a double standard, with female orphans' sexuality perceived as a significant threat and/or at risk, whereas male orphans' sexuality is not" (2011: 52).[5] Similarly, public media AIDS campaigns often denounce certain high-risk sexual activities while at the same time marking girls as victims if not key players in these acts. For example, in 2012 the National Department of Health initiated what Brouard and Crewe describe as an "ill-conceived" campaign against Sugar Daddy relationships. Erecting over 800 billboards around the province meant to stigmatize these relationships, the campaign concurrently "conceives of young women in ways which [disempower] them and [deny] their agency and it runs the risk of stigmatising the young women and not just the older men" (2012: 49). Therefore, the representation in the digital story of the girl actively enjoying a sexual encounter, albeit with, in this case, a boy of her own age, offers a refreshing counternarrative to the barrage of negative images and discourses of risk associated with female sexuality. This aspect of the digital story suggests that the girls were able to use the arts-based technique to resist or transgress taboos around representations of adolescent sexuality.

In Zulu culture, as Wickström explains, "virginity is not connected to chastity; both virginity and sexual experience are of great importance" (2010: 538). Wickström's distinction between chastity and abstinence is helpful when we are interpreting the switch from the beginning of the story, when the girls depict a willing female participant, and its decisive ending that shows the girl yelling at the boy when she finds out that he

has lied and does not have a condom. In the text bubble drawn in the final image, the female character succinctly names the boy's coercive behavior, outlines her decision to practice protected sex, and refuses sex without protection. The participants did not express any moral derision of the female lust depicted earlier in the digital story, and they did not express any confusion or surprise over, at its end, the girl's sudden switch to anger and defiance.

The conclusion of the story can also be read as an act of assertive sexual decision making. Most sexual health education focused on behavior change promotes this kind of response given that, as one participant explained, "[T]he girl and the boy know they are not supposed to have sex." The LO curriculum encourages adolescents to control individual behavior primarily by delaying their sexual debut, then, if they are sexually active, by condom use and limiting the number of sexual partners (see, e.g., Kirby et al. 2007). The ability to control sexual encounters promoted through behavior change models is in line with what Hunter (2010) describes as South Africans' "growing acceptance of condoms in an era of high HIV prevalence and modern notions of gender equality" (2007: 137). These ideas have proliferated across South Africa in the postapartheid democracy, but they sometimes mask underlying gender inequalities that prevent women from actually practicing these rights. Similarly, development discourse has seized upon representations of girl power in the third world to help construct millennium goals and expedite development outcomes while overlooking the undue burden this might place on girls living in developing contexts (Gonick et al. 2009). It is often seen to be the responsibility of women to somehow control what is thought of as the oversexuality of men, and this is habitually performed through women and girls closely monitoring each other's bodies, attire, and attitudes judged to promote sexual behaviors in men (Pattman 2005). The following is instructive.

> Researcher: Is it always the girls' job to say no?
> Female participant: I think it is.

The question that remains at the end of the digital story is this: Is the girl respected? The participants report that "it is not easy for a girl to say no to a boy." We do not know if the girl character in the story is successful in stopping the proposed unprotected penetrative sex. The strength depicted in the girl standing, pointing her finger, and yelling at the boy suggests the research participants' efforts to illustrate the empowered female agency promoted by the rights-based discourse of the education curriculum. However, even the Girl Group may have felt apprehension about representing the lived complexities of such moments in girls' lives.

Barriers to Condom Use among Youth

During the discussions associated with the digital story, the participants described condoms as deterrents to abstinence. The absence of a condom can influence young people's decision to have sex; the participants said that the lack of a condom made it possible for the girl character to abstain. This is clear in the dialogue from the digital story when the female character points to the male character and declares: "You said you had a condom but you don't. I won't have sex with you without a condom." Moreover, the youth participants felt it inappropriate for young people to have access to condoms—one male participant believes that "it should be difficult." Previous reports have focused on how young South African women avoid insisting on condoms because this risks undermining the level of intimacy and trust in the relationship, and carrying condoms suggests that a girl is sexually experienced, which goes against socially constructed norms of feminine passivity and sexual naivety (Reddy and Dunne 2007). Low risk perception is also thought to impede condom use, especially among girls (MacPhail and Campbell 2001; Bryan et al. 2006). MacPhail and Campbell's (2001) work with South African youth also notes that condom availability, peer norms, adult attitudes toward condoms and sex, and the economic context of adolescent sexuality have an impact on the likelihood of young people using condoms. How condom use is taught and promoted in schools can also vary depending on teacher comfort levels and community tolerance, alongside a fear that teaching about condoms might promote sexual activity (Gallant and Maticka-Tyndale 2004). All this suggests that youth may not be learning that condoms are an effective protective method against HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancy. That young people themselves view the presence of condoms as contradicting abstinence discourses may pose another barrier to incorporating regular condom use among sexually active youth.

A Context for Abstinence: Virginity Testing

The World Health Organization (WHO) strategy for HIV prevention promotes the slogan "Know Your Epidemic, Know Your Response" and suggests "identifying the social, legal and economic conditions that increase the risk of HIV transmission and limit access to HIV information and services" (WHO 2011: 9). Francis's review of sex and sexuality education literature in South Africa similarly argues for a strongly defined curriculum "that recognizes both context and student perceptions of need" (2010: 318). The perceptions of these research participants, who

view condoms as detracting from abstinence and argue for them to be kept from young people, are significant in terms of a growing interest in promoting culturally and contextually appropriate sexual health practices.

The practice of virginity testing is significant in the context of rural KwaZulu-Natal. Girls as young as six submit to various tests, including a physical examination to establish whether the hymen is intact or not as a way of proving sexual activity or the lack of it. There is no test or practice that establishes the virginity of boys or young men. Unlike the images of threat and disease that are promoted through the LO sexual health curriculum described above, virginity tests are perceived to operate within a discourse of culturally appropriate HIV prevention methodology and what is becoming known as a cultural renaissance (Leclerc-Madlala 2001). Support for testing argues that "by making virginity a matter of public concern … people can help girls delay their sexual debut and encourage men to respect girls' sexual integrity" (Wickström 2010: 535). Critics argue that virginity testing counters the Rights of the Child and places undue pressure on young women to protect communities and the nation against AIDS. Leclerc-Madlala (2001) writes, "Virginity testing can be understood as a gendered response to a local disease experience that is fundamentally gendered in nature. Examining girls to determine their chaste status is another thread reinforcing a web of meaning that places women and women's sexuality at the epicenter of blame for the current AIDS epidemic among the Zulu" (2001: 536–537). This discourse of tradition and culture is being used to justify patriarchal and heterosexist behavior in this context (Moletsane 2011). Public monitoring of girls' sexuality is presented not only as the solution to the ongoing AIDS crisis in South Africa but also constructs virgin Zulu girls as the cultural champions of a society otherwise under threat from Western influences and moral decay. Virginity testing is a common practice in the Vulindlela district, and the research participants were familiar with, if not participants in, this practice.

Condoms and Culturally Appropriate HIV Prevention

Whereas virginity testing is being promoted in a discourse of what are considered to be culturally appropriate responses to HIV in this rural context, analysis of the data suggests that the young people in the digital storytelling workshop viewed condoms as a culturally *inappropriate* response to HIV. The girls who produced the story felt it important to insist that their story strongly promotes abstinence until marriage. When asked by another participant, "What is your story *really* about?"

a member of Girl Group explained, "It's about a boy and a girl who do not have sex because there is no condom." Condoms were neither readily available to these young people in reality nor in this story. The local clinics are supposed to provide free condoms for everyone, but the youth we talked to reported that healthcare workers chastise young people who come asking for them. Asking for condoms from friends and family invites punishment or gossip. One female participant explains, "They would gossip about you. [Making little talking motions with her hands] 'Vavavava, vavava!'" Asking parents or elders for condoms was seen to be "really bad!" Buying condoms (if they could afford to) free of prying eyes would mean a one-hour taxi ride into Pietermaritzburg, twenty kilometers away.

With further probing, it became clear that the youth participants did not support making condoms more readily available to young people; they believed that young people should not have access to condoms. Instead, they promoted abstinence. Abstinence was important to the participants, they said, because it reaffirmed their cultural tradition of waiting until after marriage. As one girl explained, sexual activity was inappropriate for young people: "Our tradition says that we have to get married first before [we] have sex." The discussion with the participants seems to suggest that the presence of condoms made it more difficult for youth, and for girls in particular, if we are to follow the gendered roles of the story, to abstain. The impact of this type of thinking bears particular relevance to HIV prevention strategies that attempt to promote condom use among sexually active youth. If youth seek to access condoms, there exist many barriers to actually obtain them. What is more, the data suggests that youth may experience a secondary barrier impeding condom access associated with cultural discourse and ideas of appropriate sexual behavior that the presence of condoms would be seen to undermine. This creates a complex minefield for youth to negotiate.

Discussion and Conclusion

Given that the story told by the girls is one group's perspective, further research would be useful to explore the significance of these types of insights and how generalizable they might be. We were invited to present the project at a local World AIDS Day community event attended by youth, educators, and community leaders. However, time restrictions meant we were unable to show all the digital stories made during this workshop. Added to this, there were concerns expressed by some of

the event organizers that the graphic nature of the Girl Group's digital story was inappropriate to show to such a large group and in a setting that would not allow for a debrief session with the audience. The apprehension was that depictions of female sexuality shown to a large and mixed audience could, in fact, perpetuate girls' sexual oppression. It was disappointing for the girls and the researchers that we were unable to screen the Girl Group's digital story to the Vulindlela community. At the time, these decisions frustrated me, and the Girl Group was disappointed. I now feel that the organizers were correct in their decisions, including that of not showing this particular digital story. I am extremely grateful for my participants' commitment to the project and for their working so hard to share their insights and knowledge.

Grewel (2013) warns of the temptation for Western researchers to outsource patriarchy and focus our attention on the questionable practices or beliefs of economically disadvantaged countries and regions. By relying on a "narrative of difference," we covertly construct ourselves (in my case: heterosexual, Western, white, and middle-class) as having broken free of oppressive practices. As I analyzed the data back in Canada at my desk at McGill University, I was aware of the privilege that my position allowed me to work with these youth, make connections between and among the data, and disseminate it in my own words. I also acknowledge that there exist many homemade socially constructed barriers and beliefs that prevent young people in Canada from accessing condoms and practicing safer sex. What I stress, therefore, is not a condemnation of how these young South African people understand gender, culture, and condoms but that researchers and interventions need to cultivate a more nuanced understanding of young girls' realities in relation to AIDS and rurality. As the AIDS epidemic matures, the communities affected by this disease also evolve. The youth in this research have grown up with AIDS in their lives; the messages and prevention campaigns are ever-present in their schools, in the media, and in cultural practices. In an effort to build awareness and effect safer sexual practices, advocates argue: "Interventions that target youth will need to be of high quality and coverage and must be sustained because there are new generations continuously entering this age group. HIV prevention interventions will also need to be sustained into older age groups because risk does not suddenly disappear after people pass a certain arbitrary age threshold" (Mavedzenge et al. 2011: 566). With this in mind, this research has explored how young, rural, South African women construct and understand girls and HIV in their communities to inform current thinking on sexual health education and prevention.

The digital story method seemed to allow the girls in this project to explore the contested nature of female sexuality, which they represent as passive while at the same time having agency. The girls in this research used their story to present a girl actively choosing to take part in sexual expression with a partner. Given the emphasis in HIV prevention on the risks involved in sex for young women, it is encouraging that these girls could express adolescent female desire alongside messages of safer sexual activity. The use of digital story making seems to have created a space in which youth could explore and express the often taboo articulation of their understandings of sexual encounters among adolescents without having to disclose personal, potentially stigmatizing information about their own experiences.

The analysis of the digital story and surrounding focus group discussions revealed how girls decipher and negotiate sometimes competing discourses about HIV prevention. The messages of individual agency and risk put forth by the HIV prevention curriculum and abstinence campaigns based in cultural mores were represented at different points in the same story. Girls can and do switch back and forth between these different discourses. For sexually active youth, condoms arguably remain the most effective (easily applied, affordable, and somewhat discreet) prophylactic. Of particular interest to HIV prevention campaigns that promote condom access is the emergent theme connecting condoms, abstinence, and cultural practices. Further research is needed to determine whether young people in this context view condoms as directly contributing to moral decay and if girls using condoms might be interpreted as a cultural offense. Given the gendered nature of condom access (the belief that girls should not carry condoms), pro-condom messages could further isolate girls from prevention options. How are girls responding to these conflicting messages? Are they adding another layer of complexity to these competing discourses? If condoms were more accessible for youth, would these responses change? Providing girls with a range of options that they can access and employ to protect themselves from HIV infection is imperative. It is unlikely that there is one solution that suits all individuals. However, how girls are interpreting these different HIV prevention discourses in relation to their own sexuality and how they are negotiating its practice must be considered.

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Notes

1. Ethical approval was obtained from the McGill University Research Ethics Board. In accordance with local protocol, further approval was obtained from the school principal. The principal identified a cohort of grade eight learners as potential participants, and these individuals were invited to attend a short presentation during which I introduced the research project and myself. Interested youth were given parental/guardian information and consent forms in isiZulu to have signed as a prerequisite to participating in the research. All participation was voluntary, and disclosure of HIV status was not a requirement of participation.
2. This was the group name the participants chose.
3. The girl pictured in the first image is one of the Girl Group members, and the boy is one of two male research participants. All participants and their parents signed consent forms allowing themselves to be photographed and for the photographs to be used for research purposes and in research publications.
4. During discussions with the participants, the meaning of the X was unclear. The participants were unable to explain whether this X marks the entrance to the vagina or whether it represents some kind of barrier (either artificial or the hymen).
5. Weckesser (2010) bases her observations on single- and double- orphaned girls and young women living in South Africa in particular.

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Epilogue

"You go girl!" That's the writing on the wall depicted on the front cover of this book, a part of the cityscape that signposts (and claims) the relevance of place and space for girls and girlhood studies. Symbolically, this image counters the sense that there is no place for girls and young women; for them, many public and private spaces remain dangerous. It is clear that while much territory has been covered by the chapters in this book, there is still more to be explored, and theorized, in relation to the spaces and places in which girls live and learn, and as far as building better knowledge about how girls create more secure and safer lives is concerned. In October 2012, sixteen-year-old Malala Yousafzai was shot by the Taliban in Pakistan. Amanda Todd, a Canadian teenager, committed suicide after months of being sexually harassed online and cyberbullied. Early in 2014, more than two hundred Nigerian girls disappeared and, indeed, at the time of writing, are still missing. It took a group of young women students in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, to mount a campaign campaign to raise awareness about these missing girls. They said, "We're looking for them. What are you doing?"

Such cases call for more critical inquiry into the ways in which territory and place, sovereignty and rights struggles, are intertwined, both in movements for justice for girls and young women, and in the bodies of knowledge in which so many of us participate and to which we contribute. Here in Canada, from where we write, Indigenous feminist and young women of color activists mobilize against the failure of the justice system in relation to the more than one thousand missing and murdered Indigenous girls and women. Alongside a mass movement for Indigenous sovereignty, *Idle No More,* headed by Chief Therese Spence, women and girls, men and boys are working cross-generationally to claim space for their communities based on their rights to territory. Such struggles are, and ought to be, central to girlhood studies and the ways in which we conceive of girls as change makers within larger movements and struggles for physical and social space.

What would it take to reimagine space and place within girlhood studies in light of these structural forms of violence, and the modes of gendered resistance that have arisen in response? Based in these partic-

ular realities, we end this book with a call for a renewal of research inquiry that asks how, and through what means, girls create and mobilize place-based consciousness toward more just communities, and worlds. First of all, how might place and space be made more prominent and explicit in our conceptualizations of girlhood within the contexts of social change and their related social imaginaries? As the chapters in this book illustrate, contemporary girlhood studies imagines place as physical and geographic, but also as virtual, in ways that reveal the interconnections of online and offline practice, and experience. Girls find themselves and others online, where they imagine other ways of being, and in some cases, do politics and make changes that translate into their lives at school, in the street, in their homes, and in other places.

We also ask what other theories and analyses of place and space need to infiltrate, as it were, this work, to push it in new directions from a position of what we think of as aggressive commitment. From generative notions of rurality, for example, to recognition of the contested place of land itself as fundamental to violence perpetrated against Indigenous girls and young women, girlhood studies needs to acknowledge not just the idea of gendered spaces but also the ways in which these spaces are also colonized, and colonizing. Indeed, recognizing the interrelatedness of such social constructs as race, culture, (dis)ability, gender, and age we might ask if intersectionality studies still has a number of blind spots when it comes to the significance of space and place for girls.

The contributors to this volume have not adopted a problem-oriented approach to studying girls' lives; they have sought to deepen an understanding of the situation in which girls and young women live, study, work, and struggle to represent themselves and others, across their differences and different locations as part of the very construction of who and what constitutes girlhood, and what identifies the girls with whom we work. By reimagining place and space, we might reconceptualize the ways in which the issues girls face are posed by institutions, policy makers, and media industries in terms that could better account for the place claiming of girls within and around these sites. More than anything, this reimagining might allow us to reflect forward to the creation of new spaces and places for social change.

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