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Strategic Gendering: The Negotiated Social Actions of Adolescent Girls

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STRATEGIC GENDERING: THE NEGOTIATED SOCIAL ACTIONS

OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

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DISSERTATION

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STRATEGIC GENDERING: THE NEGOTIATED SOCIAL ACTIONS

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DEDICATION

To the seven adolescent girls in this study who shared their lives and experiences with me and who made me feel deeply privileged to have the benefit of their knowledge and engagement in this profound journey of learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

STRATEGIC GENDERING:

THE NEGOTIATED SOCIAL ACTIONS OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

By

Joann Stemmermann

University of New Hampshire, May, 2016

This qualitative study is focused on how gender expectations shape the identities and social actions of seven white middle class adolescent girls. Utilizing an ethnographically oriented grounded theory approach, this study seeks to reframe adolescent girls' agentic actions in relation to cultural influences. This investigation looks at "cultural impasses" in girls' lives and how they are indicators of gendered preconditions which shape their everyday choices and behaviors. Research aims are embedded in the concept that gender is socially constructed and produced through the combined interplay of girls' social actions and cultural demands. Through an examination of girl and adult narratives, elicited texts, and ethnographic research, as well as, the analytic frameworks of pragmatism and critical feminism, this study maps out a range of social actions that are sometimes contradictory in nature. "Strategic gendering" is proposed as a way to illuminate the observable blending of opposing social actions of girls in this study, who strive to satisfy dual commitments to self and culture. Strategic gendering refers to an adaptive negotiation of social actions that simultaneously links girls' personal goals with cultural expectations and can be evidenced in girls' day to day behaviors. This concept can be understood through theories of power, gender, autonomy, and agency which are considered in relation to study participants' life experiences. Further, this study explores implications of findings for white middle class girls, parents, teachers and other professionals who live and work with them.

PART I

INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATION

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

"I feel that pressure."

"I would be fine if I stayed flat forever. I don't care. I think its other people [that do]."

Michelle, age 12 (4, p. 10 & 12)

It was our fourth and final interview and Michelle's responses to my question about increasing pressures on her as a growing adolescent girl did not surprise me but reflected her own rising awareness of the sexual and gendered occurrences that marked the approaching time of her life known as adolescence. Michelle was part of my qualitative research study which is focused on exploring the nature of gender and how it operates in the lives of adolescent girls. At twelve years old Michelle's appearance was gender neutral, she had a prepubescent body, a head of thick short hair, and a preference for baggy boy clothes. Transitioning into seventh grade at a new public middle school in the northeast region of the US, Michelle suddenly found her personal appearance under attack at the same time she was navigating a confusing school environment, pursuing new friendships and adjusting to tougher academic expectations. Seemingly innocent questions directed at her appearance like "Why don't you grow your hair out?" added to these other pressures. In one of the above responses, Michelle points to a potential source of these pressures as "other people" rather than herself. For Michelle being "flat forever" seems perfectly acceptable, however, simply because she "doesn't care" about growing breasts does not mean that these pressures will go away, and in fact they do not, compelling her to have to respond and continually decide how to react to these kinds of social tensions.

Additionally, the increasingly feminine appearance and shifting behaviors of other girls in Michelle's school only highlighted her androgynous appearance and made her feel as though she did not "fit" with the social environment around her. She was sometimes mistaken for a boy due to her short hair and these kinds of frequent awkward social interactions sensitized her to the obscure rules of gender conduct. I asked Michelle how this kind of discomfort "made her feel" and she was quick to answer, "It makes me feel sort of embarrassed, but I realize that it was my choice and still my choice. I'd rather have short hair and people call me a boy, rather than have long hair and people call me a girl." Michelle's resolute response seemed to make space for her own appearance choices and revealed her struggle with other people's expectations for how she should look. With a heightened awareness to gender expectations, Michelle began to wear clothes that made her look more "girly" such as wearing pink colored pants and fuzzy tops. When I asked Michelle about how she managed the pressure to change her appearance, especially in light of her choice to have short hair, she said, "I'm sort of still tomboyish . . . but I'm just dressed like a girl."

Michelle's experiences help to capture moments of gender struggles that adolescent girls confront every day and is the focus of this qualitative research study. This investigation includes seven white middle class adolescent girls whose lives form the raw material for understanding the way that gender operates and how girls like Michelle manage gender demands. As someone who does not fit the mold for a typical girl, Michelle finds herself defending some of her choices while at the same time flexibly engaging other choices. Her ambivalence at being "flat forever" and her commitment to short hair signal individual preferences while wearing pink pants and fuzzy tops appear to afford her a path to social acceptance. In these moments of struggle, Michelle does not forego all her needs and desires nor does she totally reject socializing

influences, rather she appears to adaptively respond to the prevailing and often seemingly contradictory demands placed upon her.

When adolescent girls like Michelle respond to these kinds of competing demands, social forces appear to profoundly impact their behaviors and press them into narrow definitions of femininity which can be harmful to girls' growth and wellness. Understanding the effects of gender expectations has interested me as an educator and as a lifelong feminist. A main part of my life's work has been aimed at understanding and addressing gender inequalities through working with adolescent girls, designing girl specific educational programs, and teaching educators about girls' healthy development. The often hidden and inexplicable ways that gender operates within our culture has both frustrated me, as a white middle class female who has endeavored to disrupt these adverse effects, while at the same time fascinated me as a practitioner and scholar who seeks new levels of understanding. This investigation continues my search for knowledge and aims to explore the ways that girls, like Michelle, experience and respond to gendered demands through their everyday choices and social actions.

Focus of the Investigation

The goal of this research investigation is to illuminate the sociocultural influences that shape adolescent girls' experiences with a particular focus on the ways that gender shapes girls identities and social actions. The focus of the study is on understanding how adolescent girls navigate gender expectations and the ways their agentic capacities are constrained by them. Girls' agentic capacities are of specific interest due to traditional gender identity meanings and the ways that girls interpret them. Girls' every day choices, responses to difficult situations, and adolescent transitional challenges will help to reveal girls' sense of themselves as social agents in various contexts and settings such as home, school and after school activities. Of particular

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concern are the effects of gender socialization and gender hierarchies on girls' healthy development. Through this study my goal is to contribute a more nuanced awareness of the ways in which adolescent girls negotiate sociocultural influences, and their own individual purposes, by investigating their sense of identity and charting their everyday social actions.

<u>Primary Research Question</u>

How do adolescent girls experience and respond to gender expectations in their lives?

This main research question is centered on "gender expectations" and how adolescent girls engage with and experience gendered demands. For the purposes of this investigation, exploring the meaning of "gender expectations" as it relates to my primary research question is important. The way I am defining gender expectations is focused on the commonly held ways that adolescent girls are compelled to behave in our society which can be understood through traditional definitions of femininity that are characterized by the qualities of care and passivity. Gender expectations represent beliefs that shape how males and females think, act and adorn themselves. Gender specific expectations fall into what is known as the "gender binary" and these two categories are defined by masculine and feminine behaviors and can be understood as gender practices. For example, during adolescence girls and boys are expected to take on more household chores, however, while girls might be expected to do meal preparation and clean up, boys might be expected to take out the trash and mow the lawn. These different expectations fall into gender specific roles and inform girls and boys sense of identity and capacities. These directed behaviors can form "habits" and skills that may seem like natural proficiencies which some people believe are acquired from birth. Due to pervasive and often hidden societal influences it can be hard for individuals to discern just how these gender "habits" are formed and how to oppose them. For this reason, exploring girls' social actions and the ways that they are

shaped through gendered practices is important to understanding the relationship between adolescent girls and their social worlds.

The research goals of this study are also embedded in the concept that gender is socially constructed and draws upon Berger and Luckman's (1966) concept of "the social construction of reality" which suggests that the "reality of everyday life" originates in our "thoughts and actions" (pp. 20-21) rather than as an objective reality. In essence, Berger and Luckman suggest that humans are molded through our relationship with environments around us and through this interplay humans "produce" themselves. Further, human experiences contribute to an accumulation of a "common stock of knowledge" that Berger and Luckman call *sedimentation* (p. 68). They also note that the way that knowledges become sedimented is through a process of *legitimation* which serves to bolster and make them acceptable. As such, concepts such as gender can be understood as being socially constructed and whose meanings have been sedimented and legitimated within our common knowledge base making them appear stable and objective, when alternatively, they may serve other more obscure purposes.

Research Subquestions

1) How are girls' experiences related to core self-concepts?
2) How are girls' experiences related to key relationships in their lives?
3) How are girls' experiences related to key social networks in their lives?
4) How are girls 'experiences related to the gender hierarchies in which they live?

My search for evidence will be guided by research subquestions which are represented by four differing perspectives. These divergent lenses will help direct my search for meaning in the lives of the seven adolescent girls at the center of this investigation. These various angles will guide my conceptual inquiry, as well as, steer the development of analytic tools that will support my interviews and site visits. The question related to girls' self-concepts is vital for interpreting

girls' social actions, while the question on key relationships will help illuminate important places of interaction, as well as, provide alternative perspectives on girls' lives through adult interviews. The question on girls' social networks will guide the locations for observing girls' social worlds, and the gender hierarchies question will help to illuminate the often invisible effects of gender in girls' lives.

Focusing a broad lens on the effects of sociocultural influences in girls' lives while drilling down into the various layers of girls' experiences through specific vantage points casts a broad yet targeted net with which to pursue this investigation. Together these purposes and research questions provide ample resources and direction to support a thorough and comprehensive investigation into the lives of the adolescent girls in this study. Drawing upon feminist developmental theories and sociocultural theories, I hope to further illuminate the specific and subtle ways that girls experience an "unjust social order" (Harding, 1993). Girls' core self-concepts, key relationships, social networks and social hierarchies will provide the lenses through which I will analyze this unsettled period in adolescent girls' lives.

Cultural Impasses and Girls' Vulnerability

While charting adolescent girls' experiences Brown and Gilligan (1992) noticed that traditional gender expectations appeared to undermine girls' healthy psychological development and they began to identify and describe the impacts of gender hierarchies on girls' lives. They found that girls at the edge of adolescence came to "doubt the authority of their own experience," and as they began to learn cultural expectations of femininity many girls' inexplicitly began to let go of knowledge they once held. The words "I don't know" appeared in girls' language as they began to silence themselves in the face of new and perplexing social expectations. This finding was troubling because it signified psychological stress or difficulties in the course of

girls' development. Gilligan (1993) explains the psychological impact of gender preconditions placed on girls as they enter adolescence.

> [W]e began to witness girls edging toward relinquishing what they know and what they have held fast to, as they come face to face with a social construction of reality that is at odds with their experience, so that some kind of dissociation becomes inevitable. Girls' initiation or passage into adulthood in a world psychologically rooted and historically anchored in the experiences of powerful men marks the beginning of self-doubt and the dawning of the realization, no matter how fleeting, that womanhood will require a dissociative split between experience and what is generally taken to be reality. (p.xxi)

Brown and Gilligan's (1992) research with girls revealed important "sociocultural variables such as class, race, power, historical moment and gendered behaviors" (Bookman, 2000, p. 238) which had not been examined. Describing what appeared to be socially constructed gender relations as "hitting the wall of Western culture" Brown and Gilligan (1992) named the political dimension of gendered practices and defined a cultural-historical framework for gaining insight into this phenomenon. Detecting what they called a "cultural impasse" at the edge of adolescence for girls, Brown and Gilligan revealed "gender-differentiated" cultural norms which were "threaded tightly into [girls'] psychological development" (Bookman, 2000, p. 243). This meant that with the onset of adolescence girls began to experience a new set of cultural rules restricting their identity, behavior and aspirations in important and alarming ways. Brown and Gilligan's research and subsequent framing of girls' development incorporated the complex dynamics of sociocultural variables and influences that operate below conscious level of belief and revealed a "gender stratified society" (Harding, 1993).

Naming the reality of gender hierarchies in adolescent girls' lives was like pulling back the curtain on what was "taken to be reality" and this insight propelled work by Gilligan and other researchers who sought to understand the landscape of girls' development and the implications of gender preconditions on their lives (AAUW, 1992; Debold, Brown & Tolman,

1999; Gilligan, Rogers & Tolman, 1991; Machoian, 2005; Ringrose, 2006; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Simmons, 2002; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995; Tolman, 2002; Steiner-Adair, 1986). These works focused on the sobering reality of girls' vulnerability to gender socialization expectations and was extensively studied. These findings included subtle, familiar and novel accounts of girls' lives such as the reinforcement of girls' passivity in schools (Sadker & Sadker, 1994), the expectation of girls' "sexual accommodation" as they enter adolescence (Tolman, 2002), the onset of an "epistemological confusion" in girls' choice-making experiences (Debold et al., 1999), girls' victimization in bullying interactions (Simmons, 2002) and the invisibility of girls' depression (Machoian, 2005). Together these studies identify various cultural impasses, or their effects, and at the same time highlight the vulnerable moments of girls' lives. While these findings revealed girls "Achilles' heel" and the ways that gender norms operate to destabilize girls' capacity for action, they also unwittingly framed a discourse on girls' lives that focused on "victimization" and disempowerment, which came to epitomize the core of research at this time, resulting in an assumption of passivity marking girls' experiences as a whole.

From this perspective, girls' vulnerabilities posed dangers to their healthy psychological development. Brown and Gilligan (1992) observed that girls began "to lose their vitality, their resilience, their immunity to depression, their sense of themselves and their character" (p. 2). They explained that "quiet losses" such as these could lead to issues like depression and eating disorders (pp. 58-59) and placed girls in a positon of "heightened psychological risk." While these claims were true for some girls, critiques of research that universalize girls' experience led researchers like Harter, Waters, Whitesell, and Kastelic (1998) to challenge claims of passivity in girls. They examined "level of voice" or speaking assertion among high school girls and boys, only to find no gender differences. The work of Harter et al. reflected my own concerns about a

lopsided focus of research on adolescent girls' experiences which appeared to omit other more agentic behaviors of girls and motivated me to pursue this research study. However, contrasting research such as Harter's does not invalidate prior claims of passivity in girls but rather highlights the need for more nuanced studies to refine and verify findings among diverse populations, age groupings, and local settings, and focus on other aspects of girls' experience such as their agentic capacities.

When girls choose to silence themselves rather than speak up, take a back seat to others needs rather than ask for what they want, and distrust their own knowledge rather than believe in themselves, as researchers suggest, these vulnerabilities may represent an important warning sign in adolescent girls' development. These markers suggest that girls' agentic qualities may be unwittingly compromised due to gendered expectations and power dynamics that permeate girls' everyday lives. These seemingly minor inequities and social conventions press girls to have to simultaneously conform to gender expectations while carving out space for their own independent actions. This balancing act of satisfying the needs of "the culture" while satisfying the needs of "the self" is frequently framed as an "either/or" choice – serve the culture or serve oneself.

While Brown and Gilligan (1992) claim that the choice to align with the self, rather than the culture, is a choice for healthy psychological development. I contest this framing of girls healthy development and propose to reframe Brown and Gilligan's "either/or" assertion with a "both/and" approach. I suggest that girls' choice between "self" and "culture" is a false choice and oversimplifies the remedy for girls' choices in a gendered world. Instead, I suggest that girls create space for their own autonomy through the action of "strategic gendering" which is an adaptive negotiation girls' influence that simultaneously links their personal goals with cultural

expectations. This way of combining purposes - "girls-with-the-culture" - moves away from a "girls-against-the-culture" framework and supports what is available and necessary for girls to adapt and maneuver in the world around them while pursuing personal objectives.

I view Brown and Gilligan's (1992) false dichotomy as one that is rooted in an idealized and future oriented choice – one that rightfully seeks equality for women and girls; however, this orientation does not take into account the urgent demands of girls' lives. My view is that girls in this study, who must negotiate the near moments of daily life, and the "practical judgements" they have to make, must work with the raw materials available to them, such as relationships, beliefs and opportunities to respond to life's challenges. This more realistic view more accurately describes the social actions of girls in this inquiry and reflects their own identities as emerging young adults. These ideas will be further detailed and discussed as this investigation unfolds.

The roots of this investigation are situated in the body of work produced by Carol Gilligan and her colleagues at the Harvard Project on the Psychology of Women and the Development of Girls. In many ways, this study is a response to the "cultural impasses" that these researchers unearthed about the lives of adolescent girls and is a search for other possible outcomes. While girls' patterns of vulnerability inspired the "dissonant nudge" for this investigation, it is girls' agentic potential and the way girls' social actions are navigated in a gender stratified society that is at the heart of this project. Investigating girls' ability to finesse cultural demands with their own individual goals, while navigating a myriad of social influences, will provide new insights into girls' identity and behaviors and the ways that they are manifested.

Relevance of the Study

While research suggests that adolescence is a time of vulnerability for girls, and this has been well documented (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Yanay, 2004;

Simmons, 2002; Tolman, 2002, Machoian, 2005), it is also true that girls can, and sometimes do, rise above sociocultural limitations (Harter et al, 1998; Simmons, 2002; Kindlon, 2007). Exploring girls agentic capacities, which have been less studied, is of particular interest to this investigation and may provide key insights to support girls' healthy development. Generating alternative ways of viewing girls agency may contribute to new angles for understanding adolescent girls' identities and social actions. Especially in a postfeminist era, which claims we are "beyond gender" (Thurer, 2005), the process of analyzing adolescent girls' behaviors offers an opportunity to seek evidence which either supports or discredits these types of claims. Similarly, popularized constructions of girls today as "powerful and successful" (Pomerantz, Raby, & Stefanik, 2013) can obscure the persistent nature of sexism which is rooted in our society. Of particular importance to this study, is focusing beyond simply identifying the locations where girls are passive or agentic, but rather on illuminating the ways in which girls navigate conflicting social demands with their own individual needs, and the how they manage them. At a time where girls appear to be better off than ever before, a comprehensive exploration of girls' experiences and responses to gendered demands is important for examining surface level understandings and how they hold up against substantive experience based realities.

The goal of focusing on girls' agentic capacities, as well as, the effects of gender and the ways that girls navigate them, is to fill gaps in understandings of adolescent girls' behaviors while contributing new insights on how adolescent girls handle the very specific gendered demands which they confront every day. In addition, I aim to challenge historic meanings of gender constructs in relation to adolescent girls by generating new concepts and raising new questions which will further our understanding of adolescent girls' experiences. Pursuing these goals will offer timely insights to current understandings of gender and its impacts on the seven

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white middle class adolescent girls in this study and offer new material for research in other fields and diverse settings. Additionally, the creation of new knowledges will provide educators, psychologists and parents with valuable information to support adolescent girls' healthy development and oppose harmful gendered consequences, through informed educational curriculum design, teacher training and parent education.

What Lies Ahead

This dissertation is organized into four parts representing different elements related to this study. Part I includes two chapters including this one on "Background of Study." The second one on "Conceptualizing the Lives of Adolescent Girls" describes the "macro" and "micro" perspectives that frame this investigation including research on the topics of power, gender, autonomy, and agency as they relate to the lives of adolescent girls. Part II on "Methodology" includes two chapters, including Chapter 3, featuring "Research Methodology" and highlights the key approaches of grounded theory ethnography and feminist analysis, as well as, details of specific research methods and other research concerns. Chapter 4 on "Research Participants: The Girls" introduces the study participants through brief profiles which convey details about each particular girl. Part III on "Adolescent Girls' Agency and Social Actions Revealed" includes Chapters 5 through 8. These chapters concentrate on illuminating the most prominently observed social actions of adolescent girls in this study and focuses on three main theoretical themes including conforming actions, concurring actions and transforming actions, as well as, describing the key "agentic pathways" related to these girls social actions. Part IV on "Strategic Gendering and Beyond" includes Chapter 9 and the Epilogue. Chapter 9 describes and interprets the key findings of the prominent social actions of girls in this study and proposes "strategic gendering" as a way of understanding the sometimes contradictory nature of girls' behaviors, while also

discussing possible impacts of this research both conceptually and in practice. Finally, the Epilogue presents a glimpse into the lives of five of the seven original study participants who were interviewed six years or more after the initial data collection phase was completed and reveals themes of continuity and change in these young women's lives.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUALIZING THE LIVES OF GIRLS

A focus on the social actions of white middle class adolescent girls, and the perspectives of important adults in these girls' lives, offer opportunities to illuminate the social influences that shape adolescent girls' experiences. The study design emphasizes girls' social actions and how they are shaped by gender expectations. The research aims are embedded in the concept that gender is socially constructed and produced through the combined interplay of individual girls' actions and prescribed cultural conditions. Looking at girls' social actions through a grounded theory ethnographic approach (Charmez, 2006) including interviews, site visits, and elicited texts, and a context specific perspective including school, home, and after school activities, allows for observing and interpreting the various social actions and experiences of adolescent girls. The goals of this investigation along with the findings from this study help frame my argument that social actions of adolescent girls are both culturally and individually mediated, as well as, fundamentally intertwined, and can be explained by theories of power, gender, autonomy, and agency. These concepts form the basis for how adolescent girls' "gendered" identities and social actions can be understood and represent significant influences, contours and constraints that shape their lives.

In the section on "Power," I present and discuss Foucault's (1980) concept of "disciplinary power" and how it contributes to an analysis of power relations within societies. This theory of power will act as a conceptual foundation for the gender stratified society (Harding, 1993) in which we live and the impact it has on adolescent girls' experiences. By naming the political dimension of power structures within society the invisible is made visible

and provides a view of adolescent girls' lives that is normally obscured and adds a potent dimension to understanding the experiences of girls in this study.

The section on "Gender" will review MacKinnon's (1987) claim that gender is "socially constructed as difference." Further, I will present Butler's (1990) concept of "gender performativity" which focuses on how gender is produced through the repetition of actions rather than simply signifying an inherent personality trait. These perspectives along with others will challenge the notion that gender is stable and fixed but instead changeable and dynamic. Additionally, this segment will discuss the work of Miller (1976) who describes the "dominant/subordinate" positions held by various groups of people within social structures and how they represent a gender hierarchy. Considering gender from these perspectives allows space for understanding adolescent girls' choices and behaviors from new angles.

The section on "Autonomy" will explore various theories of autonomy including traditional, feminist, intrinsic motivation and epistemological perspectives (Debold, Tolman & Brown, 1996; Deci & Ryan, 1987; Erikson, 1963; Miller, 1976; Yanay, 1994). Key to this discussion is the idea that human behavior can be either autonomous or controlled by external forces, with autonomy as supporting individuals to be "vital and self-motivated" (Deci & Ryan, 2000). I will present and discuss these various concepts of autonomy and their relationship to girls' development, as well as, the role of identity formation. Autonomy as an aspect of identity raises specific problems for adolescent girls due to the historical construct of the term and restrictive definitions of femininity which restrict the ways that girls view themselves and their opportunities.

The final section on "Agency" will cover adolescent girls' capacity for agency and the paradox that is inherent in girls' agentic identity – that is, if girls act outside of traditional

definitions of femininity, they may not be recognized as female. This discussion will include Dewey's (1922) concept of "habit" as a model for understanding girls' agentic abilities and how it relates to girls' choices and behaviors. Additionally, Debold, Tolman and Brown (1996) offer a view of how girls struggle for knowledge limits their agentic abilities. This section will also review various definitions of agency, as well as, what constitutes an "agent." Further, I will present ideas on "resistance" and other alternative ways to conceptualize girls' agentic behaviors (Bartkey, 2002; Bordo, 1989; Debold, Tolman & Brown, 1996; Raby, 2002, 2005).

Together, these four sections offer both macro and micro perspectives that will provide rich material for examining ideas related to adolescent girls' experiences and will set the stage for presenting evidence from this study. Theories of power, gender, autonomy, and agency will guide the search for meaning in the social actions of the seven early adolescent girls in this study and will provide a rich context for better understanding adolescent girls' lived experiences.

POWER

"For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support."

<div align="right">Audre Lorde (1984)</div>

In order to set the context for an investigation into the problem of gender difference and the question of girls' agentic abilities, it is important to take into account some of the major cultural influences in girls' lives. Pursuing a study focused on gender expectations suggests there is a difference in gender socialization for males and females (Ringrose, 2006) representing what Harding (1993) calls an "unjust social order" and a "gender stratified society." Since the question that I am exploring is invariably focused on the uneven nature of gender (MacKinnon, 1987), enlisting a perspective on power relations (Foucault, 1975, 1980) will assist in further understanding the subtle and nuanced aspects of adolescent girls' identities and social actions.

Identifying the "effects of power" on a population that had been little studied was substantively brought to light by the work of Gilligan and colleagues at the Harvard Project on the Psychology of Women and the Development of Girls (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Rogers & Tolman, 1991; Machoian, 2005; Taylor, Debold, Brown & Tolman, 1999; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995; Tolman, 2002) who studied the contours of power influences on adolescent girls' lives. As a foundation, Foucault's (1980) theory on the "nature of power" will provide an important perspective for better understanding the "political" dimensions of gender. Reviewing some critiques of Foucault's theory of power and how they relate to girls' experiences will also be included. Finally, this discussion will provide a starting point for understanding subsequent conceptual elements related to this study which will focus on gender

as a social construct, concepts of autonomy and agency, and how together these ideas frame girls' social actions.

Understanding Power: Foucault

Foucault's power relations theories (1975, 1980) may assist in explaining the complex relationship described by Brown and Gilligan (1992) between girls and their culture and may help account for the socio-cultural barriers which impede girls' developmental paths. Foucault's concepts have given theorists an important tool for analyzing power relations within societies. As an early thinker on power relations, his work describes the "nature of power", a new type of power he calls "disciplinary power," and the "techniques of power". Foucault's theory (1980) of disciplinary power has been used by feminist researchers Bartkey (2002) and Bordo (1989) to explain the accommodating tendencies identified in female experience and to identify the techniques of power that work to thwart female roles, activities and capabilities. Since power relations are said to be hard to detect, and nearly invisible to the untrained observer, a discussion of Foucault's concepts, as well as, revealing some of the locations and ways that girls experience power, may help to better understand how disciplinary power operates in the lives of adolescent girls in this study.

The Nature of Power

Constructing his theories while studying the modern day prison, Foucault (1975) framed the nature of power as an apparently neutral force that circulates in the world in which we live, and claims that power is "productive" and is simply how work gets done. For Foucault, power is a tool that can have either beneficial or harmful effects but is not an attribute of people. He suggests that the benefits of power produce efficient hospitals, armies and prisons, however, the harmful effects of the application of this power, may be felt most by individuals who represent

less powerful groups such as the poor, disabled, females, minorities, and homosexuals. In later work, Foucault (1980) added further to his theory and analysis of power which concluded that "power is war, continued by other means" and notes that "the basis of the relationship of power lies in the hostile engagement of forces" (p.91). These forces, he suggests, are upheld by "social institutions, in economic inequalities, in language, in the bodies themselves of each and every one of us" (p.90). Hence, Foucault sees power residing around and inside each human being, not as a force unfamiliar or distant to us, but intimately located within our own everyday experiences.

Disciplinary Power

Foucault's (1980) concept of disciplinary power represents a kind of "power-over" model where individuals are dominated through indirect forms of discipline. Foucault suggests this kind of power replaces the "sovereign power" of the past which was held by kings and monarchs. This new power is characterized by a focus on "time and labor" rather than "wealth and commodities" (p.105). Foucault (1980) suggests this is a more subtle and efficient power which operates continuously and in a permanent system of "surveillance." He suggests that today we practice a "collective sovereignty" known as democracy which is based on public rights and "disciplinary coercions" such as the rule of law. He suggests this "society of normalization" has its focus on a "theoretical horizon which of necessity has nothing in common with the edifice of right," (1980, p.106) and therefore, applies disciplinary power unevenly with specific groups of people benefiting more than others.

Foucault (1975) claims that discipline is a form of domination and an instrument of power and is wielded in various ways by dominant groups over groups with less power. He

describes the human body becoming the site of everyday "disciplinary coercions" under what we think of as democracy.

> A "political anatomy," which was also a "mechanics of power," was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus, discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile bodies." (p.138)

Here Foucault (1975) claims that a disciplinary culture trains or produces subjects who may or may not retain autonomy over their own lives. This passage suggests that individuals are profoundly "saturated" by subtle and substantive forms of power that inhabit not only those that hold power over them but also by internalizing the various forms of disciplinary power themselves, and therefore, perpetuate the damaging effects placed upon them.

Techniques of Power

For Foucault (1975), understanding the "techniques and tactics of domination" is fundamental to an analysis of disciplinary power which operates invisibly making it difficult to detect. He suggests starting by "ascending" from the "infinitesimal mechanisms" in everyday life. Thus, the social actions of girls in this study will provide rich material for applying concepts of power and ferreting out the ways that girls experience and respond to the application of power in their lives. Foucault describes the tools of disciplinary power as "hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it, the examination" (p.170). Hierarchal observation can be thought of as surveillance, supervision and monitoring of human actions such as security checks at the airport or extensive background checks for federal employees. Foucault explains that "normalizing judgement" is "the perpetual penality that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, heirarchizes, homongenizes, excludes. In short, it *normalizes*" (p.183).

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To be normalized is to be aware of your place within the culture through visible and invisible signs and codes. A boy is normalized when he is told not to cry teaching him the "correct" behavior for a male. A girl is normalized when she is complimented on her appearance rather than her intelligence reminding her of the rules of femininity. Finally, the "examination" provides a kind of check-up or litmus test for ensuring compliance to power conditions such as college entrance exams. These techniques of domination, as Foucault claims, are one way that girls' identity and behaviors can be explained. In this way, the dominant culture, the patriarchal culture, systematically normalizes girls through various discourses and specified realms of activity.

The Effects of Power

So, what is the effect on individuals subjected to these dynamics of power? Foucault (1975) states that "disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination" (p.138). Using Foucault's example, as workers gain skills at being a nurse, a soldier or prisoner they also improve at being submissive, passive and dependent. The dynamic of "over disciplining" individuals results in a level of compliance that could be likened to "brainwashing" and calls up images of target marketing to youth by mass media and the consumer society that we live in today. Girls in particular have been exposed to intensive marketing that construct and "package" images of girls as empowered or sexualized (Lamb & Brown, 2007) for purposes of selling clothing and accessories while obfuscating the underlying reinforcement of consumer compliance. Consequently, girls gain habits as young shoppers that support multi-million dollar companies which "train" them to consume for life.

Feminist Analysis on Foucault

Since this study is focused on the experiences of adolescent girls, a look at how Foucault's theory has been interpreted and applied to the lives of females will help better relate this material to this investigation. Engaging the work of Foucault (1980) and his account of disciplinary power, critical theorists Bartky (2002) and Bordo (1989) examined the relationship between "normative femininity" and power relations (Bartkey, 2002, p.14). In particular, they looked at the female body as a site for the effects of power and the techniques and tactics of domination posed by Foucault.

Bordo (1989) studied the social phenomena's of hysteria, agoraphobia and anorexia as examples of reactions or "resistance" to disciplinary power (p.15). She argues that the female body is a symbolic and metaphorical "site of struggle" for "gender domination." She notes that "normalizing disciplines" represented in women's practices of dieting, wearing make-up and attention to clothing "may function as a 'backlash' phenomena" to correct new attempts to "transform power-relations" suggesting that as women "resist" dominant practices new conditions evolve to take their place (p.14). She views anorexia as a form of women's pathology which reveals flawed and unconscious attempts by women to subvert gender domination. She explains that while an anorexic woman may symbolically be engaged in a "hunger strike" for the purpose of dissenting to dominant culture, she is also capitulating to the "contracted female world" by taking up less symbolic space.

Bartky (2002) studied the seemingly innocuous female practices of dieting, exercise and skin care as ways to "maintain norms of feminine embodiment" (p.17). She argues that "disciplinary practices are disempowering" and identifies a "fashion beauty complex" that views women's bodies as defective, insists that women "must measure up," and is "an enormous drain

on women's time and women's money" (p. 20). She views the definition of femininity, which holds up white female beauty as the norm, as restrictive and feeding "racism and classism." Additionally, she suggests that the "project of femininity" is a set up for failure – women can never attain true perfection which is held out as the norm (p.22).

Bartkey (2002) and Bordo's (1989) analysis of Foucault's disciplinary power, as it relates to women's' lives, reveal a few of the everyday effects of power. Their examples show the infinitesimal mechanisms of power through expectations of femininity which press women to conform to unachievable images of female ideals. Unfortunately, gendered preconditions are not restricted to women's experiences but also weigh heavily on the lives of adolescent girls who confront their own difficult experiences of anorexia and the fashion beauty complex. Such gender rules are ubiquitous and saturate the daily experiences of girls in this study through gendered expectations and the socializing influences that distribute them.

Disciplinary Power in Adolescent Girls' Lives

From the perspective of Foucault, it appears that adolescent girls are at a distinct disadvantage in a male dominated social order. So, how do girls as a group experience the effects of disciplinary power? To look for these effects, a focus on normalizing judgment as one of Foucault's tools of domination will help detect when individuals are being subject to influences of power. As Foucault (1980) suggests, disciplinary power can be made visible when it "compares, differentiates, heirarchizes, homongenizes, excludes" (1975, p.183). Taking a specific example from adolescent girls' lives is the concern over "girls bullying" behaviors which researchers now call "relational aggression" (Simmons, 2002). As a discourse, girls' bullying behaviors have largely been *excluded* by virtue of their gender, and subsequently, are diverted to less visible and more obscure locations. Simmons (2002), in *Odd Girl Out*, identified

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and described girls' bullying behaviors which had long been unnamed, unaddressed and "under the radar."

> There is a hidden culture of girls' aggression in which bullying is epidemic, distinctive, and destructive. It is not marked by the direct physical and verbal behavior that is primarily the province of boys. Our culture refuses girls access to open conflict, and it forces their aggression into nonphysical, indirect and covert forms (2002, p.3).

Simmons (2002) highlights that traditional definitions of bullying feature male style behaviors that include physical use of fists and weapons but omits girls' unique way of bullying. She suggests that girls use more "indirect" methods of bullying that included more social forms of aggression such as whispering, exclusive clubs, isolation, gossiping to damage a reputation and passing notes (p. 262). She poses that the differences between girls' and boys' bullying styles are not evident in commonly held conceptions of bullying. She posits that girls' aggression is "covert" – secretive and cunning - while boys' aggression is "overt" – visible and out in the open. For girls, using subtle methods for bullying is the only real choice available to them since their actions are bound by gender expectations which deny physical aggression. Restrictions on girls' aggressive actions can be interpreted as a form of "exclusion" and represent one way that girls' social actions are "normalized" by the culture. This example helps illustrate how disciplinary power can be viewed in the lives of adolescent girls and the possible effects they have on shaping adolescent girls' behaviors.

Critiques of Foucault

At the heart of critiques of Foucault's work (Bartkey, 2002; Bordo, 1989; Dews, 1987; Lacombe, 1996; McNay, 2000) is the question of whether or not "agency" is possible for oppressed groups such as girls. Various interpretations of Foucault's work have indicated there are divergent conclusions that some theorists have come to when understanding the implications

of disciplinary power for an individual subject. For instance, Dews (1987) states "that any theory of sovereignty or self-determination must be abandoned, since the 'free subject' upon which such theories rely is in fact intrinsically heteronomous, constituted by power" (p. 161). In other words, a subject is determined mainly by factors outside of their control. While Foucault's theories (1975, 1980) have been widely probed across various populations and settings, not all agree that subjects are completely "constituted by power." In a different way, Lacombe (1996) proposes that Foucault's concept of power is inscribed in both the "practices of normalization" and the "practices of liberation." This view places equal weight on power as a "mechanism" to both limit and support agency in individuals. However, from the perspective of less powerful people the limits of power may be felt more heavily than for other groups who may benefit from the advantages of power. Especially, for females, this view may hold less relevance than other interpretations.

Feminist critiques of Foucault (Bartkey, 2002; Bordo, 1989; McNay, 2000) suggest that disciplinary power is overly deterministic and assumes the "essential passivity of the subject" (McNay, 2000). McNay (2000) rejects Foucault's "primarily negative paradigm of identity formation" and proposes a more "generative theoretical framework" which allows the subject room "to act in an unexpected fashion or to institute new or unanticipated modes of behavior" (p.22). Thus, while expected patterns of vulnerability may permeate girls' experiences, they do not necessarily predict conforming behaviors in girls, instead, McNay describes "gender identity as durable but not immutable." This perspective of the relationship between power and agency, as malleable and not fixed, will help to guide the work of this investigation and creates an opening for reframing girls' agentic capacities as they relate to the adolescent girls in this study.

Conclusion

This section presented the important perspective of "power relations" and their connection to the lives of adolescent girls in this study. This "macro" lens perspective lays an important foundation for understanding the complex ways that power operates and influences the lives of people who are in less powerful positions. Recognizing that cultural impasses as they occur in girls' lives, whether they are thought of as stereotypes, barriers or gender expectations, permeate the day to day experiences of adolescent girls, while their vulnerability, due to the demands of the dominant culture, signals the various ways that girls must "struggle" to see beyond a constructed reality which continually shifts and changes (Harstock, 1983). Foucault's theories (1975, 1980) of power, while seemingly oppressive, offers groundwork for discussing the obscure phenomena of power relations. Engaging Foucault's ideas provided the opportunity to see the infinitesimal mechanisms of power in everyday life such as women's subjection to narrow definitions of femininity or the exclusion of girls' open aggression. Additionally, the voices of critics of Foucault (Bartkey, 2002; Bordo, 1989; McNay, 2000) provided a brief look at possibilities for constructing different interpretations of disciplinary power which are more dynamic, and less oppressive. For girls in this study, concepts of power are invisible and unknown yet circulate in profoundly significant ways which influence and shape their identities and social actions. While issues of power may lie dormant in the minds of adolescent girls, the next section will address another important layer of conceptual relevance to understanding the social actions and experiences of girls in this study. The following section on "Gender" will offer a look at gender inequality, gender hierarchies, gender practices and norms, and reframing gender.

GENDER

"I have not lived as a woman. I have lived as a man."
"That public creature is something I invented. It's not me. Not at all."

Katharine Hepburn, actress

"Caroline's still a good boy and a [good] girl whenever she needs to be. She can choose to be a girly-girl or a boy. It just depends on how she's feeling. I can be a girly-girl, but it's harder, because I have short hair."

Michelle, age 12 (1, p.12)

On one level, gender appears straight forward but on another level it is "something complicated" (Butler, 2004, p. 19). Taking a closer look at gender and the part it plays in shaping the identities, social actions, and experiences of adolescent girls in this study will help illuminate gender differences and the question of girls' agentic abilities. Theories about gender range from traditional (Feminist) to socially constructed (Queer) to constructs which reframe gender entirely (Transgender). Concepts of gender are broad and evolving and reflect historical, situated and contested meanings (Butler, 2004; MacKinnon, 1987; Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010; Rubin, 1993; Thurer, 2005 ;), as well as, the ways that gender is produced through social norms and practices (Butler, 2004). While gender as we know it is "melting away" (Thurer, 2005) in academic discourse, and the lives of some people, traditional masculinities and femininities, as well as, heteronormativity, remain the prevailing landscape of a dominant white male culture.

Gender, as it is commonly understood, is about cultural beliefs and expectations that shape masculine and feminine behaviors, and is different than sex which is primarily determined at birth. While traditional views of gender persist in cultural structures and belief systems, more recent constructs such as queer theories and transgender theories offer divergent views of historical understandings of gender and propose alternative paradigms that more closely "fit" the

lives of people whose conceptions of gender are not based on a "binary, mandatory system" (Nagoshi and Brzuzy, 2010, p. 433). While gender is viewed now more as a continuum, such as "gender blurring" (Thurer, 2005), rather than two separate categories, cultural mechanisms which reinforce a gender binary system are still deeply rooted in our society. Understanding gender and how it functions, or to ask Judith Butler's (2004) peculiar question "what does gender want?" (p. 2) is the focus of this chapter.

At its core, this investigation is about gender and the inequities that are placed upon adolescent girls by virtue of their gender, and sex. I will employ a variety of perspectives on gender as a way to better understand some of the subtleties of adolescent girls' social experiences. This section will discuss various conceptions of gender with the aim of offering a "macro" perspective on gender and its effect on the lives of adolescent girls. Topics covered will include perspectives on gender inequality, gender hierarchies, gender practices and norms and reframing gender.

Gender Inequality

One way to understand gender is through the idea of gender equality, which has been long held as a tenant of feminism. MacKinnon (1987) explores the concepts of gender and equality and exposes the contradictory nature of legal and moral understandings of sex equality and how it fails to achieve its goal. She states that "a built-in tension exists between this concept of equality, which presupposes sameness, and this concept of sex, which presupposes difference. Sex equality, thus becomes a contradiction in terms, something of an oxymoron, which may suggest why we are having such a difficult time getting it" (p.33). MacKinnon suggests that despite a mandate for equal treatment in both social norms and legal doctrine, sex differences complicate equality mandates and expose gender hierarchies.

She claims that gender is "socially constructed as difference" and may serve the dominant male culture by creating divisions between the sexes. She also contends that efforts to dismantle gender hierarchies such as concepts of "gender neutrality" and the "single standard" fail due to dominant cultural codes which predetermine gender as difference. Sex equality is "conceptually designed never to be achieved", she asserts, since the sexes are set up as opposites, and therefore different, rather than as part of a continuum. MacKinnon suggests choosing to emphasize the differences between the sexes, rather than emphasizing the similarities, is imbued with intent. In MacKinnon's view, sex equality is doomed to failure because it rests on an unacknowledged assumption that values sex divisions for the purpose of exploiting power.

While MacKinnon's observation of "gender as difference" explains problems of attaining legal equality for women, it appears to be limited beyond hierarchical heterosexual contexts where gender is defined as a binary system. Critiques of Mackinnon (Butler, 2004, Franke, 1997), suggest that her view is built upon an assumption of gender hierarchies which in and of themselves reproduce gendered bodies rather than disrupt the binary gender system. This means that MacKinnon's concept is based on a hierarchical model which is reinforced by sanctioning its existence, and hence, keeping the status quo in place. This view on gender may explain a gender stratified society (Harding, 1996) but fails to account for "gender outlaws" (Bornstein, 1994) and other gender identities that do not conform to a gender binary. Notwithstanding these limitations, if MacKinnon's claim that gender is socially constructed is true, gender equality failures should be visible in other social contexts.

Gender Hierarchies

From the perspective of status, Miller (1976) has described unequal relationships which exist as a form of difference in our society. She notes the "dominant" and "subordinate" positions held by various groups of people in either temporary or permanent ways. Temporary inequality occurs, for instance, when a child as a subordinate grows up to become a dominant as a parent, whereas, groups of people designated by race, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation remain fixed in the subordinate position. Non-whites, females and homosexuals are examples of non-dominant groups designated to permanent subordinate status. Miller's view of dominant and subordinate positions helps to reveal the discriminatory nature of an unequal society and the dominance of a white male heteronormative culture.

Miller (1976) states, "Once a group is defined as inferior, the superiors tend to label it as defective or substandard in various ways" (p. 6). She says further, "In addition, the actions and words of the dominant group tend to be destructive of the subordinates" (p.6) and the dominant group, then, usually defines the roles, activities, and the capabilities of the subordinates. Dominant/subordinate relations are, therefore, relationships based on differences in power and status. Relating this idea to gender, it is possible to see how the dominant group can "socially construct" and emphasize gender differences for the purpose of privileging one group over another, as MacKinnon suggests.

Foucault's (1980) concept of "disciplinary power" may help clarify the relationship between socially constructed gender and gender inequalities. MacKinnon's observation that gender equity efforts fail due to subtle cultural codes which systematically undermine equity pursuits could be evidence of a disciplinary power at work. Foucault (1980) also suggests that truth and knowledge are organized by and utilized by a disciplinary power. He proposes that

power needs a discourse in order to establish itself and the "truth" of this discourse is set up through power. When a dominant male group defines gender as difference, and that difference favors males, this privileging can be masked as truth. Foucault (1980) contends that "Each society has its own regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true" (p.131). Gender constructions function, then, as part of the "regime of truth" of the dominant culture and help to maintain gender hierarchies.

A Foucault type of analysis would suggest that gender constructions work to maintain gender hierarchies as a function of disciplinary power. At the same time, a regime of truth of the dominant male culture "accepts and makes function as true" gender equity and gender construction beliefs. From this perspective, when MacKinnon (1987) says gender is "socially constructed as difference" it means the concept of "gender as difference" is made to function as truth via a dominant male disciplinary power. This suggests that the dominant male culture has particular investments in maintaining this arrangement, not that the concept of "gender as difference" is inherently true. From a perspective of social construction, gender appears to be more flexible than fixed than prevailing gender conventions might suggest.

Analyzing disciplinary power, using Foucault's tools of domination, can reveal gender hierarchies at work in the lives of adolescent girls. One example is the "teen sexting epidemic" which has been studied by Ringrose, Harvey, Gill, and Livingstone (2013) who found risks of "sexting" such as early exposure to pornography, cyberbullying, and sexual harassment for girls and boys, however, they also found a "double standard" when it came to unequal benefits or repercussions in image sharing and posting. Sexting is defined as "the creating, sharing and forwarding of sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images' through digital technologies such as mobile phones and the internet (Lenhart, 2009). Ringrose et al. (2013) claim that girls are

caught today between a culture of "sexual objectification" and "sexual liberation" in a society that is "beyond feminism" and where gender equality has been achieved. Girls who internalize the idea of sexual liberation, they suggest, "self-sexualize" and willingly comply to an unequal dynamic of "sexting" with male peers who rate girls nude images and use them as a "form of currency" while girls are "blamed" and risk their sexual reputations. This example reveals instances of how Foucault's disciplinary power is manifested through boys' use of a "rating" system to "compare" and "differentiate" girls' digital images as a form of normalization. The unequal practices of adolescent girls and boys digital image exchange reveals how gender hierarchies work in the lives of adolescent girls and how they reinforce gender rules of behavior and create a "double standard."

Recognizing the importance of both personal and cultural dynamics in identity formation Chodorow (1995) proposes a "personal-cultural" model of gender arguing that prior accounts "reduce gender to a single defining or characterizing feature," as well as, paying "insufficient attention to differences and variation among women and to the variety, instability, multiplicity, and contested nature of gender meaning" (p.516). Chodorow's model suggests that not only is culture a mediating force but that gender incorporates personal and cultural meanings into a synthesis of identity. Coming from a clinical approach, she suggests that "gender is inevitably personal as well as cultural" (p. 517) and that feminist theory does "not fully capture the meaning of gender for the subject." Chodorow posits that these theories do not account for the very personal "psychological experiences" of individuals. Using examples from clinical practice, Chodorow suggests that "gender is an ongoing emotional creation and intrapsychic interpretation, of cultural meanings and of bodily, emotional and self-other experience, all mediated by conscious and unconscious fantasy" (p.540). Detailing the various ways that

individuals constructed their experiences and meanings of gender through stories, past experiences, and current beliefs she describes an individual approach to gender. She suggests that "each person's sense of gender – her gender identity or gendered subjectivity – is an inextricable fusion or melding of personally created (emotionally and through unconscious fantasy) and cultural meaning." (p.517) Chodorow's account is a reminder to theorists that conceptualizing gender – deconstructing, reconstructing, generalizing, universalizing - ultimately comes down to the specific and lived experiences of people who create gender meanings through social engagement in the "lived" world.

Gender Practices

Butler's work (1990, 2004) incorporates Foucault's concept of a disciplinary power and expands upon MacKinnon's historical view of gender difference. She suggests that "we are constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies" (p.18) which can also be understood as the same vulnerability experienced by adolescent girls that was described in Chapter 1. Butler also poses that "to counter oppression requires that one understand that lives are supported and maintained differentially" (2004, p.24). She points out that "the framework for understanding how [gender] works is multiple and shifts through time and place" (2004, p.9). Butler's concepts offer compelling insights that build upon previous concepts of gender and are particularly useful in understanding the ways that gender is produced through social practices and norms.

A key contribution of Butler's (1990) work is the concept of "gender performativity" which is based on "lived experience" and is drawn from a theatrical framework. Butler suggests that gender is a "performance" and individual agents act using a script which is conveyed by "socially established meanings." In essence, individuals are mediated by social intentions which

are gendered and represent behaviors that are appropriate for males and females which have been transmitted in a seemingly natural gender binary. She claims that our sense of gender as natural is because there is a "regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects" (p.145). Butler's concept of gender, which is manifested through an ongoing repetitive practice by individuals, expands previous views of gender by placing the individual at the center of the production of gender rather than being simply a "recipient" of one's gender. Butler says "If gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint" (2004, p.1).

Butler's concept of "performativity" can be viewed in Hochschilds' (1983) study of flight attendants which revealed a kind of emotional labor (public) and emotional work (private) which she describes as the management of feeling to create "observable facial and bodily display" and is ostensibly "sold for a wage" in the public sphere or has "use value" in the private sphere (p.7). She suggests that emotional labor and emotion work are forms of acting which include "surface acting" or "deep acting" (p. 35). The former is a conscious act of "putting on" a face that is a kind of body language such as a smirk, while the latter is a "self-induced" reaction which is a "result of working on feeling" such as when the required cheerful attitude of a flight attendant becomes a "genuine" part of who they are.

Gender Norms

If Butler's (2004) "scene of constraint" represents the effects of power which shape and produce the actions of gendered individuals, how then, is gender regulated? Invoking Foucault's "regulative discourses" she claims that gender performativity is not a choice since the body is

socially constructed through "gender regulations" (p.40). She posits that "gender requires and institutes its own distinctive regulatory and disciplinary regime" (p. 41). Butler explains that "a norm operates within social practices as the implicit standard of *normalization"* (p. 41). Carlson (2011) offers that norms are what "women are compelled to observe in order to be marked as feminine" (p.77). Clarifying, Butler (2004) posits that norms are not like the rule of law but are more hidden and "difficult to read" and yet more visible in the "effects that they produce." Thus, normalization occurs in a subtle way but can be observed in the manipulation of social actions of individuals. Hochschild (1983) suggests that feelings are "pre-actions" and are a kind of "script" that is a cultural tool for directing behaviors, as such, these "feeling rules" establish the sense of obligation that directs emotional exchanges (p. 56). She notes that American middle class women are more inclined to do emotion work which "affirms, enhances and celebrates the well-being and status of others" (p.165). These feeling rules also seem to describe and relate to universal understandings of female behavior such as being kind, caring, and sensitive. These qualities are similar self-descriptors of girls in this study and raise the question of how these girls might engage in "emotion work" in their own lives.

Another way that gender norms are employed is through commonly held notions of gender roles. Basow and Rubin (1999) point out that with the onset of adolescence comes a time of "gender intensification" where more rigid conceptions of gender roles begin to shape the behavior of girls and boys. This period is marked by rapid physiological, psychological and social changes and intense focus on "sexual selves." Brown & Gilligan (1992) have noted that girls prior to adolescence are more androgynous as the social world supports more flexible gender roles. In addition, socializing agents such as parents, teachers and peers begin to pressure girls and boys to conform more intensely to gender roles. One way of explaining how social

roles originate is from an "evolutionary" perspective which accounts for variation in female and male behavior by way of sex differences, which create naturalized gender variations in personality, academic ability and job interests (Geary, 1998). In contrast, Eagly (1987) notes that "social role theory" reflects stereotypical expectations of males and females and are the result of gendered role assignments. Basow and Rubin (1999) observe that "engaging in different tasks frequently means developing different skills and beliefs. If such differences develop, they then would be due to the roles women and men have been assigned, not to some innate differences between the sexes" (p.27). This latter perspective on gender development supports the concept of gender as a social construction rather than as a predetermined personality trait and agrees with my own view of gender as socially constructed.

Contemporary gender theories reflect a shift in our understanding of gender development. In contrast to more fixed gender prescriptions of the past, Basow and Rubin (1999) define gender as the meaning we attach to being female or male in a particular culture. They note that *gender* is different from *sex*, which refers to the biological aspects of being female or male. Another term, *gender identity*, refers to a person's feelings of femaleness or maleness. Also, they note that *gender role identity* describes "the degree to which an individual identifies with the definitions of masculinity or femininity constructed by a given society" (p. 26). These nuanced definitions of gender indicate a more flexible and adaptable set of gender behaviors and attitudes than the more fixed concept of sexual selection would permit.

Gender, then, is the mechanism that both produces and normalizes concepts of masculinity and femininity which form individual identities. Butler (2004) asserts that gender may also hold opportunities for "deconstructing" gender as a binary into other permutations such as queer and transgender constructs. She suggests that meanings of masculinity and femininity

are highly flexible and that "terms of gender designation are thus never settled once and for all but are constantly in the process of being remade" (p.10). Butler's concept of gender as being malleable created opportunities for gender discussions to move beyond the gender binary and contributed to a discourse about nonheteronormative sexuality called "queer theory." She cautioned that "to conflate the definition of gender with its normative expression is inadvertently to reconsolidate the power of the norm to constrain the definition of gender" (p. 42).

Reframing Gender

Understanding concepts of gender as "difference," and the ways that gender operates through practice and social norms, provides a foundation for looking at other gender perspectives such as Queer Theory (Rubin, 1993; Sedgwick, 1998) and Transgender Theory (Roen, 2001; Tauchert, 2002). These concepts build upon feminist and social construction theories and help to account for gender identity variations which reside outside of the gender binary such as genderqueer or transgender. Since adolescence is a time of "identity formation" (Erikson, 1950) these ideas will be particularly relevant to the girls in this study who are entering a dynamic period of identity exploration. While heteronormative concepts dominate the landscape of these girls lives, their own gender self-construction is very much still in development. Queer Theory and Transgender Theory may offer insights for navigating hierarchal oppressions and transforming individual circumstances into a more "livable life" (Butler, 2004).

Queer theory (Rubin, 1993; Sedgwick, 1998) grew out of critiques of feminist theory (Butler, 2004) and claimed that historical feminist ideas were overly focused on gender oppression rather than challenging the heteronormative paradigm. Halperin (1995) suggests that "queer" opposes a dominant heteronormative paradigm and "queers" historical views of gender by advocating that gender roles, identity and sexual orientations are socially constructed and ripe

for review, disruption and self-formation. Building off of Butler's idea of "constructed performances," queer theory (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010) is based on identities which are an "open mesh of possibilities" (Sedgwick, 1998). Critiques of queer theory suggest that while queer creates a group identity, "it is an identity without an essence" (Halperin, 1995). Sullivan (2003) points out the limits of queer and notes that it doesn't account for the "lived experience" of individuals beyond a group identity. While queer theory opens up unlimited possibilities for self-constructed identities it is limited by variations which are based upon an assumption of male and female gender types (Nagoshi & Brzuzy, 2010).

Transgender theory emerged out of a critique of queer theory and was developed by Roen (2001) who articulated "transgenderism" to be a "transgressing" of the gender binary and included concepts of "either/or," as well as, "both/neither." This means that crossing the gender binary is not simply moving from one gender designation to another but includes what Tauchert (2002) calls "fuzzy gender" which allows for variations of "gender identity and gender-related behaviors." In this way, transgenderism can be thought of as representing a spectrum of identities from male to female. This can include many variations such as traditional men, girly men, traditional women, macho women and androgynous individuals in between. Transgender theory, then, makes the traditional gender binary obsolete (Hird, 2002) by individuals who "transgress" sex and gender categories.

How does all this relate to adolescent girls in this study? Queer and Transgender theories provide concepts that may be helpful in broadening how girls' identities, social actions and experiences can be understood and interpreted allowing room for individual girls' own unique sense of self to not be automatically viewed through a limited and historical gender lens. Even though these girls lives may be permeated by dominant and traditional concepts of gender, a

keen focus on individual identities and social actions may show evidence of a range of gendered subtleties. Additionally, Carlson (2011) suggests that females identities and behaviors today "integrates feminine ideals with masculine-marked practices" (p.81) which means that previous fixed and traditional definitions of femininity must be updated in order to recognize what it means to be female and feminine today.

Bendable Gender Definitions

Basow & Rubin (1999) have studied the definitions of gender and how they influence the ways that males and females behave. They note that in the United States, for instance, males are assumed to have strong "agentic" qualities while females are assumed to have more "communal" qualities (p.26). Even though most men and women don't fit these norms, they are still judged against these standards. Basow and Rubin (1999) suggest that there are variations in gender stereotypes across race and ethnicities revealing the bendable nature of gender (p.27). They observe that while white females and males are depicted as having more different personality traits (agentic vs. communal), black females and males are depicted as having more similar personality traits (agentic and communal). Interestingly, black women are two times more likely to describe themselves as androgynous than white woman. In Hispanic and Asian cultures, women tend to subscribe to more traditional expectations behaving more submissive and subservient than white women (p.28). These examples of variations in gender roles suggest that assumed gender differences are indeed driven by more adaptable cultural gender conventions and are not the result of naturalized gender differentiation.

As gender appears to be more fluid than historical accounts have suggested, understanding the ways that adolescent girls' femininity is defined today is vital to understanding their identities, social actions and experiences. While constricting concepts of femininity such as

the "the perfect girl" described by Brown and Gilligan (1992) have given way to more expansive

conceptualizations including "girl power" or "successful girls," (Raby, 2013) these variations

only serve to reveal the fickle and politically driven deployment of gender constructs as useful to

a dominant culture, rather than as evidence of social progress or the "truth" of female

embodiment. Polarized conceptions of males and females appear less and less normal today than

in times past. With static ideas of gender in flux, public narratives of "girl power" and movement

of females into male marked domains such as sports and the corporate world, a

reconceptualization of "contemporary femininity" (Carlson, 2011) will be helpful to this

discussion.

Carlson (2011) suggests that elements of femininity today are rooted in what Hochschild

(1989) called the "stalled revolution" which she claims is the result of women becoming

increasingly engaged in male marked domains without an equal move of males into female

marked domains. While women have entered male domains they have also maintained a footing

in domesticity (England, 2010). Carlson notes that "their lives have been increasingly

characterized by a hybridity that tends less to undermine gender categories and more to

constitute femininity itself" (p.79). Using women's sports to illustrate how women now "bridge"

femininity (domestic) with masculinity (public) Carlson suggests that "female athletes splice

masculine (i.e. sports participation) and feminine (e.g. wearing make-up) practices with an

increasing capacity to maintain themselves as feminine" (p.80). She poses that women today

may be engaged in a "subversive negotiation" required to maintain their sexual femininity and

the masculinity demanded by their male based hobbies and jobs. A "successful femininity"

today includes a range of work from mothering and housekeeping to working and working out. It

seems femininity without masculinity is less likely, instead "an independent woman who can

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balance masculinity with femininity seems increasingly culturally validated in the US" (p.80). This view of femininity will not only be useful but reflects the kind of femininity that girls in this study displayed during my research observations.

Conclusion

This section presented important perspectives on gender related to concepts of power, practice and regulation, and resistance to dominant gender norms. Understanding the relationship between power dynamics and gender is fundamental to a conception of gender as socially constructed. Through learning about dominant/subordinate relationships, Miller (1976) explained how gender hierarchies are created and maintained. Gaining insights on how gender functions as part of what Foucault (1980) calls a "regime of truth" helped to uncover the obscure way that gender masquerades as equal. Applying Foucault's (1980) techniques of domination, helped to locate the normalizing mechanisms in "teen sexting" and their effects on adolescent girls' lives. Further, Butler's concept of "gender performativity" (1990) and "gender regulations" (2004) helped to explain how gender is produced. Queer theory and Transgender (Nagoshi and Brzuzy, 2010; Roen, 2001) theory provided alternative ways to "reframe" gender that can challenge and resist hierarchical oppressions. Together these perspectives elucidate the cultural landscape that shapes the gender identities, social actions and experiences of adolescent girls in this investigation. While gender, for the girls in this study, represents a significant aspect of their identity, the next section will build upon a specific identity feature called "Autonomy" and will discuss the ways that gender impacts girls' identity formation and sense of independent actions.

"It's an amusing idea to some, this feminism thing - this audacious notion that women should be able to move through the world as freely, and enjoy the same inalienable rights and bodily autonomy, as men."

Roxane Gay (2014)

"Do I have to have a career in social justice or can I have a career just for myself?"

Kaitlin, age 16 (personal conversation, April 17, 2013)

This section's discussion of autonomy builds upon the concepts of power relations and socially constructed gender in order to explore the meaning of autonomy, specifically in relation to the cultural impasses that girls in this study experience, and the impact these barriers have on their capacity for independent actions. According to Webster's Dictionary (1991), autonomy is defined as "self-governing," which comes from breaking the word down into its Greek origins of "auto" which means "self" and "nomos" which means "to govern." Exploring the broad concept of autonomy, as central to human development, will help to elucidate how adolescent girls' lives are shaped in a culture that asserts powerful forces which shape and constrain the beliefs, identity and social actions of individual girls. The period of adolescence, in particular, captures the "weightiness" of cultural intentions and expectations and bears down forcefully on the lives of all teenagers but with a distinct result for adolescent girls.

Autonomy: Traditional and Evolving

Differing theories of human development have defined and described our contemporary understandings of autonomy. Traditional theories (Erikson, 1963; Kohlberg, 1973) of autonomy represent various conceptions of the "ideal of separateness." These stage oriented developmental theories envision "a progression from a stage of dependency in infancy to a stage of autonomy in

adulthood" (Yanay, 1994). Traditionally regarded as a male trait, concepts of autonomy typically encompass masculine qualities such as independence, assertiveness, and self-reliance. The concept of independence is particularly relevant in the United States and originated with the idea of the "self-made man" (Kimmel, 1998) which took root prior to the Civil War and constructed an entire national identity based on the ideals of "independence."

In traditional theories, humans are viewed as either autonomous or dependent and problems in development are attributed to a dependent personality. These notions are connected to conceptions of fixed personalities which are based on variables such as gender, race and class, and do not consider that autonomy may differ among cultures and locations. Yanay (1994) notes that "this personality-based conception paradoxically lends impersonal, dichotomized and asocial meaning to [the concept of] autonomy" (p.212). This traditional perspective suggests a "static" view of autonomy which lacks meaning for non-dominant individuals and contextual differences. Yanay's (1994) work with Israeli women revealed a public/private split, where some women feel autonomous in their work life but not in the rest of their life. She offers a more contextualized definition of autonomy based on her work with girls and women, "autonomy can then be seen as a self-authoring experience constructed in the struggle for one's needs, and goals, a self-feeling emotion which changes with one's stream of motives and actions" (p.223). While traditional male based views of autonomy lack explanatory power for female experience, other context oriented perspectives such as this allow for a more specific and dynamic approach to the concept of autonomy.

Assumptions of traditional views of human development were critiqued by feminist scholars (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976; Yanay, 1994) who sought to expand the traditional male model of autonomy which omitted female experience. Yanay (1994) states:

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According to feminist theory, the cultural polarization between autonomy and dependency, as well as, the failure of cultural discourse to maintain the tension between separateness and attachment, assertion and connectedness, reflects a particularly masculine rationality which thrives on impersonal, objective and desexualized ways of knowing. (p. 214).

Yanay (1994) asserts that "for girls, as for women, the need for autonomy raises an ongoing ethical tension and feelings of ambivalence, as it forces them to choose between attachment (dependency) and isolation (independence)" (p.214). These tensions can be understood when narrow gender prescriptions encourage dependent qualities in girls and women and force them to struggle for independence. Yanay (1994) notes that girls often feel pressure to surrender their autonomy to be "good" and accepted in response to traditional gender expectations. Christopher (1999) observes "that it's not at all clear how relevant or appropriate autonomy is for . . . women and ethnic minorities" (p. 146) acknowledging the misalignment that traditional developmental theories have in accounting for female autonomy.

Some theorists have integrated female experiences into alternative models of human development including relational autonomy (Chodorow, 1978); self-in-relation (Miller, 1976) and intersubjectivity (Benjamin. 1989) which are all concepts that strive to balance the tension between dependence and independent behaviors. Miller's (1976) "self-in-relation" model of psychological health is focused on relational competence – building a sense of self through competency in relationships. She observed that traditional developmental theories (Erikson, 1963; Kohlberg, 1973) focused on autonomy and independence but ignored the concept of interdependence – independence within relationships. Miller's view of human development includes both connection and independence, where "it is the ability to affiliate that gives the individual the ability to individuate within the context of community" (Coy & Kovacs-Long, 2005, p. 139). Millers' "reconceptualization" of autonomy points to the importance of human

development to take place in the presence of other relationships, and while it accounts for female experiences, it also reflects an overall developmental human need.

Similarly, Maslow (1970) maintained that "after survival and security, affiliation is the first psychological need of the human being" (Coy & Kovacs-Long, 2005, p. 138). Maslow (1970) noted that people who were made "secure and strong" in their early years remained secure and strong throughout their lives. He states that, "an adult who was love-satisfied in his early years becomes more independent than average with regard to safety, belongingness and love gratification at the present time" (p. 58). Hence, incorporating the needs and perspectives of males and females into human developmental models appears to address fundamental basic needs and is a corrective to previously biased theories.

Arguing for a social network theory to support girls' healthy development, Debold, Brown, Weseen, and Brookins (1999), disagree with the conventional psychologists' focus on girls solely as individuals. They claim this focus ignores "systemic oppressions" and limits girls' sense of autonomy. These authors further critique traditional assumptions of independent development noting that, "by measuring resilience in individuals and out of context, resilience appears internal to the girl and lacks a sense of agency, action or transformation that is so critical for girls to move forward powerfully into the wider world of adulthood" (p.196). Debold et al. (1999) call for a focus on "hardiness zones" – relational and educational contexts that facilitate "hardiness" or successful responses for dealing with stress. They suggest these contexts can provide opportunities for girls to encounter positive relationships with adults, engage in critical education, and build skills for making change within their communities. They assert that supporting girls' healthy development must be viewed in light of various social networks and might provide an important lens for understanding girls' experiences in this study.

Self-Determination Theory

Deci and Ryan (2000) suggest that all humans have a need to be autonomous and free to engage in activities through their own choice. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1987) is a theory of autonomy which explores different types of motivation focused on intentional actions. Central to self-determination theory is the idea of encouraging and supporting volition and self-initiation. Such encouragement involves "providing optimal challenges and structures as well as allowing people the opportunity to make choices and initiate their own behavior" (p.24). Deci and Ryan (2000) suggest that "the fullest representations of humanity show people to be curious, vital and self-motivated. At their best, they are agentic and inspired, striving to learn; extend themselves; master new skills; and apply their talents responsibly" (p. 68). They contend that humans can develop active or passive traits which are based on a "range of reactions to social environments" and are not solely a product of their biology.

Self-determination could be described as the action of one's will and is the process of deciding how to act on one's surroundings. Key to self-determination theory is the concept that behaviors can be either autonomous or controlled. "To the extent that behaviors are experienced as freely chosen, they are autonomous, whereas to the extent that they are experienced as seduced or coerced, whether by an external agent or by a strong internal demand, they are controlled" (Deci, 2004, p.3). This suggests that a controlled behavior is when a girl does her homework because she fears her parents disapproval by neglecting it, while an autonomous behavior is when a girl does her homework because she finds it "interesting or personally valuable."

Another core idea in self-determination theory is the notion of internally (intrinsically) or externally (extrinsically) driven behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 69). Intrinsically motivated

behaviors are pursued out of personal interest, whereas, externally motivated behaviors are attached to an outcome or reward such as a grade or teacher approval. Viewing self-determination theory from Foucault's (1975, 1980) perspective would suggest that controlled behaviors represent the intentions of the dominant culture while autonomous behaviors represent an individual's self-driven pursuits. Similarly, extrinsically and intrinsically motivated behaviors could be likened to Miller's (1976) dominant/subordinate statuses with the transmitters of cultural norms, as the dominants, with individuals in the position of the subordinate. From a power perspective, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) encourages a person's capacity to initiate on their own behalf through supportive structures which are aimed at individual fulfillment. Self-determination theory may be helpful in addressing the concerns of females due to the focus on encouraging subordinates to act autonomously.

Intrinsically Motivated Identity Formation

Waterman's research (2004) provides an example of an identity formation theory which is focused on the role of intrinsic motivation or actions which are freely chosen. Autonomy, which is an aspect of a person's identity, is central to individuals' growth and development. Waterman defines identity as "the goals, values and beliefs to which an individual is unequivocally committed, and that give a sense of direction, meaning and purpose to life" (p.209). Thus, the "goals, values and beliefs" of adolescent girls form the core of their identities and consequently their sense of autonomy. This model of identity formation takes up the personally driven project of "becoming" which is important to adolescent development and to the lives of adolescent girls in this study. This model may give some guidance on the ways that an autonomous identity can develop.

Waterman suggests that "intrinsic motivation," along with exploration and commitment, make up the dimensions of identity formation (p. 210). He posits that choices which are intrinsically motivated rather than extrinsically motivated are "better identity choices" than "less promising alternatives." Better identity choices, for Waterman, involve "commitments" and correspond to "potentials" which include skills and talents, chosen goals, and opportunities. He explains that "potentials, however, are not constructions arising spontaneously within the individual, but can only emerge within the conceptual, technological, political, and cultural context of a community. Without an appropriate set of social tools, particular potentials do not arise" (p.214). Thus, adolescent girls' commitments and potentials are linked with socially mediated considerations and reflect Chodorow's (1995) concept of "personal-cultural" gender identity.

As Waterman states, "a person's search for identity is an effort to identify those potentials that correspond to the real self" (p.215). So, what is a "real self"? Deci and Ryan (1991) offer an answer to this question and state that "a nascent self – a set of innate interests, potentials and processes" and "whose tendency is toward integration of one's own experience and action with one's sense of relatedness to the selves of others" (p.239). Applying Waterman's model would suggest that adolescent girls own talents, aspirations and available opportunities are what form their "real selves" within a context of social conditions. Waterman's intrinsically motivated identity model does not account for factors of gender which may obstruct internally motivated identity formation since adolescent girls' "goals, values and beliefs" along with their "skills and talents, chosen goals and opportunities" (p.214) are influenced by gendered norms which restrict the ways girls view themselves and their opportunities.

Autonomy as Self-Authorization

The effects of unequal gender practices have been observed in girls' sense of epistemological autonomy. Brown (1991) notes that "at the edge of adolescence – at ten, eleven and twelve – girls seem to struggle most passionately to authorize their life experiences, to tell their own stories, to hold on to what they know" (p. 84). In writing about girls "coming to know," psychologists Debold, Tolman and Brown (1996) define self-authorization as "their capacity to know, value and articulate their experience" (p.88). As a model of autonomy, self-authorization seems to hold an important lens for understanding girls' particular struggle for independent thoughts and actions. Self-authorization appears to be a kind of specific form of "intrinsic motivation" related to girls' capacity for self-knowledge. Debold et al. (1996) suggest that the internal capacity to self-authorize is connected to one's ability to act. Thus, girls' actions are tied to their perceptions of knowledge which are in turn influenced by gender expectations.

As noted by Deci (2004) self-determination theory suggests that when people make choices their actions are governed by either autonomous or controlled behaviors. Individuals actions can be either freely chosen or influenced by "an external agent or by a strong internal command." In particular, Debold et al. (1996) contend that the activity of authorizing one's self becomes part of inner speech. They say that we all have "multiple inner voices" that help guide our decision making, but that some voices are more persuasive than others. When girls and women today receive an onslaught of media messages about the way they should look, thin and wrinkle free, it may be hard to overpower those daily messages with their own inner voice. Unfortunately, most girls and women don't look like the images they see in the media and falsely conclude that they are not beautiful. This example suggests that girls' behavior may often be controlled by external agents or "inner voices" due to harmful gender conventions. Enacting

autonomous behavior for girls may be significantly compromised due to persistent gender practices and norms which reinforce passive behaviors.

Debold et al. (1996) suggest that girls' epistemological agency is compromised by the tension to either choose to self-authorize, and risk being rejected by the culture, or choosing to conform to cultural demands, and risk losing oneself. Either choice, presents real consequences for girls, however, the choice to align with the self rather than the culture is a choice for healthy psychological development (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, this may represent a false dichotomy based on other interpretations of gender such as Chodorow's "personal-cultural" gender model (1995). For girls, one implication of choosing to be self-authorized and self-determined is the risk of being outside the "norm" of conventional femininity and viewed as an outcast.

An example of how girls struggle to "self-authorize" can be understood through social narratives via media and other discourses which construct universalized characterizations which can thwart girls "capacity for self-knowledge." Pomerantz, Raby, and Stefanik (2013) explore how in a "postfeminist" world girls' experiences of sexism are complicated by "celebratory narratives" of "girl power" and "successful girls" where girls are told that they can "run the world." Pomerantz et al. (2013) argue that these discourses place girls between the belief of gender equality and the realities of inequality in their real lives. While these narratives create space for girls' empowerment, they also obscure sexism which actively permeates their day to day experiences. "Such celebratory narratives obfuscate the power relations that perpetuate inequalities and thus dismiss lived experience of sexism as individualized problems, making it challenging for a girl to name instances of sexism in her life" (p.187). Girls' experiences of sexism as vague and unclear raises doubts and translates into "individual and isolated moments"

which limit their ability to "articulate and combat their everyday experiences of sexism as a collective, social problem" (p.205). This kind of contradictory nature of girl's experiences – beliefs of being beyond inequality while at the same time experiencing real sexism – leaves girls confused and without tools for understanding and combating sexism as a collective social issue. This example illustrates one way that adolescent girls' capacity for autonomy is blurred through social narratives which skew girls' perceptions of knowledge.

Autonomy and the Impact of Power

Foucault's power theories (1975, 1980) and Miller's (1978) view on dominant/subordinate statuses may again help shed light on the elusive nature of girls' autonomy. These perspectives help to reveal the discriminatory nature of a socially stratified society (Harding, 1993) and the dominance of a white male heterosexual culture. Thus, girls' subordinate position within a disciplinary culture may systematically disadvantage their ability to become self-determined based on the unequal ways their gender is applied to males and females. As noted previously by Harstock (1983), subordinate groups must struggle to gain vision to see beyond a constructed reality which continually shifts and changes. In this sense, a girl's ability to clearly see and understand the world around her may be clouded, putting her at a disadvantage and compromising her autonomy and independent actions. Thus, when a girl acts, is she acting from a place of autonomy or a place of control? The answer is not definitive; however, in a disciplinary culture where gender hierarchies pervade social conventions, girls' autonomy must be questioned and may remain elusive to girls as a group.

Various interpretations of Foucault's work have indicated there are divergent conclusions that some theorists have come to in understanding the implications of disciplinary power for an individual person. The perspective previously presented by Dews (1987) is that individuals are

"constituted by power," and as such, they are determined mainly by factors outside of their control (p.161). In contrast, formerly noted by Butler, gender norms "do not exercise a final and fatalistic control, at least not always" (2004, p. 15). This contrasts with Dew's view and suggests that it is possible to have a "critical and transformative relation" to power. While there is a qualitative difference between Dew and Butler on the question of autonomy, there seems to be tacit agreement that being "constituted by power" is a more likely outcome, interspersed with moments of opportunity for breaking free of oppressive power dynamics.

Conclusion

This section discussed relevant views on autonomy with the goal of illuminating the lives of adolescent girls in this study. At the heart of this discussion is the question of girls' capacity for autonomy in the form of independent actions. While traditional male based theories (Erikson, 1963; Kohlberg, 1973) omit female experiences, more recent feminist theories (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976; Yanay, 1994) have provided models which describe female autonomy as "independence within relationships" (Miller, 1978). This construct more precisely captures the role of the "social" within female experience while acknowledging the capacity for independent action. Intrinsic motivation theories (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Waterman, 200) provided insights which may support adolescent girls' motivation and identity development by focusing on encouraging subordinates such as girls or youth to act more autonomously. In each of these theories, there remains a lack of specific attention to the larger gender barriers which may render unequal benefits for girls and boys in both approaches. Self-authorization (Debold, Tolman & Brown, 1996) more specifically describes girls' struggle for knowledge and points more clearly to the challenges girls face in manifesting autonomous behaviors and closely aligns with observations I made of girls social actions in this study. Foucault's power theories (1975, 1980)

and Miller's (1978) perspective on dominate/subordinate statuses again help to explicate how and why autonomy is elusive for adolescent girls and raises concerns over girls' healthy development and the ways girls can resist the oppressive dominant culture which circulates so systematically in adolescent girls' lives. The following section will focus on agency as it relates to adolescent girls' experiences, moving beyond concepts of autonomy to discuss how adolescent girls' capacity for action is possible in a dominant male-based culture.

"I argue for my points, not in the best ways, but I try to show that sometimes my opinions are right but they can also be wrong. Like in friendships, if I ask them not to do something and they said that they don't think that's right for them, like we, I like to prove my point and explain my point. I [take] risks like with friendships and Ms. Dalton notices it like in groups I always bring something up like that I want to talk about rather than just kind of hang in the shadows and not speaking my mind."

Olivia, age 13 (2, p. 17)

A discussion of agency and the specific meaning it has for the adolescent girls in this study draws upon the three previous concepts of power relations, gender constructions, and the paradox of autonomous identity for girls. Entailing these ideas, an exploration of adolescent girls' agentic potential as it relates to this study, is central to understanding and examining girls' social actions. In light of various interpretations of Foucault's "negative paradigm" which indicate divergent conclusions about a person's capacity for independent action, the question of adolescent girls' agentic abilities is of main concern. While one view suggests that individuals actions are mainly determined by factors outside of their control (Dews, 1987) others suggest that possibilities exist for breaking free of these oppressive dynamics (Bartkey, 2002; Butler, 2004). Despite this dim chance, Greene (1988) suggests that resistance to domination is critical to the quest for human freedom and that acting upon circumstances that constrain us is a "central life task." These views are at the heart of this investigation into adolescent girls' agentic potentials and how they navigate gender expectations in their lives. While previous sections have explored how girls' experiences are imbued with power, this discussion will consider adolescent girls' roles as social agents and their agentic potential.

For the purpose of this discussion, differentiating between the common meanings of *autonomy* and *agency* will be helpful. As previously discussed, autonomy can be thought of as

having to do with an individual's capacity for independent action, whereas agency, which can be controlled or freely chosen, is simply the ability "to act." My own perspective on agency has been informed by my work in this investigation, and I propose a broadening of the definition of agency to include actions which are viewed as either active or passive such as choosing to act or not to act. In this way, even though girls' actions are observable and their non-actions are unseen, the choice to not act may be intentional rather than assumed to be passive. Agency in this study represents both a "focus and locus" (Schram, 2006), one concerning the core questions at the center this study, while the other concerns girls' social actions as the key site of analysis. Taking a look at agency provides not only a conceptual lens but also represents an "actionable" location from which to study how gender expectations operate in the lives of girls in this inquiry.

Dewey on Agency

According to Dewey (1922), agency represents our everyday unconscious "habits," which are similar to instincts, and represent an "acquired predisposition to ways and modes of response" (p. 42). He suggests that habits describe human activity which is dynamic in quality and gives us our "sense of operativeness." Dewey (1912) suggests the driving motivation in everyday activity is what he calls our "native urgencies and needs." When girls' needs are obscured by a limited capacity for knowledge and the dual commitments to self and "other," girls may come to doubt themselves and encounter the proverbial fork in the road. Dewey (1920) sees these kinds of moments as an "indeterminate situation" or a situation which does not have a clear "end-in-view." From Dewey's perspective, moments of doubt like these create a break in habits or an individual's everyday "ways and modes of response." A break in habit brings an otherwise unconscious decision-making process to consciousness in order to reason out which path to follow.

Dewey (1922) also suggests that engaging in frequent breaks in habit can be tiring and "creates awkwardness in action" and may lead to conformity when obstacles are too great to overcome. For adolescent girls, their effective unconscious habits of the past become suspect as the "compulsory" nature of female gender norms with the onset of adolescence press down, urging them towards compliant behaviors rather than towards self-authoring their own actions. As social actors who must choose between individual needs and collective demands, girls' choice-making deliberations take center stage in this study. Girls' choice-making and decision-making processes function to reveal how they prioritize both personal and social demands which are captured in the findings of this study. According to Dewey (1922), the relationship between agentic behavior and actual choices are intricately woven together. He states that a "choice is made as soon as some habit, or some combination of elements of habits and impulse, finds a way fully open" (p.192). Interestingly, the adolescent girls in this study often spoke of how they "overanalyzed" social and personal situations while attempting to decide how to act upon them which suggests they were experiencing indeterminate situations with no clear end-in-view.

Girls Struggle for Knowledge

In light of Dewey's concept of habit, Debold, Tolman and Brown (1996) offer an insight into his theory which suggests that while preadolescent girls' unconscious habits are a valuable navigational tool during childhood, the onset of adolescence marks a period of dissonance for older girls, when intensifying gender expectations press them to doubt their past knowledge and experiences, effectively undermining their internal authority or habits. This realization raises a question about girls' agentic ability since girls habits may be substantively compromised during adolescence due to intensifying gender norms. As such, in what ways do adolescent girls yield their habits as a result of gender expectations?

Debold et al. (1996), provide epistemological insights based on working with a culturally diverse population of girls and using Foucault's account of power relations. They suggest that the "self, or subject, becomes divided against itself through an incorporation of knowledge that functions as a form of power" (p.87). This "bifurcation" or "mind-body split" represents a tension between "cultural authority" and "self-authorization", where cultural authority means "culturally sanctioned forms of knowledge." The mind-body split occurs because "knowledge of what is right, true or moral creates 'normalizing' discourses'" which spawn the "desire to be normal" in girls (p.88). As such, girls' gendered identities operate to push girls away from their own inner knowledge in favor of "culturally sanctioned knowledge."

The splitting of "the 'lower' bodily experience from the 'higher' disembodied intellectual" experience (p. 98) represents a girls' struggle to choose between her own native urgencies and needs and socially driven influences. As an example, when an adolescent girl pursues "social goals" or being popular rather than academic interests or other talents she may be disconnected from her ability to "self-authorize" and instead conforms to social norms of femininity. Making the choice to split from the self and follow cultural expectations may lead to psychological distress for girls (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Debold et al. (1996), however, view the mind-body split as a protective strategy for survival and safety in a harsh dominant male culture. While this opinion may be true, I suggest that it does not account for girls' other needs such as resisting domination and the quest for freedom.

Debold et al. (1996) argue that preadolescent girls are less likely to split since they lack the cognitive capacity to integrate oppressive discourses. Girls between the ages of seven and eleven years old appear to reveal a mind-body integration which allows knowing to come out of felt experience (p. 104). Rogers (1993) describes this integration of thinking and feeling, mind

and body by recalling a tenth century definition of the word courage, "the capacity to speak one's mind with all one's heart" (p.288). Thus, girls appear to experience a "grace period" during childhood and preadolescence where gender norms have less impact on girls and allow for a clearer understanding and connection with their own embodied knowledge.

This account of girls' limited capacity "to know" suggests external forces may be at work controlling girls' behaviors rather than girls' actions as freely chosen. This kind of undermining of adolescent girls' essential habits presents a potent barrier to their agentic capacities. The normalizing features of gender expectations appear to predetermine girls' social actions and without some sort of intervention or conscious awareness girls seem to default to socially sanctioned forms of knowledge. For example, adolescent girls in this study indicated a lack of awareness of sexism in their lives when asked about gender inequalities.

Controlled versus Freely Chosen

Bartkey (2002) explains that an "agent" is "someone who is contemplating an action, has already acted or is presently acting" (p. 31). Additionally, Buss (2002) suggests that our "authority over our own actions is a formal feature of agency." Thus, an agent is not only someone who is acting but someone who acts with their own authority to do so. From this perspective, adolescent girls who struggle for knowledge and are likely controlled by external forces would not be considered an agent. In response to such a concern, Buss (2002) states that all agents are exposed to "influences whose power does not derive from her own authority" and this may have the effect of undermining agency. Bordo (1989) suggests that "a political battle is being waged over the energies and resources of the female body" (p.28) echoing Foucault's (1980) suggestion that power relations are a "hostile engagement of forces" (p. 91). She also suggests that "if an agent fails to govern herself, this must be because, at the time, she lacks the

power to do so" (p.2). What, then, are the influences that would cause a girl to be powerless to authorize her own actions? Buss (2002) offers two frequently cited examples of threats to individual autonomy: brainwashing and addictions (p.2). While brainwashing and addictions sound extreme, they hold similarities to Foucault's disciplinary power model.

In fact, in the techniques and tactics of domination Foucault (1980) describes, the trained "docile bodies" which are the site of disciplinary power share much in common with our everyday definition of brainwashing or indoctrination. Bartkey (2002) and Bordo's (1989) analysis of the effects of power on the female body in Chapter 1 could be interpreted as a type of persuasive propaganda. In addition, the regime of truth described by Foucault (1980) could have the impact of masking reality and creating epistemological confusion. Additionally, Harstock's (1983) view that oppressed groups must struggle to gain vision, to see beyond a constructed reality, which continually shifts and changes, can be applied here, as well. From these perspectives, it is possible to see how an adolescent girls' ability to discern the world clearly may be distorted, putting her at a disadvantage and compromising her independent action. If this is so, what can adolescent girls do to avoid becoming disempowered in a disciplinary culture?

In response to this question Bartkey (2002) advocates for resistance to "normative femininity" and the creation of a "radically democratic society." Additionally, Bordo (1989) suggests that women develop a "skeptical attitude" towards the "have it all" empowerment rhetoric which is a trap for women and distracts them from confronting ongoing sexism. While Bartkey (2002) and Bordo (1989) express hope that agency may be possible their "call to action" comes in the form of opposition to and increased awareness about oppressive power rather than approaches for holding "sanctioned" power. These strategies of "resistance" to oppressive

cultural circumstances represent a few examples that can be employed in the attempt to break free of oppression and the pursuit of freedom.

Resistance

Butler (2004) addresses the bleakness of the oppressive situation presented by gender differences by identifying the possibility of freedom when she states, "my agency does not consist in denying this condition of my constitution. If I have any agency, it is opened up by the fact that I am constituted by a social world I never chose. That my agency is riven with paradox does not mean it is impossible. It means only that paradox is the condition of its possibility" (P.3). The "possibility" that Butler writes about is captured in the concept of "resistance" which has been cited often as a response to oppressive conditions (Bartkey, 2002; Bordo, 1989; Brown & Gilligan, 1994; Gilligan, Rogers & Tolman, 1991; Taylor, Gilligan & Sullivan, 1995; Raby, 2005). One view of resistance can be understood in the relationship between dominant and subordinate groups where "power is something that is possessed by the dominant group and wielded against the subordinates; the subordinates may, in turn, resist and attempt to seize power" (Raby, 2002, p. 152).

Raby (2002), whose work with adolescents, suggests that "discourses of becoming frame adolescents as having a high degree of agency" (p.443). As a period of experimentation and identity formation, which is commonly characterized as rebellion, adolescence is often viewed as having "too much agency." Raby (2002) defines agency as "the ability to make choices, to reflect on and influence one's own actions, and to potentially make change in the world around us" (p.442). She notes the difference between rebellion and resistance in reference to adolescent lives. Rebellion, which is a popular notion related to adolescence, tends to be constructed as "an indirect, generalized challenge to authority by an individual or group," while on the other hand,

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resistance, which is not commonly used to describe adolescence, is "more often considered to be informed and deliberate action" (p.445). Thus, resistance may be a term used more by adults and scholars while rebellion may better describe the actions from the perspective of adolescents.

Some researcher's (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Rogers & Tolman, 1991) call girls who go against gender norms "resisters." Brown suggests that what a girl is resisting is the falsehood of "female becoming." She states that "a girl who chooses to authorize her life experiences by speaking openly about them resists the security of convention and moves into uncharted territory" (Gilligan et al., 1991, p.72). Raby (2002) has researched Canadian urban adolescent girls and their potential for agency. She suggests that girls "resistance" to gender norms may be an expression of girls' autonomy to "prevailing power relations" as they "carve out space for their self-assertion" (p.446). She notes that while girls' resistance may signal autonomous behavior, it can also be seen as rebellion against social norms putting girls at risk of being social outcasts, creating a kind of "double bind" for girls. Girls' active refusal of harmful gender expectations can, thus, be interpreted as a form of agency – an active choice to go against the tide of convention – indeed, an act of courage.

Brown's (1998) research with white poor and working class girls in early adolescence reveals girls whose ways of thinking and defining themselves "embody a vibrant resistance and self-authorization." By expressing their "self-righteous anger" at what they see as unfair treatment by those in positions of authority, these girls display "outside the norm" behavior for girls but also find themselves frequently at odds with authority figures. Other research on black girls (Ward, 2000) and white low-income and working-class girls (Gibbs, 1985), however, suggest that these girls tend to "maintain their ability to speak their minds and express disagreement or anger" (Leadbeater, 1996, p.234) possibly making these girls more "resilient"

and less vulnerable to epistemological confusion. Perhaps when girls are of a different race and class than their white middle class counterparts, the expectations of "normal feminine behavior" are less meaningful allowing non-white middle class girls to subvert these norms rather than conform to them.

Taylor, Gilligan and Sullivan (1995) suggest that the biggest risk for girls may be the risk of changing the status quo.

> To support the strengths, intelligence, resilience, and knowledge of girls whose culture or class is marginalized by society is to support political, social, educational and economic change. It may be easier to sacrifice girls than to support their development, and when girls sense this, it may be hard for them, with the best of intentions, not to give up on themselves and sacrifice their own hopes (p.203).

Curiously, if girls were to "resist" social conventions all the time they might risk social isolation, thus, resisting as a strategy may only be one of several ways that girls negotiate their needs and actions. Self- authorization, on the other hand, may represent an important internal tool for supporting girls' conscious choice-making abilities which is necessary for resistance.

Strategic Resistance

Raby (2005) claims "theories of resistance tend to focus on overt challenges, rather than more subtle challenges including humour [sic] or passivity" (p.159). She suggests that dominant repressive mechanisms are not as successful as we imagine and that subordinates routinely resist. Subordinates understand the position they are in and the need to employ "strategic tactics." These tactics may use a "public/hidden" approach where individuals are "strategically presenting one position in front of the dominant group and another in private" (p.159). Further, Raby notes that "conformity may also, in itself, be conceptualized as resistance." She gives an example of a student who "manages" a teacher who does not like her by convincing the teacher that they get along. Raby observes that the push and pull of "dominating and resisting power" are uneven and

inconsistent but contain "elements of the other" (p.161). While Chodorow (1995) recognizes the interwoven nature of individual and cultural tensions and suggests that "that each person's sense of gender – her gender identity or gendered subjectivity – is an inextricable fusion or melding of personally created (emotionally and through unconscious fantasy) and cultural meaning" (p. 517). Thus, a girl's ability to resist in a subtle way is bound up with an "inextricable" relationship between girls and power.

In a study of Vietnamese immigrant students transitional identity formation, Stritikus and Nguyen (2007) found that youth employed a "strategic transformation" approach in negotiating their cultural and gender identities. In this process, students "intentionally define gender or cultural identities as ways to leverage social status and power within specific situations" (p.889). In a low status position, Vietnamese immigrant girls capitalize on ideas of "freedom and gender equity" to arrange higher status within the Vietnamese community. In this way, Vietnamese girls "strategically reflect a gender identity that is more in line with American culture when they are in positions of having to negotiate status and power with male counterparts" (p.889). This kind of "strategic" approach employed by Vietnamese girls, who are subordinates, seizes an opportunity through a shift in cultural location to oppose repressive traditional Vietnamese female identity and status expectations. These girls' strategies do not overthrow a dominant power but rather strike a "better bargain" for them than they otherwise would have had. In a similar way, girls in this study negotiate their gender identity through capitalizing on ideas of gender equality to leverage social status and power within various settings of their lives.

In these examples, resistance is not overt and challenging, it is nuanced and subtle without great visible effects. In addition, Raby (2005) suggests that the dynamics of power and resistance operate in an opposing and interconnected fashion rather than as separate forces. For

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adolescent girls, this may mean that acts of resistance may be subtle and even contrary to

outward displays of rebellion and that oppression and opportunity are inevitably linked. Thus,

more successful forms of resistance may not be more powerfully employed but more

strategically implemented. The following quotation by Greene (1988) seems to capture this form

of strategic resistance:

> It must be clear enough that the mere assertion of freedom as a natural right or
> "independence" guarantees little when it comes from finding a space for personal
> becoming. This is so even though the rejecting or ignoring of human rights (whether
> of women or slaves or of oppressed people generally) can often destroy any
> possibility of choice. To overthrow tyranny or authoritarian controls, in other words,
> is not to bring freedom into being; it is only to allow for the search. The search,
> however, never occurs in a vacuum. Freedom cannot be conceived apart from a
> matrix of social, economic, cultural, and psychological conditions. It is within the
> matrix that selves take shape or are created through choice of action in the changing
> situations of life (p.78-80).

"Strategic Gendering"

In light of the above perspectives, and the insights I have gained from this investigation

of adolescent girls, I propose the notion of "strategic gendering" to capture the uniquely

gendered approach which girls in this study employed to balance the dual commitments of self

and culture. This strategic approach builds upon the "personal-cultural" (Chodorow, 1995)

aspect of girls' lives and the steady and subtle way that they go about strategically "working the

system" (Raby, 2005) to meet their needs. Strategic gendering refers to an adaptive negotiation

of girl's social actions which they influence and that simultaneously link their individual goals

with cultural expectations. When girls understand the position they are in as subordinates,

whether consciously or unconsciously, they react in subtle ways to the dynamics of power and

resistance. Thus, girls' social actions reflect the raw materials available to them, such as beliefs,

relationships and opportunities, and their own inventive natures to respond to life challenges in

order to pursue their own aspirations. More about strategic gendering will appear as a part of my findings analysis and interpretation in Chapter 9.

Conclusion

This section discussed related perspectives on agency with the aim of further enlightening the experiences of adolescent girls in this study. Central to this discussion was the concern of girls' agentic potential and how girls navigate gender expectations in their lives. Drawing upon Dewey's (1922) concept of "habit" to begin this exploration helped with identifying useful terms such as "indeterminate situation" and the role of "choice" as it relates to agentic actions. Looking at girls' capacity for knowledge (Debold, Tolman & Brown, 1996) and the inherent challenges associated with increasing gendered expectations at the onset of adolescence clarifies the struggle which obscures adolescent girls' ability "to know." Further, differentiating between what it means to be an autonomous agent versus a controlled agent, brings home the sobering reality of girls' struggle for independent action. Various definitions of resistance (Butler, 2004; Raby, 2002) to oppressive conditions offer the possibility of breaking free of dominant dynamics. While concepts of "strategic resistance" (Greene, 1988; Raby, 2005) suggest a more nuanced look at strategies for opposing the dominant culture which incorporate the dynamics of power and resistance, I propose the concept of "strategic gendering" to help interpret the key findings of this investigation.

CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 2

This dissertation is guided by four primary conceptual perspectives which offer "macro" and "micro" lens to investigate the ways that gender expectations shape the lives of seven adolescent girls in this study. Drawing upon theories of power and gender, situates the social influences that permeate the experiences, identities and social actions of these girls. Theories of

power provide tools for analyzing the subtle movements of cultural dynamics while gender theories offer insights into the constructed ways that gender operates as a dimension of power. Focusing the lens of social influences from "the balcony" on adolescent girls' lives helps to reveal the significant role that wider cultural forces play in accounting for the sometimes contradictory behaviors of girls in this study.

In a different way, exploring concepts of autonomy and agency provides a more specific and applied accounting of adolescent girls' identities and social actions. In effect, viewing how concepts of power and gender manifest in girls' self-concepts and day to day behaviors. Theories of autonomy reveal the limitations that traditional meanings place upon girls' capacity for independent action, while agency theories raise doubt about girls' agentic potential. Looking from the perspective of "the dance floor" offers a particular view of restrictive gender meanings and how they specifically shape girls' responses to gender expectations. Taken together, these four perspectives offer rich and substantive conceptual dimensions for illuminating and elucidating the experiences and social actions of the adolescent girls who are at the center of this investigation. As such, these lenses will help guide the search for meaning located in the interplay of individual girls' actions and gendered cultural demands.

PART II

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The conceptual and multidimensional challenges inherent in my attempt to unravel the interplay of relationships among girls' core self-concepts, relationships, social networks and social hierarchies demands a methodological perspective that is integrative, responsive and relational. My main research question, "How do adolescent girls experience and respond to gender expectations in their lives?" requires both effective tools for unpacking large volumes of data and a perspective that will elucidate the particular circumstances of adolescent girls' lives. To this end, I have adopted a grounded theory ethnographic approach (Charmaz, 2006) as the main "toolbox" for understanding how adolescent girls' lives are shaped by gender expectations.

Agar (2006) suggests that ethnographies create a "space of possibility" and employ "conscious reflection" while the core task is to create a translation among "different points of view." As such, an ethnographic study strives to explain problems that we don't understand. Additionally, I apply a feminist analysis approach (Kleinman, 2007) to provide an important lens for detecting and understanding how power relations (Foucault, 1975, 1980) and gender practices (Butler, 2004) shape the social actions of the adolescent girls in this study. This perspective brings both a feminist standpoint which seeks to make visible the impacts of gender hierarchies on girls' lives, as well as, a set of analytic tools for "looking below the surface" of girls' everyday social actions. Thus, linking a grounded theory ethnographic approach with a feminist interpretive approach is the overall strategy I employed in conducting my research.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is an approach that guides the researcher not only through the research process but ultimately results in the creation of a "grounded theory" or an "abstract theoretical understanding of the studied experience" (Charmez, 2006, p.4). According to Charmez (2006) core tenants of a grounded theory approach include an emphasis on "examining processes, making the study of action central, and creating abstract interpretive understandings of the data" (p.9). Grounded theory offers a way to "learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them" (p.10). Employing Charmaz' (2006) grounded theory ethnographic approach to illuminate the social influences that shape adolescent girls' experiences provides specific and detailed strategies for data collection, coding, building theoretical categories, analytic writing and for assessing the credibility of the research methods. Charmaz states:

> Grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories "grounded" in the data themselves. The guidelines offer a set of general principles and heuristic devices rather than formulaic rules. Thus, data form the foundation of our theory and our analysis of these data generates the concepts we construct (p.2).

Grounded theory is informed by symbolic interactionism which is a perspective that "assumes society, reality, and self are constructed through interaction" and therefore depends on various forms of communication (p.7). This constructivist approach assumes that "interaction is inherently dynamic and interpretive" and focuses on human interactions and meanings and how they are created and transformed. While other ethnographies (Emmerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995) focus on descriptive settings, grounded theory ethnography focuses on the "phenomenon or process" that interests the researcher. An important focus on both data collection and analysis in this investigation has been centered on the concept of "social actions" which is drawn from

Gee's (2006) work on discourse analysis and supports the symbolic interactionism perspective which is rooted in grounded theory. The social actions of the adolescent girls in my study have been a core focus for observing and understanding how gender expectations shape girls' lives with a particular interest in girls' agentic capacities. Paying close attention to the ways girls' social actions are constrained and shaped by social influences is of key importance, as well as, the ways they are able to prioritize their own goals. A focus on girls actions and describing them using action words, or gerunds, such as "speaking", "working" or "resisting" helped me to keep the data alive and generative through the research process.

Working with collected data is central to the grounded theory approach and is the main way that a researcher learns about their research concerns. Charmez (2006) suggests that "coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain your data" (p.46). She advises that keeping an open mind while resisting preconceived categories is vital to allowing new ideas to take hold. Coding is the first step to developing analytical insights. Agar (2006) explains that ethnography is a kind of *abductive* logic which means "to lead away" and is central to the task of producing new concepts. He poses that insights are produced by taking "surprises seriously and creating new explanations for them" (p.13). Thus, generating new ways of understanding the effects of gender expectations and girls' agentic capacities is a main goal of my investigation.

In addition to coding, memo-writing is a "pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers" (Charmez, 2006, p. 72). Memo-writing is useful for clarifying ideas, generating new insights and developing theoretical categories. Memo-writing can also help to identity patterns and discrepancies in the data, as well as, developing the researchers' "voice and writing rhythm." According to Charmez (2006), a grounded theory is a

"theoretical rendering" which offers an "interpretive portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it" (p.10). Finished grounded theories are "constructions of reality" and reflect the "people, perspectives and research practices" of the research process.

A grounded theory approach is a strong "fit" with this study due to the "emergent" nature of the main research question and offers a dynamic and comprehensive set of tools that provide guidance both in "the field" and at "the desk." This approach supports moving beyond simply speaking with girls and towards a better understanding of the ways in which socializing agents and settings influenced how the girls in this study negotiate the gender expectations they encounter. Grounded theory processes helped to uncover how adolescent girls in this study made meaning of their experiences as social agents, how their meanings were locally constructed, and how different social contexts provided girls with various meanings and social resources.

Feminist Analysis

A feminist analysis incorporates the goals of feminism, which can simply be defined as the pursuit of equality, as a key guiding perspective with a set of analytic tools for conducting qualitative research and analysis in this investigation. The goal of a feminist analysis for this study, proposes that gender inequalities are harmful, and as such, seeks to create knowledge that is useful for challenging the adverse impacts of a dominant culture on the lives of adolescent girls (Kleinman, 2007, p.115). Employing ideas from Kleinman's (2007) feminist analysis approach is another main research strategy I used for supporting this investigation and provides an essential gender lens for conducting fieldwork and analysis on the experiences of adolescent girls in this study. Kleinman offers a vital analytic framework which is particularly relevant to girls' status and for helping to understand the challenges of gender hierarchies and their effects.

The insights Kleinman's work explicates are appropriate for both fieldwork and analysis, and offer feminist principles and sensitizing tools for delving deep into issues of gender inequalities.

Kleinman (2007) shares the lessons she learned as a "symbolic interactionist fieldworker" and how she developed a feminist perspective by paying attention to her "twinge-ometer" which represented the strange feeling she got when she sensed that something wasn't right in a situation. Learning to follow these types of visceral sensations is at the heart of her recommendations for researchers who care about "the reproduction of inequality." Often feminist research is criticized for having an "agenda," and Kleinman's perspective suggests that all researchers have an agenda, it's just that feminist agendas tend to be more explicit (p.2). She states that we are "never blank slates; our views of the world are always shaped by our identities, group memberships, and values" (p.1). Developing an attunement to evidences of inequality, as well as, an awareness of one's own motives and positionality (Alcott, 1988) are necessary for the feminist researcher.

Kleinman (2007) suggests that gender is not neutral but is a stratified system used to justify gender roles and gender hierarchies (p.7). As part of a "system of oppression" gender functions as a tool of the dominant culture, or "patriarchy," to privilege some individuals over others. Kleinman notes that the word patriarchy has become unpopular due to the confusion over the word describing individual men rather than the "gendered patterns within a society" (p.8). So, what is patriarchy? Johnson (2005) suggests that patriarchal societies, including our own, "are male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered" (p. 5). Male dominated refers to positions of authority which are usually held by men and the structures which support them. Male-identified means the beliefs and values that are taken as normal are derived from men and how we define masculinity. Finally, male-centered represents how the primary focus of attention

is on men and their activities. Johnson's explanation provides three important lenses for looking for inequalities in adolescent girls' lives and establishes a point of reference for analyzing girls' experiences in this study.

Kleinman proposes that the basics of feminist theory include the "recognition of the systematic nature of sexism and other inequalities, the adaptability of patriarchy, and the ability of human beings to reinforce or subvert that system" (p.108). The systematic nature of sexism can be understood through the concepts of power (Foucault, 1975, 1980) and status (Miller, 1976) which operate to create an "unjust social order" (Harding, 1993) and sets up gender as difference (McKinnon, 1987). Central to feminist theory is an awareness of gender inequality which is often described as "a political consciousness" (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000, p. 57). This consciousness is vital for females to resist dominant cultural practices which often serve to obscure reality through its "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1975).

A particular challenge of studying inequality is the adaptability of the patriarchy which Bennett (2006) calls "patriarchal equilibrium" (p.4) or the ways that the dominant culture changes the rules and can be understood as a form of "backlash" (Faludi, 1991). Faludi defines this concept as "a powerful counter-assault on women's rights, a backlash, an attempt to retract the handful of small and hard-won victories that the feminist movement did manage to win for women" (p. xviii). She offers the example of "just when support for feminism and the Equal Rights Amendment reached a record high in 1981, the amendment was defeated the following year" (p. xix). While this concept can be seen on a large scale, backlash also happens in the small day to day interactions of female lives such as the resurgence of female body objectification through the "hypersexualization" of women, which now includes girls, and is touted as the new "sexual liberation" of females in a gender equitable world. The adaptability of the patriarchal

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culture, and the sometimes obscure nature of sexism, makes looking for and understanding gender inequalities particularly difficult.

Another tenant of feminist theory recognizes the capacity of individuals to either "reinforce or subvert" the patriarchy (Kleinman, 2007). This means that every time someone makes a choice they are either strengthening the dominant culture or they are challenging the dominant culture. These choices can be either conscious or unconscious. Feminism suggests that consciousness is required to subvert or challenge the dominant culture due to the prevailing and overwhelming system of inequality and oppression which obscures and forces females to have to struggle for vision (Harstock, 1983). Unconscious choices invariably lead to bolstering the status quo and can be seen in the repeated actions of adolescent girls to conform to traditional gender expectations such as nurturing behaviors or compliant consumerism.

Kleinman (2007) offers "sensitizing tools" for assisting with uncovering the hidden and elusive way that the dominant culture operates and can be applied to adolescent girls in this study. While it is common for researchers to be attentive to patterns of interaction, the unique contribution of the feminist fieldworker is "pushing against that which is most taken for granted, absences, silences, omissions, distortions, in order to challenge common sense understandings" (Hawkesworth, 2006, p.3). Kleinman (2007) provides some practical concepts for looking for the effects of gender differences in female lives. She poses that "words are tools of thought, shaping how we see the world" and that words are part of dominant culture patterns (p.12). For example, when girls in this study refered to themselves and other females around them as "guys," this can be understood as an attempt raise their status but at the same time reinforces the low status of females by erasing or diminishing their presence.

Another device Kleinman describes is how inequality can be disguised and can create false parallels (p. 31). She suggests that "similarities can be deceiving" and notes that biases against women do not equal biases against men. Parallels do not exist, Kleinman poses, because of unequal resources, privilege, and power which are differently distributed across genders (p. 31). One way to understand the concept of false parallels is through beliefs of assumed gender equality, which don't exist and can be seen in the lopsided movement of females into male domains such as careers or sports, without an equal movement of males into female domains. This lack of parity reveals the hidden effects of "supposed" gender equality while there exists a commonly held perception that gender equity has been achieved.

Kleinman (2007) also suggests that gender hierarchies exist in "what people think and feel" and observes that emotions are fundamentally social (p.86). Feelings are not simply personal but reflect the socializing effects of a dominant culture which influences the "feeling rules" about how people are supposed to feel in certain situations (Hochschild, 1983). Hochschild (1983) suggests that these rules are a form of "emotion work" which is done mainly by women with the primary purpose being to "make others feel good." This kind of emotion work was observed in the social actions of adolescent girls in this study, and represented girls most visible behaviors, which were dedicated to socially oriented kinds of actions including cheering up and managing other people's feelings, as well as, frequent displays of caring and concern for others.

Additionally, the way that males engage in reproducing masculinity in relation to each other, reinforces sex differences and inequality (Kleinman, 2007, p. 48). Extreme forms of masculinity including attitudes, behaviors and beliefs function as a way to ensure the existence of femininity since the two concepts depends on the other as opposites. When females attempt to

raise their status through engagement in male dominated arenas such as sports they may be unwittingly reinforcing gender inequality rather than challenging it. By engaging in similar tough physical activities through extreme masculine behaviors females might be simply reinforcing the stereotype of females by rejecting the image of females as weak (p.57). While girls in this study may have felt proud to play a male dominant sport, such as ice hockey, they were not motivated by seeking equality, as much as, proving their capacity to compete on male terms and attempting to raise their status.

These sensitizing tools along with other concepts of feminist theory are valuable for this investigation due to the gendered nature of the research question being pursued. This feminist perspective and analytic approach helped to attune my research practices to the hidden and often invisible effects of gender inequalities, as well as, supporting the goal of creating new knowledge that can address harmful gender practices in the lives of adolescent girls.

A Context Specific and Multiple Context Study

Early work on girls' development (Gilligan, Rogers, & Tolman, 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1992) was criticized for making "overly simplistic generalizations" of mainly white and middle class girls' experiences, propelling new research on diverse female populations and settings (Leadbeater & Way, 1996; Ward, 2002). As research on girls' development has broadened and become increasingly nuanced, there have been calls for using a "context-specific framework" (Harter et al., 1998) and the need for a "more contextualized and relational understanding of girls' development" (Leadbeater & Way, 2007). According to Holstein and Gubrium (2004), qualitative researchers must consider "social context as it is relevant to the experience of the social participants under consideration" (p.299). They describe the importance of illustrating the connection between "action and contextual effects" in empirical research studies. In their view,

context is never a settled matter and represents a fluid and socially emergent set of factors rather than a static collection of conditions. This perspective is supported by McNay (2000) who poses that "agency is a situated type of action or interaction" and cannot be deduced from abstract social structures (p.178). McNay argues that agency as a "lived social relation" must be studied at the level of social action.

A context-specific framework will support the conceptual and methodological perspectives for conducting this study; however, girls' social networks will serve as the specific contexts under investigation. Silverman (2007) suggests that rather than creating artificial settings to analyze human behavior, researchers should seek data from "those contexts which societal members ordinarily assemble for themselves" (p.58). Following this opinion, this research project identified girls' primary social contexts through an emergent social network mapping process conducted with each individual girl at the outset of the study. These multiple contexts such as home, school, and after school activities afforded not just one specific context but several different contexts from which girls social actions were observed with a greater chance of more accurately unraveling girls experiences.

According to social network theory (Mitchell, 1969), personal networks represent an individuals' everyday social activities and their circles of relations and acquaintances. This can be contrasted with social contexts which are the social structures which contain these individuals. Social network theory is helpful in focusing on the ways that social ties affect individuals and their relationships rather than focusing solely on the individual. Since this study is not only context specific, but also a multiple context study, the girls became the central location of this research inquiry rather than one specific context such as a school or sport setting. Thus, while girls were recruited through two different schools with the help of teachers and guidance

personnel, this study is not school based per se, but rather followed the social networks and relationships in girls' lives which included school based activities for some girls but not for others, who met with me in their homes and other locations.

As such, drawing upon a context-specific framework, employing social networks as a context for observing girls' social actions and viewing context as an emergent set of conditions have provided an important perspective and approach for gathering rich data from multiple angles on the lives of the girls in this study. In contrast to studies that treat girls as discrete units of analysis, this study takes into account the natural settings which make up each girls' social world, and the relational ties which impact the formation of girls' identity and behaviors. In this study, attending to girls' narratives *and* their various social contexts supports a more specific and detailed investigation of girls' social actions and the influences which impact their lives.

Relevant Contexts and Settings

This research study took place mainly in and around the small rural/suburban town of Livingston (pseudonym) in the northeast region of the United States with additional settings in surrounding towns. Since this study is girl-centered rather than location centered, it follows the settings and activities of the girls in this investigation and cannot be reduced to one specific location. The following key settings will help to describe the local area where this study took place and present a range of specific activity sites where research observations occurred.

Livingston

Livingston is a rural community that spans seventeen square miles with a population of approximately 8,000 people. While it is technically a rural community due to the number of people per square mile, it has a suburban character because of the increasing commercialization of the area which includes the addition of at least on large corporation in town. The community

has a major interstate highway that runs through it which makes it accessible to professionals who work in the nearby metropolitan region. The median household income was approximately $71,000 in 2009 with less than three percent of families living below the poverty line. The racial makeup of the town was ninety six percent white with the remaining four percent being compromised of Asian, African American and Native Americans. The town has a commuter rail service to a large metropolitan city which is within an hour's drive by car. The town has a town common, local newspaper, recreation area and many working farms, horse stables and roadside farm stands.

The following schools and other sites are important settings for this investigation. The place names are pseudonyms which are simply generic names and will be used throughout this dissertation.

Montessori School

The Montessori School is located in Livingston and is a pre-school through eighth grade co-ed school. It had an enrollment of approximately 250 students in 2008, which represents a mainly white population with roughly twenty percent of the students being of Asian and Indian backgrounds. The school has a focus on multi-age classrooms, experiential learning, and student initiated work. Two participants in the pilot study were recruited through contact with a middle school teacher at the school. Interviews with these participants were conducted at their homes; however, the school functioned only as a place of recruitment for these students.

Public Middle School

The Public Middle School is located in Livingston and includes the sixth, seventh and eighth grades. It had an enrollment of approximately 360 students in 2009, which represents a majority of white students with less than eight percent of minorities including African American,

Asian, and Hispanic. The teaching faculty was one hundred percent white, while the janitorial

staff was Hispanic. A handful of students in the general student body were on free or reduced

lunch, four students were ESL, and ten percent were considered special education students with

individualized education plans (IEP's). The school has a significant focus on strong

extracurricular activities (mainly sports), individual attention to students, a well-rounded

curriculum, and a strong faculty. Six of the study participants were recruited at the Public Middle

School with the help of the school Adjustment Counselor. Interviews with two of the participants

were conducted at the school, as well, as five site observations among the six participants. These

site observations included: a visit to a student council meeting, a science fair practice session, a

visit to an after school health club, a middle school girls basketball game, and a pre-thanksgiving

pie making event.

Public Charter School

The Public Charter School is located in the nearby town of Dunmar and includes grades

seven to twelve. It had an enrollment of approximately 400 students in 2008, drawing upon

roughly forty surrounding towns. The student population reflects the general population of the

region and is determined in large part by students who are selected through the schools lottery

admissions system. The school has a focus on an integrated curriculum, teachers as advisors to

students, and a "gateway" process for advancement. One pilot study participant attended this

school which was also the location for one site observation that involved a tour of the school.

Other Settings

- Livingston high school – a visit to observe a pre-show rehearsal for a local theater groups production of Sleeping Beauty and where the study participant worked as the lighting technician.

- Livingston horse stable – a visit to observe a local stable where a study participant took horse riding lessons.

- Home of a violin instructor in a nearby town – a visit to observe the violin lesson of a study participant.

- A Livingston private home – a visit to observe a study participant work as a "practice coach" for a younger violin player.

- Ice hockey arena in a nearby town – a visit to observe at an ice hockey game in which a study participant played.

- Livingston elementary school – a visit to a town league basketball practice in which a study participant played.

Phases of Data Collection

Since this study began in 2008 there have been three phases of data collection which have varied in different ways and for different purposes. I will outline the scope of these data collection periods and how they relate to this study.

Phase I – Pilot Study (2008)

The pilot study included two study participants who were recruited from a local Montessori School and were identified by teachers. There was one high school junior and one seventh grade middle school student. Participants engaged in four separate one hour interviews, four writing exercises and one site observation which they selected. They also identified one "important" adult in their life for me to interview to gather more information about each girl. This pilot phase provided an opportunity to "test" out which age level would best fit the goals of my study, as well as, afforded me an opportunity to develop an interview protocol, refine writing exercises, and practice my interviewing and transcribing skills. My conclusion after this phase was that focusing on a middle school age group would provide a richer time period for observing gender related social actions due to the "gender intensification" which occurs with the onset of adolescence (Basow & Rubin, 1998). The interviews, site observations, and writing exercises of the seventh grade participant from the pilot phase were included as part of the main study.

Phase II – Main Study (2009)

The main phase of data collection included six additional study participants who were recruited from a public middle school in the same town as the Montessori school where the two pilot study participants were identified. Participants engaged in four one hour interviews, four writing exercises, and two site observations which they selected. Additionally, participants selected two "important" adults in their lives to be interviewed, with the focus of the interview being the girls themselves. This main study phase occurred over a ten month period of time with a six week time span focused on each participant including interviews, field observations, and writing exercises. In total, the main study reflects the participation of one participant from the pilot study and six participants from the main study, for a total of seven study participant's.

Phase III – Supplemental Study (2015 – 2016)

After a significant lapse in time without completing my research project, a committee member suggested that I return to the field to gather additional data for the purpose of refreshing my data set and reacquainting myself with my research. This new round of data collection included five of the seven main study participants. Participants engaged in a single one and a half hour interview, as well as, selecting one "important" adult for me to interview. The adult interviews were forty five minutes long, and in all cases, were the mothers of the five continuing participants. All of these interviews occurred six years after the main study interviews, and were focused on following up on the same previous interview themes, with the added dimension of how the young women's responses were similar or different than before. The interview questions were all related to the idea of how participants experiences had "changed over time" from six years previous and were related to areas of identity, previously asked questions, three new questions focused on developmental change, and finally, sharing and gathering participant

responses related to some of my early research interpretations. These latest interviews and fieldnotes have all been transcribed. Finally, data analysis for this supplemental phase has not been completed and will not be included in this investigation with the exception of updated participant profiles which will be featured in the Epilogue. Several supporting documents for this supplemental study include the following: Appendix A for Supplemental Interview Protocol, Appendix B for Social Actions Chart, Appendix C for Girl Archetypes, and Appendix D for IRB Modification Letter.

Research Methods

Girl Interviews

In order to gain insight into my research question I interviewed adolescent girls about their own subjective life experiences. Davidson (2003) suggests that "rather than asking a person to explain his or her experiences to us, we are asking him or her to share his or her experiences *with* us" (p.63). Davidson notes that it is not the role of the study participant to explain their lives but to simply share their life experiences so that the researcher may interpret and represent their ideas in their research study. In this inquiry, girls were a partner in the research process and were treated as experts on their everyday life experiences. For example, girls were decision-makers in selecting two "important" adults in their lives (e.g. parents, teachers, coaches) for follow-up interviews which were conducted for the purpose of gaining added perspectives on each girl's everyday experiences. Additionally, girls were asked to identify two of their current activities which I could observe.

For this main study, interview questions were drawn indirectly from the four *research subquestions* which represent key perspectives for illuminating the main research problem. (See Appendix E for Research Matrix for further details): These include:

- How are girls' experiences related to their core *self-concepts*?
- How are girls' experiences related to key *relationships* in their lives?
- How are girls' experiences related to key *social networks* in their lives?
- How are girls' experiences related to the *gender hierarchies* in which they live?

To transform these research perspectives into related and usable interview questions, I developed several *sensitizing topics* as key lenses suitable for building a set of interview questions. These include:

Sensitizing Topics

- Agentic identity
- Choice-making
- Difficult situations
- Adolescent transitions

These sensitizing topics helped to guide the development of *topical questions* which specified "anticipated needs for information" (Schram, 2006) and represent another step towards creating practical interview questions. These include:

Sample Topical Questions

- How do girls see themselves?
- How and when do girls feel agentic? When do they not feel agentic?
- What are important relationships in girls' lives? What are they like?
- How do girls handle situations where they had to make a difficult choice?
- How do girls adjust to the changes of adolescence?

These types of topical questions guided the development of *protocol questions* appropriate for actually interviewing the adolescent girls in this study. All topical questions were

transformed into specific questions which were used in my interviews (See Appendix F for Interview Protocol Questions). These include:

Sample Protocol Questions

- How would you describe yourself in three words?
- What's really going well for you in your life right now? What's not going well?
- In what ways do you feel independent or in charge in your life?
- In what ways do you feel stuck or struggling in your life?
- How do you handle difficult situations and can you give me an example?

Attention to use of everyday language was important when developing protocol questions. For example, to get at my choice-making topical questions I might ask a girl, "When you have to make a choice, like which clothes to wear, how much do your needs, such as feeling comfortable, factor in to your decision versus other needs, such as fitting in?" Questions such as this one helped girls understand the interview questions in relation to their own lives rather than struggling to understand it through the mind of a researcher.

Sensitizing topics and topical questions served to help me develop specific protocol questions that were employed during interviews with girls, and were utilized in a generally consistent manner from girl to girl during interviews, with the exception of clarifying questions or follow up questions unique to each girl's life situation. Davidson (2003) suggests that in qualitative studies it would be rare to use all the specific protocol questions designed for a particular interview. Interviews used an open-ended structure and drew upon the in-depth interview techniques suggested by Seidman (2006). Similar to phenomenological interviewing this study utilized multiple in-depth interviews, open-ended questions and close spacing of interviews. Distinct from phenomenological interviewing was a focus on girls' present lives rather than life-history and a shorter (approximately one hour) interview to adapt for working with an adolescent

population. Girls in this study participated in four separate interviews. All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and will be destroyed at the completion of this study. Written materials will be shredded, digital recorder files will be deleted and computer files will be deleted, as well.

Adult Interviews

In addition to interviewing the seven main study participants, I interviewed twelve adults who were selected by girls in order to gather additional data on them from another perspective. These interviews were a single one hour meeting and included questions which were similar to the questions used during the girls' interviews. For example:

- How would you describe XXX in three words?
- Can you recall a snapshot moment that would help describe XXX?
- How does XXX handle difficult situations and can you give me an example?
- In what ways is XXX independent or in charge in her life?
- In what ways does XXX feel stuck or struggle in her life?

These adult interviews, along with the girls' interviews, laid a rich groundwork for understanding each of the study participants, and with my own observations helped to build a substantive view of each girl's life experiences and social actions. Having three or four perspectives - girls, other adults, and researcher – offered a unique opportunity to find patterns and variations which helped to deepen my understanding of each study participant. Similar to the girls' interviews, these adult interviews will also be destroyed.

Participant Observation

In addition to interviewing girls, and other key adults in their lives, participant observation was an important approach utilized in this study. Observing various social networks that make up each girl's life gave me an opportunity to "see" different social contexts, as well as,

various social locations that represented each girl's social world (e.g. home, school, after school activities). Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) suggest that participant observation includes getting close and immersing oneself in the social world of the people you are observing in an attempt to "experience events and meanings in ways that approximate members' experiences" (p.2). In this study, I observed each girl in two separate settings of her choosing, in addition to the interview locations, and represented activities they were currently involved with such as sports, theater, and school clubs. As noted earlier, these sites were located at schools and other locations in and around Livingston. Various sites for observing each girl provided opportunities for learning about girls differing identities, social actions, and relationships, as well as, offering a more concrete perspective of the real people and environments that made up each girls' life.

My intention during fieldwork was to take fieldnotes unobtrusively during times that I was not interacting with participants or to write immediately following field observations (See Appendix G for Sample Fieldnote). Given the emphasis on various social contexts in this study, it was important to gather context-sensitive data that could illuminate the locally specific micro-cultures that made up each girl's social network. Creating rich descriptions of specific settings helped to illuminate girls' interview narratives by providing contextual information that painted a multidimensional view of her life. I developed prompts for maintaining an "observational focus" along with mental reminders to help me cultivate my fieldwork skills (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995). Below are a few examples:

Observation Focus

- Each girl's level of inclusion and participation during the activity
- Each girl's sense of personal identity and her role during the activity
- The ways in which all participants interact and group expectations during the activity
- The ways the group and the study participant engage in gendered behaviors

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Mental Reminders

- Focus on description not analysis
- Focus on *how* not why
- Focus on sensory details: What do I see? What do I smell? What do I hear?
- Get down initial impressions and personal reactions
- Step back from reactions and observe what's going on overall
- Balance my involvement vs. writing
- Observe regularities and patterns / variations on patterns

The interplay of gathering data from both participant observation and interviews provided a kind of feedback loop where girls words could be confirmed by her actions, thus, building a kind of integrity to her story. In another way, I sometimes found surprises or new dimensions to girls which I would not have known about without seeing girls in action. For instance, one girl who was very reserved during the interviews turned out to be a social clown with her friends.

Written Artifacts

During the pilot study, I experimented with the use of writing exercises which were conducted just prior to each participant interview and served to both "break the ice" and "prime the pump" for getting the interview conversations going (See Appendix H for Writing Exercises). These activities helped to kick off the interviews and were welcomed by the study participants. In the main study, I used these and similar writing activities to initiate my interviews with girls. Each exercise corresponded to the interview questions for that session and was organized around the sensitizing topics of agentic identity, choice-making, difficult situations, and adolescent transitions. For example, one exercise was a three minute "freewrite" to the open ended question "I am the girl who . . . ." This activity helped me gain insight into how girls understood and defined their own identity. At each interview, I explained each

exercise, gave instructions, and set the amount of time for doing the exercise. Most exercises took no more than three to five minutes. The exercises led directly into the interview with the first questions relating to the writing that the girl had just completed. At the end of the interview, I collected the writing exercises as part of the research study data. These written artifacts, written in girls' own words, were used to understand and capture each participant's way of expressing and making meaning of her distinct life experiences.

Participant Selection

Pilot study participants were selected through the Montessori School with the help of two middle school teachers. The teachers gave out packets of information about the study to the interested students who also happened to be their daughters. Since I personally knew the teachers, permission was given by both parent and student without an initial "meet and greet" with the study participants. Consent paperwork was completed at the first interview by both parents and participants.

The main study participants were recruited through the Public Middle School with the help of the school Adjustment Counselor, Ms. Dalton. I discussed selection criteria with Ms. Dalton who then identified potential participants for an initial meeting. The criteria for selection was not restrictive and included: girls who were in the seventh or eighth grade, and who were typical or representative of the school population, which was ninety six percent white, and had a willingness to participate. Girls identified by Ms. Dalton were invited to a "meet and greet" at her office where I reviewed the details of the study and expectations for participation. Girls who were interested filled out a contact form with parent information and were told they would be notified after parental permission was given. Prospective participants were informed that if they

decided to participate they would receive a cash stipend at the completion of all four interviews, adult interviews and site visits.

The supplemental study participants were invited to continue with the study six years later. Participants were contacted via letters which were sent to their homes, e-mail correspondence with parents, and phone calls to their homes. Five of the original study participants continued while two declined due to lack of interest.

Participant Sample

Brown and Gilligan (1992) assert that the onset of adolescence is a time of crisis in girls lives and suggest that girls "are showing evidence of loss and struggle and signs of an impasse in their ability to act in the face of conflict" (p.6). Debold, Tolman and Brown (1996) claim that preadolescent girls (seven to eleven years old) lack the cognitive capacity to integrate oppressive discourses while early adolescent girls growing cognitive abilities absorb them. Other research (Gibbs, 1985; Ward, 2000) shows that minority girls and girls of working class backgrounds appear to be more resilient and less vulnerable to damaging sociocultural factors suggesting that white and middle class girls may be more vulnerable. According to these researchers, and my own pilot study, twelve to fourteen year old white middle class girls' experiences appear to reflect these sociocultural "struggles," and would provide rich opportunities for me to look at the particular ways that each girl handles these challenges. This sample represents the "ordinary" middle class white girl, who is confronting routine sociocultural challenges in her life, rather than girls who are from minority, working class, "exceptional" or "at risk" categories. While this sample is not diverse, it may be particularly useful for focusing on a population that represents the stereotype of femininity – white, middle class and female. This sample may be associated with more "risk" factors than other populations due to the high level of pressure to conform to a

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stereotype which these girls embody. This sample best serves the needs of this investigation for exploring the way that gender expectations shape adolescent girls' lives. This study involved seven white middle class girls' ages twelve, thirteen and fourteen.

Data Analysis

Data analysis guidelines were drawn largely from Charmez' (2006) grounded theory ethnographic approach and offered both a generalized framework and detailed suggestions for analysis. After data collection, coding was the first step towards making sense of the numerous interview transcripts, elicited texts, and fieldnotes from this study. Coding is an emergent process which involves naming and identifying the most frequent data patterns, sorting through large amounts of data, and creating theoretical categories. I began my analysis by focusing on line by line coding of interviews through creating simple yet descriptive labels which helped to illuminate the social actions of the adolescent girls in this study. Many of the most repeated and intriguing codes I placed together on a single page of paper for each girl, in order to, view them in an aggregated manner. This allowed me to conduct a side by side visual comparison of the social actions of all seven girls in the study.

Additionally, I conducted repeated readings and coding of the data which allowed for new insights each round. The first round helped me to get a sense of the emergent social action themes. The second round helped to consolidate emerging categories. A third round of reading the data was focused on a feminist analysis perspective looking for ways that girls' social actions reinforced the patriarchy. Finally, a fourth round reading allowed me to look for the ways girls social actions challenged the patriarchy. These iterative readings and codings allowed insights to develop and "float to the surface" in a patterned and logical way, as well as, a generative and unique way.

My early coded themes gave way to theoretical categories which were described and developed through memo-writing. Memo-writing was an important way to explicate the emerging theoretical categories by defining them and breaking them down into their properties and components. Memo-writing was a vehicle I used for working with the data to develop the depth and details of important categories. Eventually, certain theoretical categories stood out while others were subsumed into them. The main theoretical categories became the basis for describing a behavioral display; I refer to as "strategic gendering." The main theoretical themes, which reveal a range of these girls' social actions, support the concept of strategic gendering and include: the agentic girl, conforming actions, concurring actions, and transforming actions. Together these theoretical themes, along with specific social action categories, made up the core of research findings in this investigation. For example, "the agentic girl" theme has three social action categories including "speaking up," "engaging opportunities," and "working hard." These theoretical themes will be highlighted in Chapters 5 through 8, while strategic gendering will be described in Chapter 9.

A grounded theory ethnographic approach, as well as, the feminist analytic perspective supported the development of a specific behavioral process I conceptualized as "strategic gendering," and help to inform the ways that adolescent girls' lives are shaped by gender expectations. Charmez (2006) suggests that a completed grounded theory illuminates the studied process in "new theoretical terms" and clarifies the dimensions, range and conditions which produce the events being studied. Thus, my analysis brought together ethnographic text, describing context specific settings and observations, with detailed narrative stories of girls' experiences across social settings. These results are based on the common and divergent themes that emerged from the supporting evidence gathered within and across all participant cases (See

Appendix I for A Within and Across Case Analysis Plan). Both the findings and analysis were informed by adolescent girls' emerging insights about their experiences of navigating the sociocultural challenges which they encountered in their day to day lives.

Research Integrity

The topic of research integrity is one that is especially important to qualitative researchers like me due to our unique role as a dynamic instrument of data collection and interpretation. One concern often raised about qualitative research is a concern for the "trustworthiness" of a study (Schram, 2006) which stems from the fact that a researcher's personal view, opinion or experiences may potentially obscure or invalidate their research during both fieldwork and the analytic process. While these claims may be true it is also true that researchers can take steps to anticipate and "make explicit the nature and implications of these concerns" not by controlling them but through an engaged awareness of their impact on the research process (p. 133).

However, while taking steps to control for subjectivity, it is also important to recognize that a person's subjectivity can never be fully removed from the qualitative process, nor should it be. Researcher viewpoints and experiences add value to our research and often represent our underlying motivations for doing our work. Striving for objectivity, while recognizing the reality of subjectivity, is the tension that a qualitative researcher must hold. The relationship between researcher and study participant is dynamic and subject to many factors including researcher presentation, stated purpose, perceived level of trust, and ability to create a connection with study participants. Schram (2006) suggests that the trustworthiness of a study can be established by attending to "consequences of presence," "selective experience," and "engaged subjectivity."

The consequences of presence is focused on the level of impact a researcher's involvement, either during interviews or on site observations, has on the research process. The assumed consequential nature of their presence, may be viewed as a disruption, but can also be viewed as the mutual construction of emergent meanings between researcher and study participant (Schram, 2006, p.134). Recognizing the limitations inherent in the research process made me aware of my presence during this study, and consequently, I adopted a research manner which was less interesting than I would normally be in other circumstances. While this "fly on the wall" strategy did not make my presence invisible it neutralized potentially larger effects of my involvement in the situation. Realistically, a researcher's presence cannot be erased and ultimately the research "product" is an interpretation created through the dynamics of participant and researcher. Schram (2006) reminds us that research is not about finding the "truth" but instead is about the pursuit of "approximating realities but not establishing absolutes" (p.134).

In a similar way, the subjective nature of the researcher's role means that there is a focus in some areas but not in others (Schram, 2006). This selective experience also must be accounted for in order for the emergent outcomes to be credible. Charmez (2006) asks, "Is there a logical link between the gathered data, argument and analysis?" (p. 182). The researcher's focus and questions are central to guiding the research process, along with the interpretation, which must be supported by evidence from the findings in the study. In this way, the research process is guided by the stated purposes and supported by evidence, as well as, the researcher's own subjective opinion about what may be important about the study (p. 135). One way that I decided what was important was by looking for patterns and sequences rather than singular incidents as a way to ensure more objective conclusions in the analytic process. When I observed something of interest I would ask myself "Is this a one-time event, or is there integrity and cohesion, to the

behavior I am observing? Do I follow it or do I pass it over?" Another key support for getting the details "right" (Gee, 2005) is the study design which engages multiple perspectives of participants, other adults, and my own observations that worked as checks and balances, and provided opportunities which were in pursuit of as good an "approximate reality" that can be hoped for in a study. Not only did these other perspectives help establish credibility in what I observed, but they also clued me into phenomena that I would not have seen otherwise.

Engaged subjectivity represents the degree to which personal qualities and sensibilities, including emotions, influence the research process (Schram, 2006, p.135). The reasons for conducting our study is often bound up with our subjectivity and must be accounted for during our research. In this study, I took steps to anticipate subjectivity by developing a clear sense of my professional role as a researcher. In one way, this meant developing an awareness of "sameness" of race, class and gender which I shared with my research participants. While on the one hand, this was a benefit to my work in recruiting participants and building rapport, however, it was also difficult at times to maintain an objective "distance" during my work due to the over friendly responses of some of the study participants.

This particular challenge of subjectivity can be understood through "positionality theory" (Alcoff, 1988) which acknowledges the various aspects of a person's identity, and how it plays out in the way we present ourselves, not only to our participants but also how we know ourselves. I can map my own positionality as being female and middle aged; I am also heterosexual, middle class, white and a parent of a female adolescent. I come from a background as an educator who designs curricula for out of school programs for girls and have taught classes on gender in higher education settings. While all this information is true, it also "positions" me in a certain way with a certain viewpoint, and a certain potential for being "too close" to the goals

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of my study of adolescent girls. Awareness of my own history and identity are vital to research integrity.

Additionally, employing a reflective stance was also critical and came in the form of "gut" feelings and points of dissonance that I felt during and after an interview or field observation or while doing analytic writing. I often asked myself "What if the opposite is true rather than what I think is true?" This way of challenging my thoughts and assumptions brought me new ways of seeing social actions in a fresh and rich way and helped to reveal blind spots in my awareness.

My own experiences during my dissertation work have shown me how important reflecting on subjectivity can be, and how developing a keen awareness is vital to the pursuit of research integrity. I know that I will continue to "struggle for objectivity" at times in my research, but with tools such as these, as part of my every day practices, I know I can pursue my work in a legitimate manner that strives for both "accuracy and plausibility" (Schram, 2006) while also ensuring rigorous and credible outcomes.

Limitations of the Study

My choice to study a population of white middle class adolescent girls was not intended to discredit or disregard other populations of adolescent girls; rather the choice to focus on this particular sample was motivated by the desire to challenge assumptions about a privileged population and the possible risks that they confront. As antithetical as it may seem, these girls white privilege, and their embodiment of stereotypes of femininity, may set them up to be as vulnerable to gender expectations, and possibly more so, than girls of other races and classes. This does not mean that other girls who are black, Hispanic or Asian, for example, are not

worthy of inquiry, rather, the adolescent girls represented in this sample offer an opportunity to investigate the ways that gender barriers effect the lives of these particular girls.

Furthermore, the constructs emphasized in this investigation, especially with regards to identity and sense of self, are built upon western concepts and make assumptions that are rooted in theories of human development which highlight independence as a hallmark of growth. If this study were to be extended to other non-western populations who are Vietnamese, Chinese or Japanese, for example, these concepts might prove to be troublesome and should be reconsidered in light of cultural differences in identity meanings.

Ethical & Safety Considerations

My *presentation of self* (Schram, 2006) to study participants was as an educational program designer who was conducting research to develop educational programs that better served the needs of adolescent girls. Similar to the pilot study, I explained to girls and their parents that the nature of my research was focused on "how girls navigate the challenges they face during adolescence through the choices they make in everyday situations." While this presentation may be simplistic and does not get at the complexities of my study, both statements are true and I believe understandable and credible from the perspective of girls' and their parents.

I employed a *relational approach* when interviewing and shadowing study participants. This means that I was aware of the unequal power distribution in the researcher/participant relationship and made efforts to "share power" with individuals as much as possible (e.g. getting input on selection of site visits and asking if they have any questions about myself or about the research). Additionally, I engaged a casual "conversational style" (Davidson, 2003) for interviewing, using common language and familiar places to do interviews such as spaces in participants homes or school settings.

Recognizing the intimate nature of possible conversations, which included difficult experiences of choice-making and struggle for study participants, required forethought on how I would handle such situations. *Confidentiality* of the subjects' identity and research data was explained as a normal protocol. However, with minors it was important to state up front, both in a verbal statement to the participants, and in the IRB informed consent letter, that in severe cases of child safety disclosures, such as abuse or suicidality, I would be required to report these incidents to adults responsible for their care. In addition to these precautions, I created a youth support resource list, as suggested by the IRB, to share with girls who may disclose sensitive information with me (See Appendix J for Resource List for Girls). At the end of data collection, I had not found it necessary to hand out any of these resources but it was helpful knowing that it was available.

My *own subjective* past experiences, in working with girls and studying girls' development, offered formidable experiences upon which to draw for moving forward with a research project focused on a population I was familiar with. At the same time, I was aware that those same experiences and knowledge could prove to be an obstacle to my own learning (Schram, 2006). In the course of my research, I sometimes found myself in the mindset of a "knower" rather than a "learner" due to my familiarity with my research population and topic. This did prove to be a challenge but was also part of my learning to find ways to "distance" myself from my study participants and my own perceptions. This lesson was valuable and left me feeling like I could take on similar work, or work with other more diverse populations and unfamiliar topics.

Due to the considerable level of involvement in girls' lives, I provided a *stipend* to girls who participated in this project, as both a thank you and acknowledgement of their time and

effort. The cash stipend was given out at the completion of all interviews and site visits at a "closure" meeting that I conducted with each girl. While a cash stipend was not totally necessary, I was aware that some ethnographic studies (Lareau, 2003) use this type of gift to both motivate and "hold accountable" the commitment made on the part of the research participants at the outset of the study. In the pilot study, I offered a cash stipend after numerous rejections by girls to participate in the research project. The offer of a stipend seemed to work, not only to motivate girls to participate, but I noticed the girls acted responsibly in communicating with me and were eager to conduct their interviews.

Conclusion

The research methodology employed in this investigation of seven white middle class adolescent girls' life experiences, provided substantive tools and perspectives to unpack my research question on how adolescent girls' experience and respond to gender expectations in their lives. Robust grounded theory tools enabled a clear pathway for collecting data and supported an emergent analytic process. While a feminist analytic lens offered a crucial perspective to uncover the effects of gender norms revealed in the social actions of girls in this study. Attending to other research concerns such as social context, participant selection and sample, research integrity and ethical and safety concerns all supported a thoughtful, credible, and purposeful investigation. Together these approaches and methods bolstered the process of "deconstructing" the collected data, as well as, and the "reconstruction" of new and emergent knowledge that was made possible through this exploration of adolescent girls' lives. The following chapter will introduce the study participants who are at the heart of this investigation and offer introductory background information, as well as, contextual details for locating these girls' particular experiences.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT PROFILES: *THE GIRLS*

The following participant profiles provide important background information, as well as, contextual details for understanding the experiences and social actions of the seven white middle class adolescent girls who are the focus of this investigation. These profiles offer a brief "snapshot" of the individual lives of these girls and their personal qualities, family configurations, and social surroundings. These sketches were created at the end of the data collection process and were built upon information gathered from interviews, field notes and elicited texts. As a qualitative study with few participants, it was possible to gather deep personal responses and rich contextual material to construct understandings about each individual girl, as well as, these girls together as a group. After spending so much time with these girls in person, along with their words and images, I feel particularly fortunate to have gotten to know them, and the learning that they provided me, which I will share with others. I hope that the reader will recognize these girls as the unique individuals that they are, as well as, some of the commonalities that they share across race, class and gender.

Michelle

Michelle was 12 years old at the time she agreed to be in my pilot study. As a preteen she had a head of very short brown hair, a small build, and a round perky face with a broad smile and bright blue eyes. She was in the middle of her seventh grade year at the Public Charter School. During one of our interviews she referred to herself as "shorty" and went on to say that, technically, she was a "legal midget" at her current height. I took this information to be a point of fact but the comment also signaled a sense of self-awareness that she elaborated more on in our interviews. I did not perceive Michelle as being noticeably short for a 12 year old since I knew

that early teen growth rates can vary widely. Her appearance was almost androgynous with a head of thick short hair. I learned that throughout our four interviews Michelle's appearance was occupying a good deal of her thoughts and actions as she approached adolescence.

My first formal interaction with Michelle involving my study was at her home, located in a rural town, on a wintery Saturday afternoon in February 2008. When I knocked on the front door of the two story country house, Michelle's mother greeted me expectantly and led me into the kitchen at the back of the house. Michelle joined us to hear about my study and ask any questions before starting our first interview. Michelle's dad was sitting in the room next to us but did not join us for our discussion. As we spoke, Michelle fell right in with the conversation and eagerly began to express her thoughts on "being almost a teenager" and how she was working hard to clearly be "seen as a girl" and make a good first impression at her new school.

I had known Michelle prior to my study, since she was a year ahead of my daughter who attended the same Montessori School with her for many years. Michelle's mother, Mrs. Kenworth, who was also a teacher at the school, had expressed curiosity about my research project. So, when I asked if Michelle might be interested to get involved in my pilot study she was keen to have her participate. Michelle had recently started to attend a new school where she was still adjusting to a different school environment and working hard to make new friends.

Michelle lived with her mother and father, and her brother, who was three years older than her. She expressed affection for both her father and brother who she said were always there to "cheer her up." Her mother, she said, was an "important person" in her life and Michelle gave me permission to interview her to get another perspective for my study. Before this year, Michelle had always gone to the Montessori School where her mother worked in a nearby town. Since that school stopped at eighth grade, and because her brother had switched schools a couple

years earlier, Michelle needed to change schools for her seventh grade year, to get a spot at the same charter school. This was a significant change for her and the transition presented unexpected trials for her during her first year at the Public Charter School. Michelle no longer benefited from having her mother in the same building and having an identity as Mrs. Kenworth's daughter. The transition was helped by the fact that Michelle's brother attended the same school and provided one point of familiarity in the foreign environment that she entered.

For our first interview, Michelle and I headed down to the basement in her house which had recently been finished into a family room with a large comfortable couch. She was eager to start talking, required little prompting, and was very articulate as we began the interview process. To each question, Michelle gave a lengthy and in depth response, and even paused before signaling that she was done, to be sure she had said everything she could on the topic. During that interview, I could sense her intuitiveness as she anticipated my next question and eagerly responded with speed, clarity and detail. As I pushed on from interview question to interview question, Michelle didn't hesitate to stop me and add newly discovered information from a prior question. Her assertiveness during the interview was a bit of a surprise to me; indicating a strong mental curiosity and skillfulness.

After the interview, I realized that Michelle was much more aware and self-reflective than I imagined she would be, easily keeping up with my string of untested questions. She had the advantage of being comfortable in her home and in possession of a sharp mind. I, on the other hand, was a bit thrown off by her command of the situation – not hesitating in her responses or needing clarification on any of my questions. Although intellectually astute and relaxed in her own home, I would soon learn Michelle was being challenged in her relationships with others, as well as, her relationship with herself. After finishing the first interview, Michelle

and I walked back upstairs to the kitchen and I spoke to Michelle's mom about arranging the next interview. As we struggled to find a date, Michelle jumped up on the arm of the living room couch and raised her arms in the shape of a "V" saying, "We can do it!" in a display of early adolescent exuberance. Mrs. Kenworth and I looked up and chuckled at the enthusiastic support and then turned back to finalize the next interview date.

Important Person: Mrs. Kenworth (mother)
Site Visit: Public Charter School (school tour by Michelle)

Courtney

The first student to participate in my formal study was Courtney, who was 12 years old and finishing up her seventh grade year at the Public Middle School. She had long dark brown hair, was of medium height and had an expressive face with big round eyes. Courtney described herself and said, "Everybody says I'm always smiling, happy, I rarely get mad. I think I'm hysterical." Courtney's outgoing qualities quickly became apparent as she talked about the out of school activities she engaged in such as theater and cheerleading on two separate squads. Later in our third interview, Courtney expounded, "I'm just naturally a loud talker" and said, "I will totally speak my mind." Indeed Courtney's highly verbal and social skills made her an effective communicator and often a leader in both her academic and out of school interests. However, as I would shortly learn, these same assets sometimes landed Courtney into trouble when she didn't expect it. She found herself sometimes going head to head with different teachers and said, "I almost like to argue." As I got to know Courtney over the course of several weeks, I came to understand that her biggest strength could also at times put her in direct opposition to both peer and adult interactions.

I initially met Courtney briefly with the help of Ms. Dalton, the Adjustment Counselor at her school, who assisted with identifying girls for my project. We first met in Ms. Dalton's office

and for ten minutes I talked about my project and Courtney listened. I considered this a "meet and greet", a preliminary process for cementing each girls involvement in my study – an opportunity to meet face to face and decide, if indeed, we each wanted to proceed. After a few minutes, Ms. Dalton asked if Courtney had any questions for me. When she spoke her voice was strong and forceful and she appeared unfazed by the presence of two adults in the room. When we finished, I asked Courtney if she was still interested to participate, which she was, and then we speedily exchanged contact information. I expected it to take a while to set up the first interview with Courtney but to my surprise the first interview was set for the following week.

I drove my car up the driveway to Courtney's house through a neighborhood that looked well-kept and the houses looked to be only ten to fifteen years old. It was nearly the end of the school year in late May 2008, when we met for our first interview. The day was warm and I knocked on the front door which was opened by Mrs. Charles, Courtney's mother. She invited me in and offered me some freshly made cookies which looked tempting but I worried that I would get distracted and declined to sample them. With Courtney joining us, we sat in the living room briefly to review my project and then quickly went upstairs to Courtney's bedroom where we conducted all four of the interviews. Courtney's bedroom was orderly and had a canopy bed with white furnishings and exposed wooden beams above. I saw pink colored accents in the room and soon learned that pink was Courtney's favorite color. Courtney was dressed in capris and a hoodie and was barefoot with red painted toe nails. She struck me as someone who cared about her outward appearance and didn't mind being a little showy.

As we began our first interview, I recalled being quite nervous and not at all at ease with showing up at a strangers house and initiating an interview. I remembered being more concerned about keeping track of time and getting through my prepared questions than with really being in

the moment. I talked more than I should have and Courtney gave short direct answers to my questions. Despite my awkward attempts, we still managed to move along with the interview and Courtney filled me in on her family life. She lived with her mother, father and older sister, a dog and two cats. She said her mom was "very organized" and "used to be the cheerleading coach." She said her dad "travels a lot" and about her sister she said, "We're similar and we're close." With not too much detail, I sensed that Courtney lived in an organized and loving home with her family.

As we talked, I observed that Courtney responded to my questions in a clear, forceful, and lively voice that was both cooperative and confident. I asked her to do a brief writing exercise, which all participants did, that would help me to get to know her better. The prompt that I gave her was "I am the girl who . . ." and directed her to write in a free style way for three minutes without thinking too hard. One of the responses Courtney wrote was, "When anyone is sad, I can cheer them up." In a later interview, she elaborated when talking about her friend group and said, "I'm the one that like brings enjoyment into their lives." Courtney saw herself as someone who could support others and was able to play this role well among her peers. As we finished up our first interview, I asked Courtney to think about important people in her life that she would like me to interview and some of her activities that I could come observe. She quickly responded and said I could visit her health club after school the very next day.

After the interview, I wondered if Courtney was telling me what she thought I wanted to hear or if I was seeing the authentic Courtney. I was conscious of being an adult who she might perceive as "testing" her and looking for "right" answers. It occurred to me that as both an actor and cheerleader this supportive role might come easily to Courtney and may or may not be part of her innate nature. Either way, Courtney's life was built around cheering people up whether

through entertaining people as a lead actor in her theater company or as an actual cheerleader on

her school squad. While Courtney gave a strong impression of happy control over her life, I

soon came to understand that her outspoken nature was also at times a point of struggle for her.

Important People: Mrs. Bancroft (Health Club teacher); Alana (Theater Program teacher)
Site Visits: Public Middle School (health club); Livingston high school (play rehearsal)

Olivia

I met Olivia towards the end of her seventh grade year when she was thirteen years old.

As the second participant in my study, she had long blond hair, was of medium height and had a

serene looking face with big knowing eyes. During our first interview Olivia said, "I know who I

am, and I am in charge of who I am." She also described herself as "cheerful and friendly," out

of a desire to be open to new relationships with her peers. As an early adolescent, Olivia was

working hard to keep up with the many changes in her life that seemed to be happening all at

once, and on all fronts, including family, school, friendships and after school activities. While

Olivia worked to keep herself in focus, the world around her seemed to represent a significant

challenge for her at this time. Not one to stay on the sidelines, Olivia began the difficult process

of finding and maintaining new friends upon who she could depend to help her through this

demanding period. Olivia was learning to pursue new relationships even though it wasn't easy.

She said of her efforts so far, "It's a fair bit of work." I soon learned that Olivia's resolute

personality was being tested while shouldering the difficulties of her parent's recent separation

and the many increasing responsibilities she felt at both school and home.

Olivia and I first met at Ms. Dalton's office for the ten minute "meet and greet," similar

to the one I did with Courtney just the previous week. Our meeting was short and sweet, as

Olivia listened to my description of my study and smiled back at me with nodding approval. She

filled out the contact form I had with the requisite e-mails of her parents so that I could arrange

our first interview. After contact with Olivia's mother, we set up our first session together to take place at her home. As I drove my car to their house along a winding road, I noticed that I was following along the shore of a lake. I soon found their house which was located down and off the side of the road and located right next to the water. As I approached the front door, I passed Olivia's older brother taking out the trash. I knocked on the door and Olivia's mother answered it and invited me to sit at a table on a porch that overlooked the lake, and where we gathered with Olivia to discuss the necessary research paperwork. Afterwards, Olivia offered to give me a tour of her house before settling into her bedroom for the interview.

Olivia's bedroom was compact and cozy and I sat in a chair next to her bed while she sat on top of her bed facing me. I found out that Olivia lived with her mother and her two brothers and learned that her parents were separated. Olivia told me that her dad was not currently living at home. I was not sure of the status of their relationship but learned later that her parents were in the process of getting back together after having been divorced. As we talked about her family, Olivia said that she "gets along pretty well" with both her mother and father but that they have a lot of disagreements and fights. Olivia said she wished she got along better with her older brother, who she had a bigger age gap with than her younger brother, who she did more activities with. Her grandparents on her father's side she said are "very very close" since they lived nearby when she was growing up. Her other grandparents lived further away but were important and who Olivia had "a lot of good times with." There are several pets that live with Olivia including two dogs and two lizards. Olivia also rode a horse named, Jake, who I learned more about later.

As I listen to Olivia answer my questions, she painted a world that she described in a matter of fact sort of way. I noticed she took her time responding and her voice was soft, steady and cautious as she spoke. I realized later that some of her words got lost on my digital recording

device due to her low level of output. As we sat face to face, I became aware that Olivia had an intense gaze on her face as we talked and that made me feel a bit uneasy, as if she didn't trust me. I felt a gentle sadness underneath her responses as we talked about all the difficult changes that had occurred recently in her life. Olivia told me about a particularly difficult decision she made to sell her horse, Jake, not too long ago. I got a lump in my throat as she conveyed this story to me and realized how very difficult this decision must have been for her. Olivia expressed the reality of how hard she was working at this time in her life when she said, "I'm keeping up but I'm trying to keep up more, and more and more." She also felt a bit like sometimes she was losing ground and noted, "I get so stressed that it slows me down." Olivia and I ended our first interview and focused on setting up the next meeting the following week.

After the interview, as I drove home I reflected on my time with Olivia and found myself focusing on her ability to endure what seemed like too many changes in her life all at once. Knowing that adolescence is all about change, I wasn't surprised that she was navigating lots of transitions, however, Olivia expressed concern about entering eighth grade the following year and said, "I'm not sure like what to expect, so it's kind of nerve-wracking." Despite her doubts, I soon learned that Olivia was unusually attuned to social dynamics, and through her own efforts, was working hard at keeping herself moving forward during a very challenging period in her life.

Important People: Ms. Dalton (Adjustment Counselor); Jackie (Riding teacher)
Site Visits: Livingston horse barn (tour by Olivia); Public Middle School (science fair practice)

Alissa

Alissa was the third study participant that I interviewed and was thirteen years old when we met in the fall of her eighth grade year. She had long dark hair, was of medium height with a thin build and a knowing face with eager eyes. During our first interview, Alissa described herself as being "sensitive and determined." Both of these words, I came to see, played out

clearly in Alissa's life. Her sensitivity was explained by her when she wrote the words "[I] experience sadness when others are feeling sad" during a writing prompt activity I asked her to do. Her determination was evident in her feeling of mastery in her school work and violin pursuits. She said, "I really love school. I love learning." Additionally, she spoke about violin, "[It's] really important. I love doing it." These two qualities were noticeable in her school work, home life, friendships and violin lessons. When Alissa said, "It's great to share the love of getting good grades [with friends]" she revealed her feeling of joy at doing her school work. Alissa's heightened sensitivity was at the heart of all her activities, making her especially attuned to her academics, violin and peers. As I got to know Alissa, through interviews and site visits, I came to see that this very same quality was also at the center of her biggest challenges which involved navigating relationships with friends, peers and family members.

I first met Alissa and her mother, Beth, together in a small meeting room next to the Adjustment Counselors office for a "meet and greet." We sat at a large rectangular table, as I described my study, and both immediately responded in an animated manner with interest to my topic. Simply hearing my reasons for doing the study provoked so much interest and apparent connection for both Alissa and her mom, that they both began talking excitedly about their own personal experiences. During the course of our conversation, both of them shed a few tears of what I interpreted as "happy excitement," as our discussion resonated with their own circumstances. Unlike my other "meet and greet" meetings with other girls, which were brief, our meeting lasted well over thirty minutes and we focused on my study rather than the cursory logistics involving consent forms and gathering contact information. With Alissa's mother present, we were able to set up the first interview easily and planned it for the very next week.

I arranged to meet Alissa at her home, as I did with the previous participants, and we conducted all four interviews there. It was October 2008, when I drove up to Alissa's two story blue painted house in a rural neighborhood on a curvy road. I walked up to the house and was greeted by Beth, Alissa's mother, at the door. Alissa joined us, and after a few minutes in the kitchen discussing and signing consent papers, it was decided that Alissa and I could do our interview in the basement of their house. I sensed that Alissa was eager to pull me away from her mom and keen to get started without any further waiting. We headed to the basement and began our first interview situated among what seemed to be Alissa's father's study space.

As we began, Alissa responded to my questions effusively in a fast, crisp and urgent tone of voice. She told me that she was a single child and lived with her mother and father, and as of recently her grandmother, that she calls "Me mere", was also living with them since she was recovering from an operation. Alissa said of her relationship with her parents, "Mom and dad are very important to me. They're like my friends, my best friends too, [be]cause I don't have any siblings." Alissa described her Me mere as being "very generous" and also "really stern." While Alissa's immediate family was small, she also talked a lot about her cousins on her mom's side of the family who she was close to and described as a bit "rough around the edges." She also spoke about her father's mom and dad who she said are "graceful" in what they said and how they acted. In addition, Alissa talked about a special relationship with a family that she said they share a "home church" with, and were almost like family.

As we talked in the basement of Alissa's home I found myself listening intently as Alissa talked about her life with insightfulness and a keen self-awareness. In the process, I noticed that her emotions adjusted easily from sometimes hysterical laughter to gentle weeping within a matter of moments. Her descriptions were detailed and revealed an emotional perspective on the

world that could be characterized by her frequent use of the word "love," which was peppered throughout her speech such as, "I love learning, I love to laugh, or I love the lord." When Alissa described herself she said, "I definitely have a heart for love." In addition to the words "sensitive and determined" mentioned before, Alissa also described other qualities she had, as "loving, silly, fun and [likes to] laugh." These additional qualities seemed to support her overall attitude towards a feeling oriented sense of self and pointed to the types of interactions she had with others. She said, "I really try to be friends with everyone" and "I need to be nice." The interview ended with a rich understanding of Alissa's world and we were both looking forward to our next meeting.

After the interview, I felt I had gained a great depth of insight into Alissa's life and felt appreciative of her astuteness and explanatory skills. Her thoroughness in explaining herself in colorful detail during the interview was striking to me, and the way that she seemed to have an understanding of herself and those around her, struck me as being more mature than her age. I soon learned that Alissa's life was not without struggle, and that her feeling orientation to the world might very well contribute to some of her current life challenges. Finishing up our first interview, Alissa and I turned to the subject of site visits, which she had already thought about and suggested that I come with her to her next violin practice the following week.

Important People: Kirsten (violin teacher); Beth (Alissa's mother)
Site Visits: Violin Lesson (at Kirsten's home); Violin Coaching (private home in Livingston)

McKenzie

McKenzie was the fourth participant to join my study, and was 14 years old and in the fall of her eighth grade year, when I met her. As the oldest participant, McKenzie had long bleach blond hair, a thin build, a confident smile and bright eyes. During our first interview McKenzie described herself as "strong-willed" and explained that "I don't give up easily." I soon

came to see that this quality had direct relevance in all areas of her life including school, sports, and home. She described herself as "the girl playing hard and competitive who's not afraid to get a little dirty." Her determination, I soon learned, was a key quality that she brought to many sports arenas including ice hockey, field hockey, lacrosse, and softball. When I asked her what it is like to be involved in all these sports she responded, "I'm competitive, I like being on the field. I feel like I am in charge of being able to do my best and sort of excel in everything that I do." While McKenzie's strong-willed nature may get honed on the playing field, the context that tested her most was a challenging home situation that I soon learn about over the course of our interviews.

I met McKenzie with the help of Ms. Dalton, the Adjustment Counselor, at the Public Middle School that she attended. In the same process previously mentioned, McKenzie and I met for a "meet and greet" that lasted about ten minutes. I talked about my study as she listened and filled out the necessary contact information for me. The most important aspect about these brief initial meetings was exchanging accurate communication information and for the girls to have an opportunity to meet me. McKenzie, in her succinct and matter of fact manner, came and went from this meeting with a "can do" attitude, and soon I was in contact with her mother and arranging our first interview at their home.

Driving to McKenzie's mother's house was a bit of an adventure – there was a long winding uphill driveway and it was a cold and windy November day in 2008. The house was not conventional but looked more like a mountain lodge with a natural wood exterior. When McKenzie's mother answered the door she was wearing a brightly colored spandex type hat. She introduced herself as Wendy, and welcomed me to their home, and then called for McKenzie to join us. The three of us sat in the main living room area, of the open space interior, and I was

offered a cup of tea, which I accepted. After our review of the necessary paperwork, McKenzie's

mother excused herself and McKenzie and I began our first interview.

I learned about McKenzie's family and the history of her parents' divorce several years

prior during our first meeting. McKenzie explained that she spent time between her parent's

homes, which are in different towns, and that she and her younger sister stayed alternating nights

in their dad's home and in their mom's home. She said that her dad was her "main guy for

hockey" and was actually a coach on her ice hockey team. Her mom, she said, was "strong-

willed and she knows what she wants." McKenzie had a younger sister who she was "really

close" with, and an older sister who was in college, that she saw infrequently. The impact of

McKenzie's parents' divorce was significant and the interviews were an opportunity for her to

express what she had learned from it. In sizing up her experience, she noted that, "nothing was

dramatic or difficult before [the divorce]."

As we sat in the spacious living room of her mother's home, McKenzie seemed

comfortable talking with me and sharing her experiences. There was a kitten in the house that

occasionally distracted our attention and we laughed at its humorous antics but then would try to

ignore it. I found that the interview went quickly as McKenzie answered my questions concisely

and clearly. She was self-assured and practiced about expressing her thoughts and feelings.

When she turned to talk about her parents' divorce, she couldn't help but shed a few tears, and

talked through them apologizing for her sudden response. Since we had extra time, I covered a

couple more questions that I would have reserved for our next meeting, before we ended our first

interview.

After the interview, I was struck by McKenzie's clarity of thought, and her own growing

compassion for herself and others through the crucible of "the divorce" experience. It was clear

to me that the intensity of the situation had left an imprint on her that was already shaping who she was and would become. I soon learned more about McKenzie in the coming interviews and how this strong-willed fourteen year old was making her way in the world. As we finished up, we worked out the details of follow up sessions and site observations. McKenzie took on contacting her teacher and coach, to smooth the way for my visitations, while her mom and I set up the second interview.

Important People: Wendy (mother); Jennifer (field hockey coach)
Site Visits: Arena in nearby town (ice hockey game); Public Middle School (pie making event)

Patricia

I met Patricia, who was thirteen years old, in the winter of her seventh grade year and was the fifth participant in my study. She had long dark hair, was of medium height and build and had a determined expression on her face. Patricia said her friends knew her as being "very athletic" and she played many sports including soccer, softball, basketball and lacrosse. When asked to describe herself she selected the words "outgoing, helpful, friendly, and caring." Patricia put these qualities to use in a variety of ways through her sport activities, school and home life. As one of the older students in her grade, Patricia felt a sense of responsibility towards her peers and found she frequently took charge in social situations, like organizing a party or diffusing a lunch table conflict. As a noticeable leader in her grade, Patricia explained that she "knows the right thing to do." While being assertive in social interactions comes easier for Patricia than her peers, she conveyed the burden she sometimes felt when she said, "Standing up is hard when you're the only one." I would soon learn through our interviews that while Patricia appeared collected on the outside, under the surface she was working hard to balance the demands of social responsibility, with the need to not jeopardize her approval among peers by acting too assertively.

Patricia and I first met in the Adjustment Counselors office, similar to the process with many of the other participants. Our "meet and greet" went smoothly and Patricia listened intently to what I had to say about my study, and then, filled out a contact information sheet which she did with a sort of adolescent professionalism. With the necessary information I needed to contact her parents to get consent, I found myself soon setting up our first interview. Unlike all my other participant interviews, Patricia asked if we could do them at school instead of at her house since she had after school basketball practice and had free time between the end of the school day and when practice began. This worked out well, so we decided to conduct all four interviews in this manner. There was a small empty room next to Ms. Dalton's office and it had a desk and two chairs that served our need for a private space to talk.

For the first interview, we met in the empty office, which at first felt a bit clinical but I found that the sparse work setting gave a more authoritative feel to our project, and this fact made us both take the task a bit more seriously. It was a cold winter day in January 2009, and the room had a single window which let in the mid-afternoon sunlight. During our talk, I found out that Patricia lived at home with her mother, father and younger brother who are all very close. She talked about her dad and said, "I look at him as a coach more than a dad." Patricia said her mom is "always there to talk to," and her relationship with her brother she described as "really close," and that people often mistake them for being twins. Her grandparents, who she calls "Nannie and Grammpy," also lived in an attached apartment to her house. Patricia's interest in sports was shared by her family, who she said was very sports oriented and noted that her friends call them "gym junkies" since they spent so much time at sports activities.

As we continued to talk, I could see that Patricia was intent on responding to my questions with thoughtfulness and her best effort, which I noticed and appreciated. Her responses

to my questions were given in a steady, sharp, and grounded voice indicating an inner foundation that was sturdy. She didn't seem phased by our difference in age, and I could detect her competitive spirit which I assumed she had acquired from her many sport activities, as we quickly tick through the questions I had for her. As we finished up, I asked Patricia to think about important people she wanted me to interview and which of her activities she wanted me to observe.

Reflecting on the interview, I was struck by Patricia's clear, direct, "go-getter" attitude towards life. Outwardly, she appeared particularly confident and I recalled her stating, "you can do whatever you put your mind to" as a personal philosophy that she followed. Speaking with her, I very much got the feeling that she could accomplish many things in her life, however, underneath that self-assured exterior, I came to learn that she was also exerting regular effort to balance her own assertive behavior with the sometimes different expectations of those around her.

Important People: Gloria (mother); Patrick (father and basketball coach)
Site Visits: Public Middle School (girl basketball game); Livingston town league basketball practice (public elementary school)

Lucy

As my last study participant, Lucy was thirteen years old when I met her in the winter of her seventh grade year. I recognized her at our first interview as a student at my daughter's dance school in a nearby town but we had not formally met. She had long dirty blond hair, was tall with a thin build, and had light skin that flushed sometimes when she spoke. Lucy described herself in our first interview as being "athletic, funny, and smart." Lucy seemed to live a "life of action" as she participated in many sports activities including lacrosse, field hockey, basketball, softball and Irish Step dancing. She said she was "competitive" and was a hardworking and selfless

teammate who had learned to think like a "warrior" in her competitive pursuits. Yet, as I soon came to see, Lucy had another side to her that was both gentle and generous in spirit. She described herself as funny and would clown around with her peers to break the ice or keep up the mood during a game. It was this "other" oriented quality, I found, that lay at the center of what was Lucy's most urgent growing edge as an adolescent, and which I came to understand better during our remaining three interviews together.

Lucy and I met at Ms. Dalton's office to discuss my study and to gather contact information. After the brief explanation of my study, to which Lucy listened attentively with a slight smile on her face, she filled out the contact form and was off. I contacted Lucy's mother and within a week I had arranged to meet Lucy at her home on a wintery Thursday evening. Since it was night time, I couldn't make out the surroundings very well but was guided by a light on the porch of Lucy's house and I knew I was at the right location. The house was two stories and looked white after dark but it could easily have been another color. After parking near the house, I walked up on the porch and rang the bell. Lucy's mother, Sheila, answered the door and invited me into the well-lit kitchen area. Lucy came shortly after and we talked briefly, and then, Lucy and I went into the living room to conduct our first interview.

Since there was no door we could close for privacy, I sensed that Lucy felt a bit self-conscious since it was evening and other members of Lucy's family were home who could possibly overhear our talking. We launched into the interview but I could immediately detect some resistance to answering my questions and found that Lucy gave short factual responses. I soon found out that Lucy lived with her mother, father and three older brothers. Lucy described her parents as both liking sports and her mom as "just easy to be around" and her dad was someone she "gets along with." Lucy went on to talk about her three older brothers who she said

"I get frustrated with all my brothers, but that's just them." Lucy had a very large extended family due to having eight siblings on her mother's side and four siblings on her father's side. She expressed closeness with her twenty one cousins on her mother's side, which she seemed to spend a lot of time with. In addition, her brother had a cat and her family had a very large dog named Buster.

As Lucy spoke, her voice was soft, calm, tentative and sometimes interrupted by nervous laughter. I pumped Lucy with questions to try and draw out more detail than she initially volunteered in hopes of getting a better picture of her life. As we talked, I heared about Lucy's very full life which was filled with seemingly nonstop activities – sports, dance, school, church and family – which all sounded amazing and impressive but I found myself thinking it was also a very heavy load. Soon Lucy talked about "being stressed out because of all the stuff going on [in her life]" and I heard about how she coped by telling herself, "You can do it. You'll get it done. Don't worry about it." After a while we both started getting tired since it was a school night, and I decided to conclude our session early. I suggested setting up our next interview in the room next to Ms. Dalton's office since Lucy was on the basketball team too, and she agreed since she had extra time after school before practice.

After the interview, I wondered about the stress that Lucy expressed and if it was a normal amount for a teenager to be under. I began to sense that Lucy was carrying a bigger load than perhaps she should, and speculated that her ability to take care of her own needs may lag behind other more obvious qualities she had such as being a competent athlete, intelligent student and supportive friend and teammate. As our interviews continued, I soon learned that while Lucy exceled on the sports field and in the classroom, her greatest challenge might be in recognizing her own needs over the needs of others.

Important People: Ruth (mother); Jennifer (field hockey coach)
Site Visits: Public Middle School (girls' basketball game); Livingston town league basketball practice (public elementary school)

Conclusion

The participant profiles of the seven adolescent girls in this study provide a detailed glimpse into the "real" lives of the girls whose everyday experiences are under investigation. The individual experiences of these girls tell one type of "story," however, when taken together these girls combined experiences tell another kind of "story." Analyzing the individual and the collective accounts of these girls' lives is the main task of this investigation and yields important learnings to be absorbed. With these images and understandings the following four chapters, which represent the core findings of this investigation, will further reveal the specific and various ways that these girls' social actions are shaped by gender expectations. Specifically, the next chapter will delve into how agency is constructed for girls in this study, while the three chapters following, will illuminate the most prominent social actions observed in the course of data collection and analysis.

Table 1: **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION & METHODS OVERVIEW**

Participants (pseudonyms)	**Family**	**Interviews and Locations**	**Site Observations & Locations**	**Adults Interviewed**
Michelle 7th Grade 12 years old	Parents Married 1 girl 1boy	4 interviews 3 at home 1 at school 4 writing pieces Winter, 2008	Public Charter School - tour	Mrs. Kenworth (mother)
Courtney 7th Grade 12 years old	Parents Married 2 girls	4 interviews 4 at home 4 writing pieces Spring, 2008	Public Middle School - health club Livingston high school - play rehearsal	Ms. Bancroft (health teacher) Alana (theater teacher)
Olivia 7th Grade 13 years old	Parents Separated 1 girl 2 boys	4 interviews 4 at home 4 writing pieces Spring, 2008	Public Middle School - science fair practice Livingston horse stable – barn tour	Ms. Dalton (adjustment counselor) Jackie (riding instructor)
Alissa 8th Grade 13 years old	Parents Married 1 girl	4 interviews 4 at home 4 writing pieces Fall, 2008	Violin instructors home in nearby town – violin lesson Private home in Livingston – violin practice coaching	Beth (mother) Kirsten (violin teacher)
McKenzie 8th Grade 14 years old	Parents Divorced 3 girls 1 step sister	4 interviews 4 at home 4 writing pieces Fall, 2008	Ice hockey arena in nearby town - ice hockey game Public Middle School - pie making event	Jennifer (coach) Wendy (mother)
Patricia 7th Grade 13 years old	Parents Married 1 girl 1boy	4 interviews 3 at school 1 at home 4 writing pieces Winter, 2009	Livingston elementary school – town league basketball practice Public Middle School - student council	Gloria (mother) Patrick (father)
Lucy 7th Grade 13 years old	Parents Married 1 girl 3 boys	4 interviews 1 at home 3 at school 4 writing pieces Winter, 2009	Public Middle School – girls basketball game Livingston Elementary School – town league basketball practice	Ruth (mother) Jennifer (coach)

PART III

ADOLESCENT GIRLS' AGENCY AND SOCIAL ACTIONS REVEALED

CHAPTER 5

THE AGENTIC GIRL

"I argue for my points, not in the best ways, but I try to show that sometimes my opinions are right."

Olivia (2, p.17)

Charting and unraveling the social actions of the adolescent girls, who are the focus of this study, represents the major findings of this investigation. Steering this inquiry with sensitizing concepts and sharp analytic tools led to the emergence of robust theoretical categories depicting these girls' "agentic pathways" and most evident social actions (See Figure 1). Engaging four separate readings of the research data revealed novel perspectives from which to piece together a range of differing social actions and pathways for enacting them. This chapter introduces the concept of "the agentic girl" and how I expand the notion of agency to better fit the lives of the girls in this investigation. Additionally, I will describe the three most frequent "pathways" that these girls' social actions followed which can be understood as "avenues of expression" and include: speaking up, engaging opportunities, and working hard.

The concept of agency is linked to a person's ability "to act" and is fundamental to this investigation due to an emphasis on the observed social actions of adolescent girls. As a defining framework for exploring girls' social actions, a clear understanding of what is meant by agency and how it relates to the particular lives of girls in this study is vital. Since historic concepts of agency have often been attributed to masculine modes of behavior, such as independence and assertiveness, it is necessary to be explicit about how the relationship between agency and girls' social actions is being constructed for this study, and builds upon the core theories of agency

**Figure 1: Mapping the Social Actions
of Adolescent Girls**

Expanding Opportunities	Multiple Contexts	Major Influences
Endeavors/Roles/Locations	Home/School/Sport	Macro/Micro

The Agentic Girl
What is agency?

"Agentic Pathways"

Speaking Up   Engaging Opportunities   Working Hard

Social Actions

"Oppression"		"Opportunity"
"Social"	*Balancing*	"Self"
"Attachment"	*Opposing*	"Autonomous"
"Expectations"	*Tensions*	"Possibilities"

Conforming Actions	Concurring Actions	Transforming Actions
"Social Follower"	*"Shadow Actor"*	*"Identity Explorer"*
What is expected? *What is valued?*	*What is denied?* *What is devalued?*	*What is necessary?* *What is possible?*
Doing Right Social Smoothing Working Friendships	Enduring Stress Resisting Support Conceding Actions Rejecting Actions	Building Capacities Shifting Behaviors Evolving Singularity

Strategic Gendering
What is negotiated?

Caring Aggression   Managing Appearances   Aspiring Together

HOW ADOLESCENT GIRLS SOCIAL ACTIONS ARE SHAPED BY GENDER EXPECTATIONS

(Dewey, 1922; Raby, 2002) and autonomy (Miller, 1976; Deci & Ryan, 1987; Debold, Tolman & Brown, 1996) previously discussed in Chapter 2.

The construct of "the agentic girl" as a social actor is a deliberate attempt to broaden images of girls' behaviors and question previous generalizations of girls' actions as predominantly characterized by the feminine qualities of care and passivity. In this particular study, the agentic girl recognizes each girl's innate capacity to initiate her own actions and choices whether they are viewed as active or passive. The agentic girl acknowledges the active force that endures within each girl in this study and is the spark of each girl's undertakings. While this force can be thought of as the engine that powers these girls' endeavors, it does not necessarily distinguish between overt actions and silent concessions, or even positive and negative acts. Rather, it includes all of girls' competencies and inabilities alike and widens previous simplistic characterizations of girls' behavior. This agentic quality, or ability to act, provides the energy and the impetus to initiate girls' needs and desires on a moment to moment basis and propels the everyday social actions of girls in this study to find a route of expression. The choice to speak or not to speak, and the choice to act or not to act, are all part of the agentic girl's range of strategic means to achieve her goals. With these parameters as a backdrop, the behaviors of girls in this study can be more clearly comprehended.

This chapter frames the actions of the study participants from the perspective of the agentic girl, and further illustrates the most visible means, or agentic pathways, by which these girls' social actions were expressed and enacted during this research investigation. The contents in this chapter start by illustrating the most prominent actions associated with girl's primary agentic pathways, as observed in this study, and detail the methods of these actions. This chapter will further serve to create a foundation for the next three chapters, which will attend to the more

content oriented social actions of girls in this study, and which are carried by these agentic pathways.

Agentic Pathways

Data collection from interviews with girls and adults, as well as, researcher site visits exhibited a commonality of specific ways in which girls' social actions were predominantly conveyed. These ways were evident in girls' behaviors and are captured by three distinct methods of action that can be understood as *enactments* of girls' behaviors. They are focused on techniques of action, rather than on the substance of action, and can be thought of as "how a girl acts" rather than "what a girl acts." More specifically, it focuses on the approaches girls use to act, such as speaking up, rather than focusing on what a girl is speaking up about, such as talking about the results of her latest exam with a friend. The girls involved in this study engaged in these shared "means" of social action despite each one having different opportunities and experiences particular to their lives. Through keen observation, girls' social actions were noticed to move on these various agentic pathways which carried girls' priorities and preferences and were detected in girls' activities and words. The most visible agentic pathways of the adolescent girls in this study include the categories of: 1) engaging opportunities 2) speaking up and 3) working hard. Each of these pathways represent differing ways for carrying out girls' needs and desires, as well as, serving different purposes.

Pathway #1: Engaging Opportunities

"Engaging opportunities" is one way that study participants responded to the expanding possibilities that were presented to them during their transition into adolescence. These girls found themselves reacting to new and rapidly increasing expectations, while at the same time, stepping up to new freedoms and responsibilities. These occasions provided openings for girls'

abilities to emerge and for them to take on novel roles as growing young adults. Girls talked

about increasing expectations at school, new responsibilities at home, and expanding time away

from adult supervision. All of these occasions provided a dynamic landscape to each girl's

adolescent experience and a rich arena for their developing sense of self and emerging capacities.

Michelle talked about her move to a new middle school and how she was no longer in the

shadow of her mother who was a teacher at her former school.

> Michelle: Like when I came to this school for the first time I didn't have my mom
> there, which was really weird.
> Joann: Like not having your mom there, how does that translate into sort of feeling
> powerful and independent?
> Michelle: I can be more free here because I was always trying to be a goody-goody
> at the Montessori School so I wouldn't get in trouble. Because if I got in trouble at
> school, I would get in ten times more trouble because my mom was there. So, this
> time, I'm more – it's like I'm more relaxed, more loose. I don't have to watch what I
> say. I mean I do have to watch what I say but not as much.
> (2, p.3)

For girls in this study, adolescence is a time of increasing separate action – doing things

for oneself and by oneself, more frequently. This pushing out into the world as a person, separate

from parents and other adults, takes courage and determination - the courage to risk new

experiences and the determination to persist through what can feel like unknown territory. These

girls increasingly found themselves acting as supportive friends, peer problem solvers, decision

makers, social organizers, peer leaders, self-advocates, and family helpers. These transitions are

subtle and mostly go unnoticed and unacknowledged but represent learned and emerging social

skills required for girls' entrance into adulthood. Various social environments played a key role

in providing the stage upon which these girls' emerging abilities and roles were being shaped

and built, such as home, school, and outside of school activities. Opportunities could be found on

the sports field, taking on a new role as an actor in a play, or in a difficult interaction with a peer

that had to be resolved. Like performing a one person show, girls in this study were adapting

their various aptitudes to constantly shifting situations. Each day these girls found themselves being the academic at school, the supportive friend in the hallway, the team captain in sports or the daughter at home, and all the while, engaging in a myriad of social interactions and settings.

Seizing Chances

As a seventh grader, Patricia played four different sports and participated on six different athletic teams during the school year, some of which were school affiliated and some were town sponsored teams. During my first interview with Patricia, she explained, "Sports is like pretty much like a main part of my life. Like all my friends know that I'm very athletic and I hang around with a lot of people that do sports." Even though Patricia plays sports intensely, she doesn't think of herself as just an athlete, and engages in other school activities as well. She said, "Me and my friend are both really involved in sports, but like to do other stuff, too." Patricia talked about her involvement in student council and the winter school play, the Wizard of Oz. In addition, she applied herself to her academics with the same vigor that she did with sports. She stated, "My grades are important to me, so I try hard to do good [sic]. Some of my friends, they don't study as much as I do. But that's just one of the things that's important to me, is doing good and trying in school." Patricia's energy and effort can be heard in her words, especially when she compares herself to others, and highlights the value she places on achievement. It was also apparent from Patricia's experience that she was not only "seizing chances" in one area such as sports, which might be expected from someone who is such a dedicated athlete, but she was also actively engaged in a substantive array of activities which included sports, academics and other activities.

After learning about the level of intense involvement that Patricia engaged in, it might be assumed that she was an exception, but I found that most of the girls in this study had similar

patterns of involvement that represented a host of possibilities. In fact, these girls seemed to have a plethora of opportunities from which to choose representing school, town and privately based activity options. Some different types of activities that these girls pursued included a range of examples. For Alissa, being a "practice coach" for a seven year old budding violin player, Morgan, was a way to move into a responsible teaching role for which she got paid. At thirteen years old, Alissa's mother drove her to the younger girl's home and waited for Alissa to conduct the session. Alissa coached once a week for thirty minutes with Morgan and took charge of the situation. Giving gentle but firm direction, and keeping a tight focus on her pupil, she used all the tricks she had learned from her own violin experience.

In another situation, Olivia found herself with an opportunity to go to the state level science fair. She, and her two female co-presenters, developed a winning science project on the "sounds of crickets" and were invited to replicate their presentation at the state competition in the spring of her seventh grade year. Olivia and her peers attended extra practice sessions and made plans for traveling to the state event together with their teacher, Mrs. Stanton. In another, out of school example, Courtney took a trip to New York City with her theater program teacher and a group of other students. They caught a play and visited other sights as an opportunity for raising their aspirations and fueling their interest in drama, singing and dance. In these instances, girls found engaging opportunities that stretched their abilities, and were buoyed by the behind the scene resources of organizations, as well as, teacher and parental support which made the experiences possible.

Stepping Up

Each girl in my study talked about the new expectations that she faced as a growing adolescent; mainly with a sense of anticipation and readiness for the challenges ahead. In

general, these girls expressed a positive attitude towards what they sensed would be a sustained climb towards becoming an adult. When I asked how things were different in seventh grade than from sixth grade, Alissa talked about how expectations and the pace of work had increased. She reflected on each of her classes and said, "English is definitely stepping it up" and as she continued to think she noted, "Each year [that] you get older you are able to absorb more and not have to keep being told." When McKenzie talked about her ice hockey experience and what it meant to her, she saw it as an ongoing process of learning. She explained that she was "trying to get to the next step; [developing] those new skills." When she spoke similarly about her academic goals, she said she was "building up to more complex and higher stuff." Likewise, Courtney described how she was expected to accomplish her academic work, now that she was in seventh grade. She stated that the "teachers expect a lot from you, like they'll give you an assignment, and they'll give you two days to do it instead of two weeks to do it and they expect everything done better and faster and higher quality." These girls' experiences show how they responded to new opportunities and how they focused their personal goals to align with increasing academic and athletic expectations during the middle school years.

In a different way, Alissa found that she was also "stepping up" to take on increasing roles and responsibilities in the academic environment.

> I kind of steer myself to be the leader most of the time and when, you know, a leader is given, I try not to override them sometimes. But with me, because I'm kind of a perfectionist, especially in school, if they're not—if they're struggling with something, I will step in. And if—you know, it's my obligation whenever I'm in a group project to kind of lead them. (4, p.1)

Correspondingly, Olivia expressed a similar desire to put herself forward as she talked about her participation in a collaborative problem solving program called Destination Imagination.

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Olivia: I want control, which I am not a control freak, but I like to lead stuff like I said before, like in Destination Imagination I lead discussions and would write down ways that we can figure things out and plans and . . .
Joann: So, you like to be in charge.
Olivia: [I]t's hard for me to kind of sit on the sidelines, I like to be out there, and I guess you could say "playing the game", rather than being like the water girl or something. I like to be the coach. (2, p.16)

For Alissa and Olivia, stepping up provides an opportunity not only to contribute to group work but to assert their need to apply their knowledge and skills as mediators of social processes. The desire to throw themselves into the messy activity of group work was viewed eagerly and as a test of their abilities by both girls. For some girls in this study, just keeping up with the rapid pace of change during early adolescence was enough but McKenzie understood this process in a different way when she reflected, "It's like you've really got to understand that this is, you're getting ready for what you're going to be doing like when you grow up. It's now; this is building up to more complex and like higher stuff. So, it's all really, just like learning." McKenzie's insight about how responding to new day to day expectations related to her rapidly expanding life was not an awareness shared by all girls in this study but reveals her perspective on how the daily challenges she tackled related to her emerging life.

Making Choices

Another aspect of engaging opportunities for girls in this study was how they took up responsibility for "making choices" around their own relationships and activities. As previously chosen after school activities intensified and demanded more time, some girls found that they couldn't go deeper with one undertaking while still keeping up with all the other activities on their plate. This pressure was often felt by these girls who found it hard to keep up with new demands on their time or the rising resources required such as money or parent time for driving them around to their events. Decisions seemed to come when there was a buildup of external

pressure that forced a choice, such as finances or a deadline, when the current situation could no longer be sustained and a decision had to be made.

Olivia found herself feeling this kind of pressure as new activities in middle school became available to her and her feelings about her old activities began to shift. A key activity for Olivia had been riding her much loved horse, Jake, and taking weekly lessons at a stable in town. This had been a major life focus for her since she was seven years old; however, as Olivia found other interests in middle school, she became more ambivalent about her riding, and wanted to pursue other opportunities besides spending time with her horse every day. An additional pressure Olivia had to deal with was when her parents separated during middle school and she sensed the financial burden that her horse added to the increasing stress in her family. Taking into consideration her feelings and family pressures, Olivia decided in discussion with her parents that she would make the difficult decision to sell her horse. Despite this hard choice, Olivia did not give up riding entirely but was able to cut back on her responsibilities for owning a horse, and instead decided to take a weekly riding lesson when she could, which allowed her more time for other activities.

Alissa, who was a ballet dancer and violinist, had to make a decision between these two pursuits during her seventh grade year. She told me, "I was getting to the point in ballet where it was stepping up and it demanded me to have, five days a week. But violin, it was also at that same point where also I needed way more time to do more, violin really takes everything that you have, like every day, orchestra, and lessons, and classes." Alissa ultimately decided not to pursue ballet, and explained her thinking and why she decided against it and chose violin instead.

> Well, I didn't really like ballet. Like I liked it - I loved it. But ballet was getting, like you need to like ballet to keep going, because it's really like grueling, you hurt! And I was getting injuries from just dancing, and my ankles [were] hurting, my knees [were hurting] and none of the girls that I was dancing with did anything else. You

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know? That was their life. And so, I was kind of like on the sidelines, and I don't think I really was that good. . . . I don't think I was. (Laughs) So . . . that helped me not to be so torn about it . . . but it's always like . . . that feeling when you're like quitting. And I wasn't really quitting . . . because I just didn't want to do it . . . I had to choose between doing that and the other thing. . . . I put a lot . . . more time in violin than ballet . . . . So it was a pretty easy decision. But I had to think about [it], and my mom was like, "you decide" and so, and the money was getting a lot more, violin and ballet. (3, p.7)

Alissa's words illustrate how she was expected to begin taking responsibility for deciding about her activities and all the thinking that went into her decision. She looked at both the short term and the long term consequences for her decision – her hurting body, her level of skill in each activity, and which one held more lasting prospects for continuation. Ultimately, Alissa's choice was about deepening her commitment to one pursuit, which she and her parents hoped would offer her opportunities for growth, and possibly build to something more in the future. But even after the decision was made, Alissa found that her choice also excluded other possible activities with her friends, which most likely, was an unexpected consequence of her deepening commitment to violin. She talked about how she had to decline activities with her friends because of her choice to do violin in such an intensive way. Alissa would tell them, "No, I have violin lessons. No, I have to practice violin." Making such a strong pledge to violin came with a touch of disappointment, and in a way, she had to choose violin over and over again every time she had to decline social invitations. She expressed those feelings recalling how "Courtney really wanted me to be in the play with them [friend group], and that really makes me feel good, because they wanted me to be with them. You know? So that makes me feel better." However, Alissa also regretfully noted that "It's so hard to have them have their time and I'm practicing the violin or doing something else." Alissa's words reveal what a difficult process decision making can be even after a choice has been made.

For Olivia and Alissa, making choices represented a new set of responsibilities in their lives and came with seemingly complex variables that they had to consider and navigate. In each case, those factors went beyond their own personal desires and included the consideration of others affected, financial resources and potential future beneficial gains. In many ways, their choices had more to do with these growing constraints and changing expectations rather than not caring to continue participation in their previously chosen activities.

The distinction between seizing chances, stepping up, and making choices seems to represent evolving ways for girls in this study to take action in their lives. While seizing chances represents a girl's choice to engage more fully in life, stepping up takes into account girls' commitment to take on the work of new levels of activities. In contrast, making choices seems to function to manage and balance the new activities which they had chosen. In this way, making choices may be a harder skill to develop as it requires acknowledging one's own needs, and then acting upon those needs, and in most cases, speaking up about those needs. This act may seem simple but there are many subtle prerequisites that are required to implement making choices like clear understanding, gathering information, and being able to self-advocate and communicate with other's who are either peers or adults. Whereas, stepping up requires no outside negotiation but rather an internal commitment with oneself to work harder. In addition, seizing chances simply takes the ability to say "yes" to an opportunity that comes along.

Each of these three social actions required different levels of ability to perform and each of these levels were demonstrated by girls in this study to varying degrees. It might also be concluded that each of these social actions fall along a continuum of development moving from seizing chances to stepping up to making choices with each one representing a harder or more complex set of social skills. Since each girl's growing capacities differ with each respective

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pathway the range and readiness for each girl to enact them represents degrees of variation in each girl's developmental journey.

Pathway #2: Speaking Up

"Speaking up" provides another pathway for girls' social actions and signals when a girl in this study was able to verbally express herself in various settings, with different people, and effectively communicate her needs or desires. The American author and social worker, Virginia Satir, said that "once a human being has arrived on this earth, communication is the largest single factor in determining what happens to him [or her] in the world." Thus, speech can be a critical tool for girls to set boundaries, state personal opinions, negotiate relationships, communicate a decision, intervene on someone's behalf, and assert their individual needs and plans. Especially, during the middle school years, when parental roles began to shift, speech becomes an increasingly important tool for these girls to direct their personal priorities and goals.

For girls in this study, speaking up is not the same as talking, and as one adult study participant, Jennifer, pointed out "some girls just like to hear themselves talk." In this case, speaking up was not about personal acknowledgement or giving a lesson on a topic which might happen to be about one's interests; it was more purposeful and served to fulfill an urgent need or desire. When Patricia spoke up to ask for help from her math teacher or Olivia discussed selling her horse with her parents, these were intentional conversations with an end goal or outcome in mind. In both cases, there was a need or unresolved issue that was pressing and served to motivate each girl to speak up.

At school, Olivia consciously worked to make herself heard by others and had support from the school Adjustment Counselor, Ms. Dalton, to develop her speaking skills. She was motivated to improve her verbal skills for several reasons including experiencing friendship

difficulties and managing life at home, in light of her parents' recent divorce. With these aims in mind, Olivia deliberately pursued her communication efforts and took the risk to be heard. She responded to a question I asked her about friendship and explained her verbal objectives.

> I said that I argue for my points, not in the best ways, but I try to show that sometimes my opinions are right but they can also be wrong. Like in friendships, if I ask them not to do something and they said that they don't think that that's right for them . . . I like to prove my point and explain my point . . . and Ms. Dalton notices it like in the [support] groups. I always bring something up; like that I want to talk about rather than just kind of hang in the shadows and not speaking my mind. (2, p.17)

For girls like Olivia, speaking was a necessary tool for getting everyday needs met and with a basic level of competence became a powerful skill set to achieve personal goals both large and small. Speech functions not only to express needs but can play a vital role in resolving sticky dilemmas that these girls faced increasingly on their own during early adolescence. Without developing effective speaking skills, these girls might find themselves disadvantaged by their own silence as they get older.

Expressing Needs

One motive for girls in this study to speak up has to do with getting personal wants and needs met. These range from basic needs such as voicing a preference for a certain kind of food to more complex needs such as voicing an opinion about going to see a particular movie with friends. With skillful verbal communication, girls in this study felt confident about setting and achieving goals, solving their own problems, maintaining friendships, and communicating their own viewpoints. For Courtney, speaking up came easily and she was not afraid to state what she wanted and expressed her opinion without hesitation. She boldly argued with her math teacher over the differing results of a math problem or cast the only dissimilar vote in health club when voting for the groups t-shirt color for an upcoming school fundraising event. In contrast, for Lucy, speaking took more effort and she expressed herself most effectively at home rather than

at school or in social settings. She yelled back at her three older brothers when they teased her and told them, "I don't like that – enough!" Even this kind of determined communication by Lucy was not always effective and similar efforts usually meant that she simply had to endure her brother's unwelcome taunts. In McKenzie's case, she got a lot better at speaking up after her parents' divorce, when she needed to learn how to navigate the complicated demands of two separate homes. When McKenzie's mother asked her to help communicate a problem she had with her ex-husband McKenzie quickly uttered, "Nope, that's your issue." McKenzie also learned that expressing her emotions was really important and helpful when going through such a difficult time. She learned that it's better to tell people how what they say makes her feel rather than "keeping it down."

In these three instances, the girls' abilities varied greatly and could be described as confident, tentative and emerging, respectively, in their speaking capacities. As these examples show, girls' speaking abilities vary across different girls' experiences and represent a dynamic phase of verbal development. These distinctions suggest that some girls utilize "speaking up" more effectively as a way to convey their social actions, while other girls may rely more on alternative agentic pathways.

Resolving Dilemmas

Another noticeable way that study participants found themselves speaking up was to solve problems and to step in to deal with peer conflicts. Frequently, girls in this study found themselves in the role of problem solver, peacemaker, or negotiator which required the capacity to speak up and take action, and entailed verbal abilities to interface with others and reach past their own needs. As a field hockey team co-captain, McKenzie was used to speaking up with her peers and taking responsibility for the group. One day when a team player didn't show up at the

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meeting location for walking over to the neighboring school for practice, she took the initiative to make a phone call and to inquire about the girl's whereabouts. This kind of speaking up involving others, goes beyond the self and extends girls' use of speech as a dynamic means of social interaction, and builds upon their personal communication capacities.

For Patricia, intervening on someone's behalf at the school lunch table was a common social action for her. In one situation, a girl at her table made an uninformed and inaccurate comment about current politics and was then teased by her peers. Patricia was quick to speak up to the mocking students and said, "Hey, guys' maybe she just doesn't know what it means," and in so doing was able to diffuse the awkward situation and effectively put down the critical words directed towards the uninformed girl. The ability to think quickly before speaking, however, is critical for the adolescent environment where the smallest error can have huge impacts. Patricia's confidence and previous experience as a social negotiator allowed her to influence her peers and not be pulled down as an additional object of peer ridicule. Her seemingly simple act of speaking up entailed a myriad of subtle awareness and judgement such as paying attention to her level of voice, emotional delivery, social audience, her effective articulation of ideas, the ease or difficulty of message delivery, and gaining the audience's attention. Patricia's effective response illustrates a deeper level of skillfulness than most girls in this study could readily handle and revealed her personal effectiveness as a social mediator.

When Courtney saw an act of vandalism in the girls' bathroom at school she felt compelled to tell a teacher and spoke up about what she witnessed. Despite backlash from the girls who did the vandalism, Courtney held her ground and stated how she defended her actions by telling the girls "Don't do the crime, if you can't pay the fine." Speaking up to address social problems that don't directly involve someone, like Courtney did, are quite different than

speaking up to meet one's own needs, and may represent a more high stakes interaction involving personal risk and possible consequences for those actions. In Courtney's situation, while she might have been "right" to tell a teacher about the bathroom vandalism, she also became the target of the accused girls' anger, and was publicly called out by those girls. While girls in this investigation bring a range of proficiency to speaking up, for all of them speaking up was an act of courage, as they tested their evolving verbal capacities.

The difference between expressing needs and resolving dilemmas appears to be found in the contrast of being able to act on one's own behalf and the ability to act in a more interactional way. The capacity to speak for one's self appears to be a first step on the road to verbal competency, while the ability to speak up to resolve social dilemmas appears to require another level of skillfulness. For girls in this study, speaking up to solve day to day problems increases a girls range of ability in social interactions, and reaches beyond her own needs and allows her to act as a social mediator that can effect change in her social environment. While speaking up to meet one's own needs appears foundational to girls development, if this ability is restricted or does not evolve, a girl might find that one of her agentic pathways is of limited value and she may become an astute social observer rather than a skillful social actor. Speaking up, whether for oneself or in service of others, represents a vital pathway for meeting individual needs and social interaction as girls move into adolescence.

Pathway #3: Working Hard

The third agentic pathway identified in this study is "working hard," which spotlights the increasing level of effort each girl in this study expends in her daily life, in order to respond to changing expectations as she grows. When these girls talked about their lives they spoke about the rising effort they put out as "trying hard, doing more and working harder," in comparison to

what they experienced just a few years earlier. Their words seemed to reflect the novel

circumstances they found themselves confronting and the unexpected volume of energy that was

required. This exertion was observed across all areas including school, home, sports and

friendships. Olivia found that her school work was more difficult than it had been when she was

younger and she had to "work hard to keep up" with her middle school assignments. She also

found that the ease of friendships in the past had disappeared and now she had to start "working"

on her friendships.

In this case, the word *working* appears to mean laboring or toiling – the kind of

expenditure of energy that is necessary to accomplish a task. Girls' increasing effort during

middle school became clear as they spoke about missing their past lives of seemingly carefree

existence. Some girls' words took on a more serious tone as they spoke about the exertion they

experienced and how they were buckling down for what they sensed would be more work ahead.

As a budding violinist, Alissa had little extra time for socializing outside of her school and violin

practices. She felt like she had to "keep working harder" and never got a break. It seemed that

she had suddenly moved from the world of childhood play into the world of adult work, a sort of

unpleasant awakening of what was to come.

The second word *hard* has to do with the intensity of these girls' efforts and describes the

rigor and continuous nature of expended energies girls were experiencing during middle school.

For Patricia, this type of hard, the never letting up kind, sometimes left her "feeling stressed"

and what she called "getting crazy" – a kind of momentary melt down seemingly caused from

being pushed steadily in new ways and without sufficient time to recover from the ongoing

stream of effort that was now required of her. For some girls, this new reality caused them to

pine for their old lives - a kind of "Peter Pan effect" of not wanting to grow up and escape their new and growing responsibilities.

Increasing Demands

"Increasing demands" is one element of working hard and means that as girls in this inquiry were getting older they encountered new and mounting claims on their expanding abilities. For these girls, the nature of new obligations was expressed as "higher expectations, school is harder, ridged expectations" and reflected the many new and often implied responsibilities they encountered such as home chores or supervising siblings. However, these girls' entrance into adolescence brings with it an intensity of changes that pale in comparison to what they had experienced previously. During the middle school years, there appears to be an accumulative rise in both expectations across all social settings and a correlating rise in requisite effort. This kind of *doubling down* on girls may be reflective of the dynamic stage of adolescent development, but there may also be other elements at work in these girls' lives, such as seemingly unlimited opportunities, and the unspoken expectation that girls should take full advantage of them.

Girls in this study responded to these new requirements by adjusting their actions in a variety of ways. They pushed forward, found their determination, and began to think about their future. They also felt overwhelmed, encountered relationship discord, and got bewildered. When girls spoke about their experiences during this time they used a mix of descriptors to reveal their actions and thoughts such as: "doing good, goal setting, feeling free, following rules, staying organized, stressing out, buckling down, high expectations, doing more, letting things go, keeping up, pulling own weight, figuring things out, and feeling stuck." These pithy categories

capture the energy and swirl of movement that make up the demanding world of these growing adolescent girls.

Describing this period of her life, Michelle pointed to the highs and lows by saying "academics [are] going well, friendships are hell." As a new student at Public Charter School, Michelle seemed to find comfort in the structure provided by her academic life; however, making friends seemed a daunting task as she did this alone for the first time. Maturation and growth do not happen without effort, and novel demands and situations are how people learn, and this was part of Michelle's growth and development.

After reflecting on her old life in childhood during an interview, Alissa announced, "It's not fun and games now," highlighting the fact that childhood was over and life would never be the same for her. Alissa further gave voice to these conflicting feelings when she divulged, "I don't want to grow up," naming the sense of loss she felt about growing older and further away from her former life as a child. She explained, "I don't know why. I just want to be in that state. I just want to stay in, when I'm really happy about something, I just want to stay there and just make it last and not have to worry about 'oh, I have this essay due,' and then, that feeling is gone really soon." The resistance Alissa gives voice to signals the mounting responsibilities and gloomier side of what it means to grow up – a sort of loss of innocence that will never be recaptured – and an acknowledgment of the sobering toil that lies ahead.

Sustaining Effort

Another aspect of working hard has to do with the duration of work and the unrelenting expectations and tasks that were continually confronting girls in this study. There didn't seem to be any one single burden of work, like studying for a test or attending basketball practice, that was particularly overwhelming; it seemed to be the accumulative effect of demands, like

multiple tests in multiple classes every week, along with sports practices on school days and on weekends, too. It was surprising when girls talked about the volume of school related and non-academic activities they were involved with presently, and over the course of the school year. One girl said she played five sports during the year, meaning that she doubled up in some seasons, and one of her sports, ice hockey, was played the entire length of the school year. This kind of sustained effort was both impressive and alarming at the same time.

Girls' "working hard" actions can be understood as representing various levels of intensity. For instance, working hard on individual activities like a homework assignment or a soccer practice is one way to work hard. A single activity is time limited and the effort to sustain it is usually manageable. In another way, working hard can be viewed over a period of time such as a semester or a school year or the phase of adolescent development. This kind of sustained working hard can be cumulative, as in the culmination of a math course over a semester and taking a final exam – the work and expectations build up over time. Or, working hard can be the kind that is felt on all fronts such as totaling up all the activities of a girl's life which might include everything from school to sports to family to social expectations and responsibilities into one continuous ongoing effort. These different types of working hard – single activities, single sustained activities, and continuous ongoing efforts – are all present in girls' lives during adolescence. Single activities can be thought of as one-at-a-time activities. Sustained activities are like a day hike up a mountain with the effort paying off when you get to the top. Continuous ongoing effort is more like running a marathon that never ends.

Patricia spoke in detail about how she asserted her own high expectations to match the continuous academic demands in middle school.

> [L]ast year I had high honors for . . . all three terms. And then this year, I had a B+.
> Which I'm fine with a B+, like that's a good grade. But this term, I've been pushing

myself . . . I got honors for the first term . . . and this term, I've been pushing myself to get . . . it was an 89 . . . to a 90. So, just to make it . . . like not even just to get an A, but just so I know . . . that I can do it. Like just to be pushed that, a little bit further and I have a 93 right now. In math, I'm really hard on myself like in math. Math is just, I have an 88 in that class right now, and that's good but like it's just still hard for me, so I try to work at it as much as I can, and like stay after [school]. I usually stay after for math help and - just push myself more. (2, p.4)

Patricia's recounting of her academic objectives for getting good grades represents a single sustained activity, and the effort on her part can be seen in her frequent use of the words "push" or "pushing," as she expends increasing levels of energy to meet academic demands in seventh grade. Patricia's words reveal not only the intensity and constant attention she gives to her academic work but also the sense of urgency and import with which she pursues her work. The true meaning of working hard is not lost on Patricia, or the other girls in this study, and is taken as a challenge to be accepted and done with determination and vigor. Yet, while the impact of sustained effort prepares girls to work hard in the future, it can also teach them that extreme output is the norm, and done for extended periods without pacing and renewing oneself, can have adverse impacts and form undesirable life habits.

Conclusion

This chapter seeks to reveal how the seven participants in this study were engaged actors in their expanding lives during the early stages of their adolescent development. It is particularly important to create a picture of girls' *agentic* behaviors and to reveal their active role and the familiar territory upon which their lives are built. Additionally, this chapter identifies specific modes or means of social actions that were demonstrated by all seven participants including engaging opportunities, speaking up, and working hard. These three agentic pathways are fundamental to understanding the mechanisms of girls' social actions as they represent the substructure of these girls' behaviors in this study. This exploration illustrates a range of avenues

girls employed to express their personal priorities and interests, as well as, how they responded to the increasing demands on their lives. For the girls in this study, these means of expression represent dynamic processes of manifestation which vary from girl to girl but are ultimately shared by each in an essential way. These particular ways of maneuvering are the pathways upon which other types of girls' social actions travel and will be the focus of the next three chapters which include "conforming actions, "concurring actions," and "transforming actions."

CHAPTER 6

CONFORMING ACTIONS

"Well, you don't have to be what other people want you to be. You have to be what you want to be. But what I want to be is what other people want me to be."

Michelle (4, p.11)

This chapter introduces the most visible social actions which were observed in the lives of girls in this study. As one of three major theoretical social action themes, "conforming actions" illuminates these girls' characteristically feminine behaviors in response to gender shaping influences. This theme, along with the following chapters on "concurring actions and "transforming actions," will be described through numerous instances taken from the lives of the adolescent girls in this investigation. Further, each of the three major theoretical themes will describe the properties, components, and conditions under which these social actions take place and help to illustrate specific aspects of these girls' every day behaviors.

The meaning of conformity as it relates to human behavior is widely understood as the act of changing one's actions in order to "fit in" with people around you. The period of adolescence is also frequently pointed to as an example of group conformity, otherwise known as "peer pressure," which also asserts an important influence at this time. However, the motive for conforming actions or responding to peer pressure during adolescence, does not necessarily capture the entirety of shaping influences on young adults. If we look beyond the perspective of the adolescent, and take a larger view of the influences at work in the lives of adolescent girls, we might see other more subtle motives for girls changing their behavior, like the need to comply with the requests of other more powerful people such as parents or needing to be

obedient to those in positions of authority like teachers or coaches. When we add socializing agents such as parents, teachers and coaches into the picture, and understand the influential roles they play as transmitters of cultural norms, we begin to get a deeper view of the complexity of controlling elements that pervade girls' lives, and that conformity is not simply a function of adolescent malleability but part of a larger compulsory shift towards normative behaviors. Applying "macro" perspectives like this, helps to illuminate the surrounding social forces, making these girls' social actions more visible and more clearly understood.

The data collected from interviews with girls, adults, and from site visits revealed that the most obvious social actions girls displayed were those of conforming actions, as they relate to commonly held expectations for early adolescent girls, and reflected their strong social orientation towards "others." These behaviors could be described as generally following gender norms, despite the fact that girls' roles have more recently expanded to include non-feminine activities such as sports, and beliefs based on masculine ideals, such as highly competitive attitudes. Eagly (1978) asserts that women are more likely to conform than men, and this fact may help explain why gender based conforming behaviors represent the most visible kind of social actions displayed by girls in this study.

The meaning of conforming actions, for the purposes of this investigation, recognizes the dominant role of cultural influences which press adolescent girls into gender normative behaviors; however, this does not mean that adolescent girls do not simultaneously strive to meet personal objectives. Conforming actions are highly discernable in the everyday social actions of girls in this study and are evoked and rewarded by socializing agents. These girls' actions are based on beliefs held by these socializing agents and socializing environments, which are then incorporated as their own. Conforming actions provide girls with their social and ethical sense of

self and are readily embraced by girls in this study. The push towards achieving adulthood motivates them to follow these conventions, which saturate their daily lives, and can be thought of like the rails of a cattle chute which offer no choice but to move forward.

This chapter aims to illustrate several different types of conforming actions that girls in this study engaged in during their middle school years and builds upon the agentic pathways discussed earlier. These specific social actions don't represent all possible conforming actions but rather the most evident actions observed during this research project. The contents of this chapter will detail the defining components of these social actions, the specific properties contained within each different action, and the particular experiences of girls who engaged in those actions. This chapter will serve as the first of three key social action themes, as well as, describe three different conforming action categories which will depict a range of social actions that make up the experiences of girls in this study.

Further, the conforming actions described in this chapter, while representing one social action theme, are interrelated with the other social action themes "concurring actions" and "transforming actions" which will be described in the following two chapters. Each social action theme can be viewed separately but in fact have dynamic effects upon each other such as "opposing influences," which actually produce some actions as a side effect of other actions. In this way, conforming actions can be thought of as the first of a dynamic set of social actions that depict how girls' agentic behaviors are manifested. Finally, conforming actions can be thought of as representing contemporary stereotypical behaviors of girls and include the categories of 1) doing right 2) social smoothing and 3) working friendships.

Doing Right

"Doing right" is about how girls in this study identify with and act upon their sense of what is right and wrong. This social action category concerns girls' relationship to issues of fairness and justice, social norms, and following rules in their everyday lives. These girls appear to be responsive to just or unjust treatment that occurs especially between peers in a variety of contexts - from offering to share food with a classmate at the lunch table to thoughtfully considering party invitations to including a new student in social activities. These girls seemed to carry a special mantel of awareness and responsibility for social integrity that may be deeply rooted in their identity. Striving to treat others in an upright manner some girls felt compelled to intervene in the presence of others unfair behavior. When speaking to girls, I found their language peppered with phrases that pointed to both an internal moral compass and a desire to uphold social rules. Michelle said, "I speak up [because I] don't want any lies." Patricia spoke out when she saw injustice and felt compelled to "do the right thing." Olivia talked about her need to control group activities to make "sure that everything went right."

For girls in this study, "do[ing] the right thing" is a kind of internal operating mode that guides their actions and is extended to others in their social surroundings. I observed girls monitoring both their own behavior, as well as, those around them – like social sheriffs – embodying righteousness and distributing justice at the same time. They acted like what Michelle called a "goody goody" – someone who follows the rules and models social expectations. As one of the older students in her theater program, Courtney said she felt like "I have to be perfect" in the eyes of her teachers and younger students. In a different way, McKenzie described how her growing understanding of rules had changed as she got older.

Joann: What don't you like about being a teenager?
McKenzie: Um . . .

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Joann: So, what's different about that kid that used to be able to run around and go wild and not have a care in the world?
McKenzie: Yeah. It's definitely more like – more sort of like rules to go by now that I have these new like opportunities and stuff. Like the – alright, you know, now you really need to concentrate on your school work and do the best that you can do. It's not just like "Oh, here's an answer. I'm going to guess on this one." It's like you've really got to understand that this is – you're getting ready for what you're going to be doing like when you grow up. It's now – this is building up to more complex and like higher stuff. So it's all really like learning – just like learning. (3, p.4)

McKenzie's reflection reveals her shift in awareness and the potential impact for not paying attention to evolving codes of conduct. These heightened expectations for doing right can be viewed solely as what is expected for adolescents as they mature, but they may also signify complex cultural forces at work with particular meaning and intentions for adolescent girls.

Doing right is also about how these girls interpreted and enacted both *explicit* and *implicit* sociocultural directives. These actions can be seen as taking on more responsibility as one gets older, but also denotes entrance into an adult world of conforming to societal rules – understanding and practicing the rules of an adult culture. Girls move from childhood where rules are simply obeyed to early adolescence where rules are now known and self-monitoring is expected. While girls I spoke to didn't always like following the rules because it often added more stress to their lives – like having to respond to increasing academic requirements; they often spoke about these stresses as challenges that they were eager to meet. Explicit rules seem to have little to do with girls' identity and appear external their inner operating beliefs and seem to be more like hand rails – something to guide and give direction in social settings. They represent rules that are out in the open, written or spoken, and are understood readily like traffic rules or the rules of a game. Implicit rules, on the other hand, are more subtle and often operate on the level of conscious and unconscious thought; they are more like invisible codes that have to be discovered through trial and error. Most people would not even think of them as rules and may not know these rules exist until they inadvertently break them.

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Doing Rules

"Doing rules" refers to explicit standards of conduct or *by the book* rules – these are generally the kind of rules that can be found in a school policy handbook, academic expectations, sports game rules or safety guidelines. Girls I interviewed frequently spoke about the need to "keep up grades" and "be responsible" at school and took pride in following the rules. These girls were often models of so called "good behavior" for those around them, possibly due to their early maturity, as compared to boys. In light of this, they were often social and academic role models praised by their teachers within the school context. Girls in this study spoke of meeting and exceeding school expectations as part of their primary personal goals. Being an "honor roll student" and identifying as an "overachiever" were common experiences that girls spoke about. When these girls conform to societal expectations, such as doing right, they may receive rewards in return such as teacher praise or parent approval. In this way, girls who eagerly follow societal rules may be supporting the pervading social order, and may act in kind, seeking future rewards. These types of recompenses may create a cycle where these girls' actions, when aligned with cultural expectations, create a sort of incentive loop whereby girls seek to maintain their favored status by continually striving to fulfill institutional aims.

Doing rules illustrates girls' role as agents of what is "good and right" in everyday interactions. Girls in this study displayed a keen sense of what the rules were, knew when something was out of line, and followed rules effortlessly. In a previously discussed incident, Courtney witnessed vandalism in the girls' bathroom at school, and then acted upon her own internal sense of justice to report it to a teacher. In another case, while on summer vacation, Patricia frustratingly declined to join older friends on a car trip to the arcade because the new driver was not "legally" allowed to transport passengers because she was under the six month

probationary period. Patricia's firm grasp of the motor vehicle rules represented a clear boundary for her while this was not the same for other youths who took the ride instead. In recounting the situation Patricia's mother, Gloria, said, "She knew that was the right decision." Each of these girls had a clear understanding of the expected rules in each case and took action to conform to them. For Courtney and Patricia, their learned understanding of rules was tested in these incidents and they came down on the side of "right" rather than allowing other influences such as being stigmatized or caving in to peer pressure shape their responses. Their reactions, while seemingly correct, are actions that don't necessarily come easily. While straight forward rules may appear obvious, acting on them may offer up social consequences that girls may prefer to avoid such as the sting of reprisal that Courtney was subjected to from the girls who committed the bathroom vandalism.

Doing Justice

In a different way, "doing justice" represents implicit moral codes which are not as obvious as explicit by the book rules but are still of concern to girls in this study. These girls' social antenna was highly attuned to social inequalities and their moral compasses picked up on troubling situations with speed and clarity. As an implicit code, doing justice is something that is not found in a school policy handbook but is found in the often unspoken expectations of socializing agents who interact with girls including their peers. The expectation to follow implicit codes appears built in to these girls' sense of identity and seems to be noticed more frequently in their behavior than in boys. Gilligan's (1982) research identified a "difference" in female moral behavior which she characterized as focusing on "relationships" rather than on rules. This observation may predispose girls to act upon implicit ethical digressions that are not part of explicit directives, but rather are internally based on their own sense of right and wrong.

As highly tuned agents of "correct and appropriate" social behavior, girls in the study

were active in addressing peer interactions including troublesome conduct and offending deeds.

For Courtney, as a member of a local theater group, she found herself taking on "leaderish" kinds

of actions towards some of the other younger participants in the program. She explained that

sometimes she would be the one to bring order to misbehaving students who were pushing and

pulling each other by telling them, "No, you can't do that" and said it was "because I think I

always know what we are supposed to be doing." In another case, Patricia traces her inner

compass back to the influence of her family when she said that she was "brought up to be

responsible." Her mother, Gloria, explained that "she has a strong sense of right and wrong."

Additionally, her father, Patrick, provided a picture of the kind of action Patricia might take to

assert her sense of "right and wrong" in a social setting.

> Joann: How does she get her needs met? Like, you know, if she needs something,
> how does she go about doing that?
> Patrick: She's a pretty mature kid as you already know. So she has – she has figured
> out, you know, some of those things. On the social side, if she sees – if she needs
> something, or if she needs to be, you know, heard, she has no trouble. She's the first
> kid to tell so-and-so that, you know, what a lousy sport he was because she witnessed
> him not getting in line for the basketball team and shaking the other players' hands.
> She'll get on that kid. She got on him the next day. I won't mention who. That's part
> of how – she just – she goes after it." (Patrick, p.3)

Patrick's example paints a vivid image of how Patricia asserted her own idea of correct

and appropriate social behavior in her social surroundings. In this situation, Patricia was not

bound to say anything to the boy who is at the center of the incident; in fact, her actions might be

viewed by some as none of her business. There was no written rule that she followed except her

own inner direction which was guided by her personal belief system.

For girls in this study, learning the unspoken language of implicit codes was sometimes

fraught with surprise and uncomfortable interactions. Rapidly changing expectations during

adolescence often left these girls feeling confused and unclear about how to respond

appropriately to new or difficult encounters. Several girls spoke of making the mistake of accepting a second "play date" after committing to an earlier one, and consequently, experienced the hurt of their friends' displeasure while learning the unwritten code that "first dates always take precedent." Sometimes these girls knew the right action to take in a complex circumstance, but for lack of skill or fear, didn't respond as they would have preferred. In one case, Lucy saw a friend being bullied but didn't speak up because she feared being the next target of bullying. She recalled that the thought of entering into the situation felt like a "minefield" which prevented her from taking action.

Doing rules and doing justice, are two ways that these girls enacted doing right social actions, and represent ways they acted to make their intensions known. In the category of doing right, girl's range of ability varied from effective implementation to confusion, yet all signaled growth along a developmental path. Some girls found following rules (doing rules) easier than asserting themselves in support of addressing more vague and unfair situations (doing justice). For these girls, following rules from outside authorities, such as teachers or coaches, may be an easier path than addressing an incident that is not fair and has no clear rule to back it up. Pursuing implicit rules may require more complex abilities that girls may not yet possess such as the courage to speak up, trusting one's own judgement, or effective verbal skills. Regardless of where girls are on the developmental curve, doing right appears to be a significant social action for these girls who eagerly embraced the two fold edict of following rules and standing up for rightness.

Social Smoothing

Social smoothing represents the role of girls in this study to act as agents of social interactions and who help facilitate the process of every day human engagement. This kind of

behavior highlights girls' responsibility as community helpers, peer problem solvers, emotion

workers (Hochschild, 1983) and social planners. Speaking to these girls, I noticed that they

described themselves as "helpers, supporters, facilitators, caregivers, problem-solvers, and

organizers." These roles in everyday life function in the same way that conjunctions in language

work to connect words together to make sentences flow. Similarly, girls act as social facilitators

using these social roles to make the events of life happen. Additionally, among girls' top

descriptors of their personal qualities were words such as "helpful, caring, friendly, funny,

understanding, loving, sensitive, cheerful, and happy." These kinds of words imply behaviors

that define stereotypical nurturing roles common to definitions of femininity, and were woven

tightly into these girls' sense of identity. These amiable qualities represent commonly held ideas

of how adolescent girls are viewed and can be easily detected in these girls' sense of identity and

their social actions. The likable qualities and supportive roles that these girls enacted clearly

combine to reveal a robust gender identified characterization of participants in this study.

For these girls, social smoothing was another type of social action that was noticeable in

their behavior, while their related identities were sometimes referred to as "the peacemaker," the

"facilitator," or in one instance, a mother that I interviewed talked about encouraging her

daughter to be "the smoother." The roles of peacemaker and facilitator were familiar and

commonly held roles that could be characterized as having feminine qualities; however, the role

of "the smoother" was new to me. In fact, two mothers used the same term, and it held my

interest, so I asked what it meant. As it was explained to me by Alissa's mother, Beth, this role

required abdicating one's view in order to pave the way for efficient social interactions.

> Joann: I'm wondering if you can think of a time or event that maybe would help me
> understand who, a little bit more about who [Alissa] is?
> Beth: Um, hmm.

Joann: It could even be like an incident or a situation that arose and how she handled it or something.
Beth: I feel as a mother, she tends to be a little, um, less assertive, less assertive to what she wants, she tends to be overly, I think, um, kind of giving in to what the crowd wants versus exerting "well no", you know, or "well, you know, I think we should do this" . . . some of it is me because I've sort of directed her to be a little more cooperative. . . . I've always kind of tried to teach her "look at the situation, if it doesn't really matter, if you don't really care about something then pick and choose when you will say 'no, I really want this', so that you are cooperative . . . cause if it doesn't really matter . . . if you could go either way . . . then be the one that sort of is the, you know, the smoother." (Beth, p.4)

In Beth's description, the role of the smoother is clearly that of being an expeditor of social interactions with the primary focus on collective aims over individual concerns and reveals the largely communal purpose of social smoothing actions. As I observed, these actions were frequently directed at classmates, teachers, coaches, close friends and family. Additionally, this role was shared among the girls in this study and was evident in their self-stated attributes, as well as, part of their personally defined identities. The following subcategories represent different types of social smoothing actions that I detected in these girls' day to day lives.

Social Cheering

"Social cheering" is about how girls in this study engaged in managing the everyday emotional states of people in the social environment around them. Social researcher Arlie Hochschild (1983) has written about this phenomena, and how especially females, often find themselves acting as "emotion laborers" in the work setting and "emotion workers" in the private realm. She suggests that "emotional skills" are learned at home and have a particular weight for people who are middle class and female. Like Hochschild's study of flight attendants, girls in this inquiry were intuitively adept at detecting and responding to the emotional landscape around them. For instance, some girls picked up on emotional lows among friends and then worked to lighten the situation with emotional levity. The words "friendly, funny, cheerful and happy" were common self-descriptors used by girls in this investigation. While these words can describe girls

themselves, they can also be viewed as social qualities having an interactional element. A girl is friendly, not to herself but to others, and being funny is usually an action that requires an audience.

Courtney pointed to this social dynamic during an interview when she confidently said, "When anyone is sad I can cheer them up." Interestingly, her words were backed up by her practiced skills as a member of two separate cheering squads in town. Like Courtney, several other girls spoke directly about ways that they engaged in the process of "cheering up" those around them. These girls acknowledged roles that they played in the presence of others and claimed them as part of their identity. Lucy talked about liking to "make people laugh" and would clown around and act silly with her friends and her cousins. She was good at "pulling faces" and acting animated in the presence of her peers. Lucy's field hockey coach said that, "everyone likes Lucy," pointing to the fact that Lucy is a person most people would find enjoyable to have around. In another example, playing on the middle school girls' basketball team, Patricia could be seen giving supportive words and gestures to other players during a game. When she was off court watching from the sidelines, Patricia said that "I always cheer" for the other girls who are playing.

Social Caring

"Social caring" is the act of supporting and maintaining close relationships by girls in this study and reveals how they show concern for others during the ups and downs of daily life. Like worker bees in a hive who diligently care for the new emerging baby bees, girls bustle around their friends and family members with keen attention. Social caring happens when a girl is saddened by insensitive comments from peers and her friends come to listen to her story and reassure her. Social caring happens when a girl aces an exam she worked hard at and celebrates

by telling her attentive friends about it in the school hallway. This kind of "emotion work" is common among girls in this study and can be seen in their daily interactions and particularly with their "friend groups." Alissa spoke about the role she played in her circle of friends. She said she was the "caregiver" and explained that she "feels others sadness" and tells her friends "you're going to be okay." Alissa's sensitivity made her particularly well suited to caretaking others emotional states and revealed her heightened focus on the social environment around her.

Girls' words that related to social caring, and were frequently used to describe their actions, were "helpful, caring, understanding, loving, and sensitive," and revealed qualities that girls displayed as part of certain interactions in which they appeared to have a deeper level of relational commitment. These empathetic words suggest that girls may take more effort and time when engaging with others, especially those they have close relations with. For instance, the capacity to be understanding is something that happens only when someone takes the time to listen and learn about another person's situation. This would not happen with simply anyone but someone in whom a girl choses to invest her time and attention such as a close friend or family member. McKenzie spoke about her ability to "be understanding" when her friends were having a tough time. She said she was the kind of "friend that you can talk to and not be judged" and often gave a listening ear to her close family members and friends when they were experiencing turmoil. Social caring appears to be an intimate kind of social action which girls may have learned through particular influences such as parental coaching and the unspoken messages of gender specific expectations transmitted by peers and other involved adults.

Social Activating

"Social activating" acknowledges how girls in this study initiated and took charge of social happenings. Girls words during interviews described their part in this role when they

spoke about taking responsibility for initiating communications, organizing social activities, stepping up to work tasks, and to solve problems. Most girls in this inquiry stepped in to take up slack when problems occurred or work had to be done in social and school locales. As part of a theater group, Courtney would often "fill in for others" roles when last minute glitches arose before a production like an actor becoming ill or injured. Among her friends, Patricia found herself being the "conversation starter" in new or awkward situations, especially when boys were involved, and stepped forward to break the ice. Taking the chance to care for her grandmother, who was recovering from surgery, Alissa stepped in one night when her mother was out late and took responsibility to put her grandmother to bed and do all the little things that her own mother would have done for her. These kinds of social actions are not only common among the girls in this study but also required an awareness of social needs or "gaps" and the capacity to fill them. While girls may be eager to put their forming abilities to the test, they are also acting as conduits of social purposes other than their own. This kind of attunement to social interactions, especially when there is a need or gap to be filled, appeared strong in girls' social habits and represented a perspective that was keenly "other" oriented. Picking up on the subtle needs of those around them, these girls responded willingly to a variety of others concerns while often setting aside their own needs.

As co-captain of the middle school girls field hockey team, McKenzie, helped to keep the ball rolling during practices and on game days. Her coach, Jennifer, observed how McKenzie would reinforce her practice instructions with comments like "C'mon girls, let's go. Hustle over!" This kind of initiative was not expected in her role as co-captain but was something she took on herself to expedite practice activities. At another time, Coach Jennifer described how

McKenzie independently took it upon herself to engage her teammates in a ritual of collective

reflection after their games.

> Joann: Can you give me an example of maybe a time when she was outspoken?
> Jennifer: At the end of games, on the bus, she brought this poem . . . that she would
> read out-loud. She got the whole team to read it out-loud and then they had to do like
> a moment of silence or something like that.
> Joann: Do you remember what the poem was?
> Jennifer: It was like a world peace poem.
> Joann: Huh.
> Jennifer: It had nothing to do with field hockey (laughing).
> Joann: Oh, really.
> Jennifer: But, yeah, she is definitely inspirational, and it kind of calmed them down.
> Like (sighs) I think they got – the team sometimes got a little bit big-headed because
> we never lost, and she . . . they were just very loud at the end of games, and she . . . it
> calmed them down. (p.3)

The role of being a social activator can seem exciting but stepping up to make things

happen was often hard or difficult and placed responsibility of those actions squarely on these

girls' shoulders. As a social planner among her peers, Patricia frequently initiated and organized

peer events like parties or putting groups together to go to sporting events such as Friday night

football games. Not only did she feel the responsibility of making sure everything went smoothly

but also felt the burden of work it required, not simply in the planning but also managing the

pluses and minuses of group undertakings, like unexpected conflicts and hurt feelings. In a

reflective way, Patricia seemed to realize that making events happen was not just fun but work

too, and quizzically stated, "I always feel like I'm in charge of that for some reason."

Social Anchoring

"Social anchoring" includes the actions of girls in this study to hold and steady the social

environment around them. These girls' various social capacities make them logical mediators of

social processes and social norms as described in some of these girls' previous accounts. The

qualities of self-control, adaptability, and keen awareness, position them to act as standard

bearers of social expectations. When Patricia confidently said during an interview, "I just know,"

succinctly explaining how she recognized the appropriate response to social dilemmas, she saw herself acting as a catalyst of social knowledge. She may not know where her knowledge comes from but she is certain about the rightness of her information base. Beyond knowing what is right, she further told me, "I just know what to do," and in this case, she again viewed herself as a transmitter of social intentions such as when intervening to correct inappropriate peer behaviors. When McKenzie said to me, "I see both sides" of her two friends conflict, she saw herself as a mediator of social concerns. These two girls actions and beliefs were not self-serving but rather benefited the collective social environment; helping to make it a more tolerable and comfortable place for everyone.

Serving as actors of societal ideals, girls in this investigation appear to shoulder the mantle of cultural standards and take on the role of social anchor – helping to secure a predictable social world – the way an anchor of a ship keeps it from going adrift and pulling it back to familiar ground. In this study, girls' social actions are adaptive and responsive to the changing social movements around them. When girls' take on active roles in their social surroundings such as knowledge holders, initiators of action, and processors of group concerns they represent and work to support the collective social body and larger cultural interests. These girls' subtle but profound actions all add up to support a social world that girls and others live in, and benefit from, and helps to ensure social stability for everyone.

When girls are so effectively tuned into the needs of others, and the social environments in which they participate, they may inadvertently forget about their own needs. I noticed that girls in this study sometimes spoke about a desire to "not be needy" or having "no needs." Girls explained that they did not want to burden their friends and peers with their requests and instead focused on others needs while subordinating their own. In one example, Lucy's field hockey

coach, Jennifer, told a story about a time when Lucy had difficulty breathing during a game but did not signal that she needed to come off the field. Coach Jennifer remembered that observing teammates on the sidelines called out, "Hey Coach, Lucy's having trouble and needs to come off the field," and only then did she notice Lucy's health crisis and called for a time out. Lucy's lack of action could be interpreted as her not wanting to burden others with her immediate health concerns and showed how too much focus on collective purposes, without attending to one's own basic needs, can backfire on girls. Girls such as Lucy may find social smoothing actions deeply rooted in their behaviors, however, what they give up in the process just might be the social support that they need for their own survival.

Social cheering, social caring, social activating, and social anchoring illustrate the category of social smoothing, and present additional directions that girls' social actions took during the course of this inquiry. While each kind of social smoothing action is unique, these four have similarities and differences between them. Social cheering and social caring seem to represent a kind of emotional giving that comes directly from girls' capacity for compassion and connection which are based on their keen social sensitivity and receptivity. Whereas, social activating and social anchoring seem to be the manifestation of girls' social awareness combined with their capacity to initiate, organize, and take responsibility for shepherding the surrounding social environment. Regardless of which social smoothing actions girls choose to employ, they represent an important range of social skills and social resources that girls bring to everyday human interactions and settings.

Working Friendships

"Working Friendships" represents the effort girls in this investigation put into making and sustaining the relationships they had with their friends. Girls spoke frequently about their

current friends, making friends, and friend troubles during our interviews. While these girls have relationships with other peers who are not considered friends such as classmates, teammates, and temporary acquaintances, there appears to be a deliberate increase in importance and effort necessary to make and sustain close friendships. At the edge of adolescence, it appears that adults "step back" and these girls are expected to "step up" to managing their own friendships. This means that making new friends, maintaining friends, resolving conflicts, breaking up, and negotiating and organizing friend activities, suddenly becomes the responsibility of girls who are taking on these tasks for the first time. Gone are the days of carefree play with friends on the playground; a time when adults supervised and helped to mediate childhood conflicts. These girls were now responsible for guiding their own social agendas and recognized the need to step up to this task. As Olivia observed, this was a time when she had to begin "working on friendship[s] and working much harder to keep your friendship[s]." This added work was noticed by all girls in this study with varying degrees of excitement and concern.

Almost intuitively, girls in this study appeared to sense the need to surround themselves with their own tribe; creating a sort of peer family during the middle school years. Most girls could quickly list off the names of their "circle of friends" when asked. Planning and negotiating activities in order to spend time together was a priority, however, the intention to get together on a weekend came long before deciding on a specific activity, which gave the impression that the activity was not as important as the interaction with others. When girls spoke about members of their circle of friends it was done with an unusual level of familiarity and tenderness that seemed like they had known each other forever. This need for tight relations with others, to feel like a member, and to have a kind of "peer home" was observed among all of the girls in this inquiry.

These groups ranged from more tightly knit groups to more loosely formed groups to groups that were just emerging.

Friending Material

Girls in this study didn't always find their middle school experience easy sailing, especially when it came to relationships. For Olivia, working on friendships became a central focus during her middle school years. She described her friendship struggles as making her "feel vulnerable," and she intentionally decided to work on building a core circle of friends with the support of the school Adjustment Councilor, Ms. Dalton, after she began to experience "friend troubles." Suddenly, during her seventh grade year, previous friendships began to disappear and Olivia started to worry about not having any close friends that she could depend on. She explained, "I think I did need some new friends because I can't just be stuck with like only two good friends, and I wanted more friends that I could rely on because if those two got mad at me, then what was I supposed to do." As part of a plan to change her situation, Olivia began to pursue new friendships and was on the lookout for what she called "friend material." During an interview, I asked Olivia about her experience of finding new friends.

> Joann: This is something you probably never thought about before but, you know, how do you choose your friends?
> Olivia: Well, a lot of my friends I make through other friends, and they tell me like . . . how trustworthy they are, and like how they're really nice to other people and everything. . . . [F]rom preschool I've met a lot of people . . . like in preschool we were all so carefree and everything that . . . we just met people and we thought that they were nice and everything, so we just became friends. But I have a lot of friends that I've met through other people who have said that—I guess you could call friend material. (3, p.1)

According to Olivia, the phrase "friend material" represented girls who she identified as having the potential to be her friend and came through current acquaintances. These contacts provided an avenue for meeting up with possible future friends and helped her to avoid likely disappointments or mismatched connections before they happened. Olivia's search for the right

friendships led her through a process of sorting out old friends, making new friends, and over time, rebuilding a new core group of friends.

Finding Shelter

Regardless of the arrangement of their friendship ties, girls in this investigation found themselves in a dynamic web of relationships that demanded their time and attention. These relations were often rewarding but sometimes girls found them to be incredibly difficult. At its best, a circle of friends held the potential to be a kind of "nest" where girls could be nurtured by peers in a loving and supportive way. Courtney spoke about her circle of friends in this precise way. She expressed that she could "depend on her friends" and at the same time felt "needed by them." In this reciprocal social process, she explained what it felt like to be part of her friend group.

> Joann: So what's your group of five like?
> Courtney: Um! (raised voice) (Joann laughs) Well, what do you mean?
> Joann: Well, what does it feel like when you're with them, like what's going on, are you being goofy, are you supportive of each other, or do you give each other a little hard time, how do you interact?
> Courtney: Well, we're very supportive of each other and we always goof around and like, we'll give each other a hard time like playfully, kind of like if someone made a mistake we might bring it up. Like as a joke.
> Joann: So, do you feel safe with them?
> Courtney: Yeah. I can tell them anything.(1, p.4)

In another separate conversation with Courtney, she expounded upon the supportive aspects of her friend group, how she fit in to it and what it meant to her.

> Courtney: With my friends it's almost like we all have some sort of like power, kinda, like I think we might have talked about how we each play like a different role and so, like when it's like my turn to do my part, it's like, it's my turn, I'm in charge.
> Joann: Right (laughing) and what, what role do you usually play?
> Courtney: I'm the one that like brings enjoyment into their life, almost. Like, like some of them are very serious, so I just kinda bring like, give them, almost like a new look on things and so, kinda remind them they're not fifty, and kids.
> Joann: And are you, um, do you think they respect that of you, in some ways?
> Courtney: I'm not really sure. I wouldn't think so because like, they're all, we're all very self-dependent, if that's a word, like we always kind of rely on ourselves and,

like sometimes I'll rely on them to like remind me, if it's finals I'm so stressed out
with the studying and the, so like, one of them reminded me today and it's like "it's
only finals, it's like, what you get is what you get."
Joann: Would you ever, can you ever imagine any of your friends saying "oh, what
would we do without Courtney?"
Courtney: Yeah, well, I think they'd almost do that, they are all very nice and like
just nice people, so just like, if like they were sad for some reason or something, like
"oh, we need you to do this and you gotta cheer us all up and you gotta make us
laugh, we need you and" kinda making me feel needed. (4, p.13)

In these two interview excerpts Courtney paints a picture of what it feels like to be part of
her friend group. Not only does she feel secure but she also participates in a vibrant social
process where she was able to actively play a needed role in the group while also accepting
support from the other members. This kind of "home team" helped meet Courtney's basic need
for social inclusion, especially during the challenging middle school years, but also provided her
with a kind of testing ground for learning essential human interactional skills. While friendship
circles hold the potential for providing nurturance and protection, they also take sustained effort
to gain the skills necessary for messy group interactions, which are a familiar part of friend
group dynamics.

Managing Friends

Olivia was at the end of her seventh grade school year as we sat in her bedroom talking
about what she had learned about friendships during seventh grade. She sat on her bed cross
legged while she talked about her recent experiences with friendship dealings and spoke in depth
about her efforts at maintaining friends, making new friends, and resolving conflicts with friends.
On this journey, she learned that friendships can have different levels of intensity; some can be
"close" while others may need to be more "casual." Olivia realized that close friends take a lot of
time and need to be "maintained," while others can be more laidback and require less energy.
Olivia's experience of pursuing new friendships provided her with a wealth of knowledge that

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helped her understand certain particulars of girls' relationships. The following interview

sequence reveals some of Olivia's reflections about friendships and some of the ways she learned

to "manage" them.

> Joann: I wondered what you've learned about having friendships, you know, in this
> past year.
> Olivia: Well, I've learned that it's good to have close friendships but it's also good to
> have just like casual friendships because then you have people that you can go to talk
> to and then just people that you can have fun with without worrying about keeping
> up that really really close friendship . . . I haven't really learned a lot about
> friendships, I just learned that I, it's a lot harder to keep them up and to work with
> them and see what you, what happens each day.
> Joann: [D]o you think that you are getting better at navigating your friendships?
> Olivia: Yeah, because once you have been friends with someone where you learn
> like what makes them mad, what helps them, how to like help them with their
> problems and everything. So, it's easier to kind of feel out your friendship, and then,
> you know what's going to happen. But there is also like little things that come up
> that you don't know how to deal with . . . then it's easier next time. (2, p.1)

Olivia's responses to my questions reveal a variety of concerns about managing

friendships including different types of friends, the needs of friends and the amount of work it

takes to keep her friends. Olivia's insights reveal the complexity of middle school relationships

that most girls don't express but encounter on a daily basis. Her keen insights of the social

dynamics around her helped uncover some of the complexity and attention that girls in this study

shared while engaging in close friendships.

Annoying D*rama*

When girls in this investigation spoke about their friendships, there was a significant

emphasis on how difficult they could be despite the many benefits of having friends. Frequently,

their stories focused on what many girls called the "drama" of friendships, whether it was with

one friend or a group of friends. Several girls agreed that dramatic moments happened when

others overreacted to little things – like when someone said something and another person "takes

it the wrong way." I asked Olivia what the word "drama" meant to her and she succinctly said

"just causing more problems than there needs to be." She discovered that she had to start "choosing her words carefully" around her friends so she wasn't misunderstood and this kind of extra effort to communicate made her feel less comfortable and free to speak her mind. She explained, "I really don't like going to school as much as I used to, it's just a lot harder. There's a lot more drama than there was in first or third grade."

Patricia spoke about an awkward situation involving a friend she invited to her house, when another friend who wasn't invited, found out about it. Patricia had to deal with the second friend's disappointment of feeling excluded. In another instance, Lucy found that she would not "defend a friend" for fear that her actions would be taken the wrong way and she would become the brunt of the next hash peer comment. These girls also learned that their actions could easily land them into "friend trouble" leaving them to suffer the effects of guilt and confusion about what went wrong. Alissa described the difficulties she encountered with her friends when they were trying to make a decision as a group about what kind of activity to do. She expounded upon the decision making process of making plans to see a movie together.

> Joann: So, what's not going so well for you this year?
> Alissa: Well, it's – there's always like a constant like struggle with my friends and making plans. It's just really been like magnified this past month. And it's not like we're fighting at all. Like at all. They probably don't know that I feel this way, but they probably feel this way. But like (sighs) we can't decide on anything. It's so annoying. Like, "I want to do this. Well, I want to do this. Oh, I want to do something different." And I say, "Okay, we can do that." And then the plans totally change and they're like "Oh, we're doing this instead." And it's like (sighs), "Can we just decide?" You know, argh. It's really annoying and like with Carolyn . . . she lies to make sure that she gets her way sometimes. I get very angry quickly at the situation and so I just step back and say "Okay, you guys, if you want to do whatever, I don't care." That's kind of difficult sometimes to deal with and then I'm just like "Carolyn, you know, at the end of the day—just chill out. Chill out." That's one of my big things. (Laughing) "Chill out. You know, don't be so uptight about stuff! Because . . . it doesn't matter. And who cares, you know, what car we are going in. Who the heck cares?" And I'll just say that to her and she's like, "Oh, you're right Alissa. I'm sorry."
> Joann: It's intense. Huh? It sounds intense.

Alissa: Yeah. Sometimes, yeah, sometimes it's really intense and sometimes its fine. It's just very interesting.
Joann: So what do you think the intensity is about? Because like you say sometimes like they're little things and there's like a big – you know . . .
Alissa: Deal over it?
Joann: Deal made over it. What do you think is going on?
Alissa: Right. Mmmm . . . I think that at some point, everyone wants to do what they want. And, I don't know. I don't know. I haven't figured that out yet. (2, p.9)

Alissa's words reveal the inside workings of girls' friendships and how laborious their interactions can be. At the core of girls' relationships, and possibly any relationship, is the reality that human interactions require continual effort. On the surface, it could be easily surmised that girls' friend interactions are often messy and painful, but in fact, as was previously discussed in the finding shelter subcategory, girls also find great comfort and a sense of belonging in friend groups which may provide the necessary counterbalance to engaging in such close alliances.

While the overall point of "working friendships" is about the effort that is at the heart of relational engagement, girls in this study frequently learned to handle these messy relational situations by applying effective skills and strategies that they gained through experience. For example, Patricia liked to organize events but preferred to "buddy up" with a friend, as co-organizer, in order to "blame the other person" when someone got upset over not being invited. Courtney acknowledged the need to "avoid some girls" and steered clear of them in order to sidestep unnecessary conflicts at her cheerleading practices. In the middle of friendship disputes, McKenzie tried to remain "neutral" in order to not have to take sides, and instead, took the role of "listener," while refraining from judging others and letting her friend's just "blow off steam." Rather than being stuck trudging through constant "friend troubles," these girls developed useful tools for managing their own social interactions more efficiently, and these efforts may represent a kind of social acuity that largely defines these girls developing social skill sets.

Friending material, managing friends, finding shelter, and annoying drama all represent elements of the category of working friendships. These components further detail important social actions enacted by girls in this study and the ways in which they exhibited them. Friending material and managing friends appear to speak to finding friends, and then, subsequently keeping them. Whereas, finding shelter and annoying drama, respectively, detail the supportive function that friendships can provide, and the flip side, which is the uncontrollable and irritating social interactions that take up girls time and energy. Together these four subcategories reveal some of the "back office" maneuvering of girls' relationships, the effort filled experiences of girls in those relationships, as well as, some of the positives and negatives of simply partaking in friendships. As a category, working friendships illustrates another set of important social actions that were observed in this study, and underscore the subtle workings of the socially oriented behaviors which characterize these girls lives.

Conclusion

This chapter features the theme of conforming actions and how they are manifested in the lives of girls in this investigation. When viewed together they represent behaviors that share an orientation that is highly social or "other" focused. Doing right, social smoothing, and working friendships represent social actions where girls engage like social scientists - keenly observing the intricacies of social rules, social feelings, social relations, and their social environments. This chapter identifies specific social actions and their component parts, of the experiences of girls in this study, and includes a range of situations related to individual and group interactions. These three different social action categories depict some of the most prominent behaviors observed in girls' experiences during this study. This analysis reviewed a variety of circumstances that related to girls' identities, experiences, and responses to interactions across several contexts

including home, school, sports and other out of school activities. For girls in this study, these

social actions signify behaviors that fluctuate from girl to girl but are shared by all in a

fundamental way. While these specific activities highlight girls' most visible social concerns,

other less obvious social actions are simultaneously on display in girls everyday social behaviors,

if we stop to look for them. These more hidden and less examined social actions will be the focus

of the next chapter, which will introduce the theme of "concurring actions," and explain in detail

what they are and how they manifest in the lives of the girls at the center of this inquiry.

CHAPTER 7

CONCURRING ACTIONS

"I'm keeping up but I'm trying to keep up more and more and more because it's like hard to like be up there at the very top but I'm probably somewhere like three quarters of the way because I get so stressed that it slows me down."

Olivia (2, p.10)

"[Girl ice hockey players] hold back a lot more, whereas boys are greedy and puck-hogs and will shoot, whereas, the girls could use a little bit more of that."

McKenzie (4, p.7)

"I look at some people and [think] 'oh, they're just like really lazy.' I don't want people to think that I'm like that."

Patricia (1, p.3)

This chapter introduces the second of the three major theoretical social action themes which were identified in the lives of the adolescent girls in this study in response to gender shaping influences. The theme of concurring actions is more substantive in weight than the other two themes yet these actions live on the margins of girls' behaviors rather than in plain sight. These social actions will be illuminated through numerous instances from these girls' lives and will describe the properties, components, and conditions under which these behaviors occurred in order to reveal further the social actions of the girls in this study.

The concurring actions theme represents the simultaneous happenings of these girls' social actions which inhabit a more obscure location than the more *foregrounded* social actions of the conforming actions theme. The word concurring, as it is used in this social action theme, has a twofold meaning: one is "to occur at the same time" and the other is "to agree." The first meaning is focused on acknowledging the coexistence of concurring actions alongside the previously described conforming actions, while the second meaning addresses the tacit agreement between these two separate but related themes. Concurring actions portray the less

clearly observed and understood social actions of girls in this investigation, which correspond in time and space, to the more visibly observed social actions of girls conforming behaviors. However, concurring actions and conforming actions, while representing two separate themes, share similar gender shaping effects and purposes in girls' lives.

Collecting data from interviews with girls and adults, as well as, from site visits uncovered an interesting array of social actions that could not be easily described but represent significant behaviors which signal repeated patterns across the experiences of girls in this study. These various actions, however, take a backseat to the much more visible social actions of girls described in the previous chapter. Some of these actions were enacted in private locations, and as such, were not as readily noticeable and harder to discern. These concurring actions represent "crooked paths" and "blank spaces" that led to girls' attempts to suppress their individual needs or redirect their non-feminine behaviors back to more culturally acceptable social actions. Concurring behaviors could be described as "corrective strategies" which ultimately reinforce normative gender behaviors despite girls' perception of themselves as acting to the contrary.

More specifically, concurring actions represent hidden, avoided, or prohibited social actions that girls in this inquiry engaged in, and can be described as having a *reverberating* relationship with the behaviors of the conforming action theme. In a circuitous way, girls' concurring actions seem to quietly align with conforming actions through a kind of "corrective tension" that appears to exist between the two differing sets of behaviors. While conforming actions are public behaviors that are readily shown to the world, concurring actions seem to resist or conceal socially non-normative behaviors, while foregoing full expression, and occupy the more private or internal life of girls. Concurring actions also signify a kind of boundary which tacitly redirects girls' social actions back towards conforming actions and away from other

possible social action choices. These often unseen or unacknowledged actions represent a "shadow" world of feelings and acts that often remain contained within a girls own mind or private sphere. Concurring actions offer new landscape in the lives of girls in this investigation and a dynamic expansion to the previous category of conforming actions.

While conforming actions have a more recognizable social purpose, it is part of the aim of this chapter to illuminate and explore the more latent social actions of girls in this study, and to highlight the relationship they have with other social actions. These particular social actions represent only a small slice of possible concurring actions but help shine a light on some of the lesser known behaviors of girls in this inquiry. Similar to before, this chapter will outline the different categories of these social actions, their particular components, and a variety of girls' experiences related to this theme. This chapter will additionally serve as the second of three social action themes which lay out the experiences of the girls under investigation. These concurring actions can be thought of generally as representing both normative and non-normative behaviors and include the categories of 1) enduring stress 2) resisting support 3) conceding actions and 4) rejecting actions.

Enduring Stress

"Enduring stress" represents the strain that girls in this study felt from the deepening demands of adolescent transitions but were rarely shown in public. As new expectations and opportunities built up during middle school, one way that these girls reacted was by unwittingly allowing demands to "pile up" on them, and this response caused them to feel pressured in uncomfortable ways. Without the experience of managing new heavy workloads, girls became stuck with the mounting wave of new expectations and the resulting personal burden. These girls seemed to keep their expressions of strain private while preferring to show more predictable

behaviors in their day to day public interactions. For these girls, stress seemed to come from not one area of their lives, but from the cumulative effect of rising requests that originated from all important settings such as home, school, sport, and out of school activities.

Even though these girls were highly adaptive to the demands of adolescence that did not mean that they avoided "tensions" associated with this transition. Girls in my study all expressed that it was inappropriate to show their stress or negative feelings which they experienced from social or academic struggles and frustrations. During interviews, girls talked about "getting grumpy, having a temper, or getting angry," especially when they were tired, and reserved this kind of non-conforming behavior for home or even their own bedroom. For Lucy, who played five sports over the school year, stress was simply part of her day to day experience. When I asked her "What's not going so well [in your life right now]?" Lucy responded by stating "probably being stressed out because of all the stuff going on." While Lucy was keenly aware that her life was like a never ending marathon, she was not yet fully capable of managing her heavy commitments in a more balanced way, so, she endured the stress while foregoing making choices that might have reduced her load.

Enduring stress introduces the duality of public and private spheres that existed in these girls' lives. While the theme of conforming actions operates in the public sphere, many of the components within the theme of concurring actions operate within the private sphere. This distinction is important, and was made more visible in my study by use of a writing exercise which each girl completed prior to one interview, which asked them to identify their public and private social actions. Girls' responses were critical to "seeing" some of the more hidden aspects of their identities and social actions, and without ferreting out these kinds of experiences, they could not have been perceived through observation alone. The low level of attention and hidden

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location of these social actions suggested a reduced kind of status in the experiences of girls in this study, and obliged me to draw out and inspect them more rigorously in order to grasp their subtle meanings. The following components of the enduring stress category will help to illuminate some of these girls lesser known experiences and include the subcategories of keeping private and overwhelming pressures.

Keeping Private

For the girls in this study, a key element of dealing with stress focused on keeping it hidden or private. Girls seemed to sense that stress, which could make them feel out of control, was not something that should be displayed in public. Alissa said, "I get really overly stressed and then I get angry about a lot of things." Alissa explained that she reserved this kind of behavior for the home environment.

> Like this is more, not a school aspect, it's not in school. It's more like at home with my mom and my dad. I get overstressed about like not being – like not finishing a project - mostly writing. I get really, really bad writing blocks and I get so stressed and it's so awful. I get really crazy and angry and I just, I can't think about anything. So that's about the stress, so that's something inside." (3, p.1)

This kind of sentiment was shared by other girls who expressed having similar kinds of feelings. Olivia, spoke about conflict that she experienced at home with her family members.

> I seem to take it out on them, and so then, we get into that conflict but it really is newer because before I was always, didn't feel like that difference between us, but because of all the stress building up on me it's hard. When there's little things, then you just get mad and blow up at other people." (2, p.4)

Girls like Alissa and Olivia seemed to reserve their volatile emotions for the privacy of their own home rather than express them more publicly. Home appears to be a place where their unpleasant feelings could get aired without sacrificing reputation or relationships and preserved a public perception of themselves that they chose to maintain. Some girls talked about ways of avoiding or covering unwanted feelings when they used phrases such as "keeping it down and

hiding pain." During an interview with Patricia, she said, "I don't really like other people to know that I'm having a disagreement and argument with somebody else." Her comment reveals how she held her personal matters close and didn't want them on public display. She also spoke about dealing with the physical pain that she experienced in sport scuffles and similarly stated, "I don't like to show if I'm hurt. I'll just like play through it." Patricia's words capture how she "keeps down" her undesirable interactions and physical pain, and effectively washes them out of public view, while at the same time locating them in her personal private sphere. For these girls, and other girls in this study, keeping negative feelings, pain, and conflict out of public view seemed to be part of what was expected.

Overwhelming Demands

Another way that I heard girls in this inquiry speak about enduring stress was in the way that life demands were building up and how they often lacked the skills to handle these increasing expectations. This intensifying process often made girls feel confused and disoriented. Olivia recognized the detrimental effect of academic stress on herself but felt helpless to do anything about it. She said, "education is getting harder to learn and everyone's just like getting stressed out more." Olivia added, "I really don't like all the drama; it just causes more work for you." Alissa, who is a violinist, felt this kind of overwhelming stress even outside of academics. After committing to join a youth orchestra, Alissa said, "It's not just fun and games now. It's serious. Everything is serious." While increasing demands on girls during adolescence is to be expected, these girls words highlight this difficult process and the substantive weight of escalating requirements on them.

I asked Courtney at the end of her seventh grade year to describe some aspect of her life that she didn't know how to handle.

Courtney: Probably, the stress of school, I get very stressed and very quickly, so, it's almost like in health class we always talk about "oh, this is what you can do like take deep breaths, go into a separate room and just sit there for a couple of minutes" or when I'm in a bad mood or I get too stressed I'm just done for the rest of the day until I take a long nap or go to sleep for the night.

Joann: So, when you talk about stress are you aware of where the stress is coming from?

Courtney: Yeah. It's all from school and finals. It's also the drive to like say "okay, well I gotta get a hundred on this [exam], if I want to keep this average" and so [then] I feel like a study wreck. (4, p. 22 - 23)

Courtney's words point to the fact that stress was normal during middle school, which is acknowledged by recounting her health class strategies, but also had a big impact on causing her to be overly tired and needing extra sleep. In addition, the stress made her feel like a "study wreck" and compromised her academic effectiveness. Not surprising, Courtney's comments are not unusual, and most of the girls in the study had similar ways that they talked about stress in their lives.

In another situation, Olivia's words revealed how swamped she felt academically when she stated, "I'm keeping up but I'm trying to keep up more, and more and more, because it's like hard to be up there at the very top but I'm probably somewhere like three quarters of the way because I get so stressed that it slows me down." During that same interview, Olivia expressed doubts about her future and what she thought would be expectations that might exceed her capabilities.

I'm not really sure because I don't know how I'm going to do if there's more stress with like high school, there's going to be a lot more stress and there's going to be a lot more things that you have to deal with, like getting into college and everything like that so, I'm not sure how I'm going to deal with [it]. (2, p.10)

For Alissa, violin was not a requirement for school but she and her family took her participation seriously on several levels, including the investment of time, money, and the option of a possible career ahead. Even though this activity was freely chosen, it still put enormous pressure on Alissa in more ways than one. She had high ambitions, which might have originated

solely from her or from other influences; however, regardless of the source, the immense pressure she felt was real. She told me, "I'm looking for greatness. I'm striving for greatness. Not in the sense [that] I've decided this is what I'm going to do [for a career] but I'm still going to put forth my best effort. I'm still going to work on all this hard stuff. For me, it's going to be all or nothing." Alissa's comment reveals the high expectations she had for herself, as well as, the high level of work she had committed to outside of her normal school work load. In this moment, Alissa seemed to be keeping up, but such intense endeavors can come at a price, and learning how to handle such demands is critical to her and other girls' development.

For girls in this study, learning to endure stress was seemingly part of the process of growing up and taking on increasingly adult-like responsibilities, however, it may also represent an intense phase of social learning or possibly point to gender related demands. In contrast, boys generally "blow off steam" through tolerated physical scuffles or the occasional angry outburst while girls have much less leeway for such behaviors. While such messy emotions are not condoned behavior for either gender, and are routinely relegated to private life, there may be subtle differences in the expectations for each. For these girls, keeping such a tight "lid" on their emotions may have negative impacts on those around them such as when their unchecked feelings burst forth and are directed towards undeserving family members.

Keeping private and overwhelming stress are two ways that girls in this study exemplified enduring stress as a category of the concurring actions theme. In this category, girls' experiences are characterized not so much by their ability, but more by their lack of ability to effectively strategize how to lessen their burden and reset their priories. In keeping private, girls appear to have learned that their individual needs are to be kept away from public view, while overwhelming pressures seem to teach girls that working intensely is normal. By design, or by

accident, these girls seem to be learning to give priority to social needs rather than their own, and to expect to cope with mounting responsibilities. These kinds of powerful lessons teach girls to embrace social actions that will form their future behaviors and reinforce the message that girls' emotional needs are strictly a private matter to be faced alone.

Resisting Support

"Resisting support" represents occasions when girls in this study relinquished opportunities to solicit resources from others in order to meet their own needs. More specifically, this social action category is about how girls refrained from asking for help when they need it, or when they instead, acted overly independent when it would have been appropriate to seek assistance from others such as parents, teachers and peers. Lucy's field hockey coach, Jennifer, noticed these particular kinds of behaviors during team interactions. I asked Jennifer a question during our interview about how Lucy got her needs met on a day to day basis during practices and she replied, "I feel like she doesn't need anything from anybody. Like if she can do it, she'll kind of just go about and do it herself." Jennifer continued and explained, "She doesn't like to need something, and if she does . . . I think it's really hard for her to ask for it." In a similar way, Patricia's mother, Gloria, stated that her daughter at the age of thirteen "doesn't expect a lot from us [as parents]."

For the girls in this study, resistance to asking for support may originate from various sources and may also represent developmental gateways during adolescence. These girls may not yet have the skills to speak up to ask for what they need, such as the ability to identify and prioritize their needs when compared to other's needs. These girls might sometimes have difficulty asking for what they want, but may also refuse support for other reasons, such as trying to live up to false notions of maturity which are pushed upon them by socializing agents. In this

case, girls may refuse help to solidify an image of independence that they seek to fulfill. The pressure to "act like a grown up" can also be seen in these girls actions such as dressing more like an adult, starting to drink coffee or staying up late at night.

For these girls, their abundant social, physical and academic competencies sometimes made it appear like they were already "grown up." Girls used words like "self-powerful, self-dependent, and self-directed" to describe their sense of personal authority during interviews. For girls like these, early maturity may set them up to look and act older than they are, and this in turn, might mislead girls to act alone prematurely when taking on responsibilities and caring for themselves. Since increasing adult behavior is expected during adolescence, girls may feel pressured to "act like an adult" when in fact they may not be able to completely fulfill these expectations since they are still in the process of becoming an adult. When I asked Courtney's theater instructor, Alana, to describe an area where Courtney appeared to be "most in charge of her life," she quickly responded, "Is there an area where she's not in charge? [Laughing]" and then she added, "She's like a little adult." Alana's comments about Courtney were not uncommon and echoed words that some adults had used to describe other girls in this study.

Exceeding Expectations

I was intrigued by how girls in this study impressed me with their capabilities and desire to rise to new opportunities and challenges. Patricia did just that, as an intensely confident and driven seventh grader, and was the kind of person that her mother called an "old soul." When I asked Patricia about changes in her life as a teenager she talked about doing her own laundry and explained that she was "brought up to be responsible" to take care of herself and to be independent. Patricia's mother, Gloria, who is a first grade teacher, most likely brought some of her classroom expectations to bear upon raising her daughter. During my interview with Gloria

she used the same example that Patricia gave about doing her own laundry in response to a question I asked about how her daughter was able to act independently. Interestingly, while Gloria spoke proudly of Patricia's self-directed behavior, she also added that she "fe[lt] a little guilty" about not helping her sometimes. The twinge of regret reflected in her words might be a "mother's guilt" but it could also be that she sensed Patricia was shouldering more work than her peers.

For McKenzie, an outwardly self-assured eighth grader, who lived between the homes of her two divorced parents, acting independently had become a necessary life skill. During my interview with McKenzie's mother, Wendy, we were interrupted by a phone call from McKenzie who was at school. Wendy told me after the call that McKenzie had gotten an eye injury at school and wanted to tell her mother that she was okay but she needed her to set up a doctor's appointment for the next day. Wendy laughed when she told me about the call and appreciated the role reversal going on and how McKenzie had the incident completely under control. In this case, McKenzie was informing her mother about her injury, told her not to worry and asked her to make the necessary doctor's appointment. Her display of competency in that moment was so complete that Wendy barely had the chance to express her concern and offer supportive words. In addition, McKenzie knew Wendy was in the middle of our interview, and so kept the conversation very brief to respect her mother's time with me. Later, when I asked Wendy to describe her relationship with her daughter she said, "I totally and completely trust her judgment. I totally and completely trust her, period, on all fronts."

In another case, Courtney, who was a highly social and verbal seventh grader, had participated in a theater program since she was a young child. Speaking with her instructor, Alana, who elaborated on Courtney's personal qualities and as someone who had worked with

hundreds of children over many years, described how Courtney handled expectations as a young adult. Alana explained, "She's extremely organized, about certain things, about her life, I think she's extreme about the way she schedules everything, I think she's extremely organized, she always seems to know where she is supposed to be and sometimes better than her parents." She continued to elaborate more on Courtney's actions and said, "She's actually kind of unusual in that she is one of my only students who will call on her own, or e-mail me on her own, if she's going to miss a lesson or not going to be somewhere. She knows her schedule, you don't have to say, do we need to talk to your mother about this, your father, it's just 'I am available this date for make-up.'"

These three examples illustrate how some girls in this study were not only stepping up to responsibilities, at least in the eyes of some of the adults around them, but seemed to be exceeding expectations from a developmental perspective. On one hand, these girls' early maturity may position them to surpass age level expectations, but on the other hand, it may allow socializing agents to bypass attending to their continuing developmental needs. The level and degree of these girls apparent maturity was noticeable, in a curious sort of way, leaving me to wonder about how out of place it appeared much like noticing a strange crook in a tree. This over compensatory behavior may represent conflicting personal and social objectives which obscure surface level understandings. When competing tensions like these are at work in girls' lives, the unintentional consequence may be that social demands override these girls' important developmental needs, and as such, they may forgo opportunities for adult support such as learning new skills, receiving comfort or additional safety supervision.

When girls so eagerly demonstrate, through their social actions that they are highly competent, at least in some areas, it may give an unconscious message to others and themselves,

that in fact, they don't need external support of any kind, which may result in a generalized

resistance to support. In this way, girls perceived competencies may in fact end up blocking

critical care and assistance that they really need. Exceeding expectations, as an example of

resisting support, may seem paradoxical; after all, independent social actions are a key goal of

human development. However, when independent actions convey the appearance of unequivocal

self-sufficiency, then, girls may miss out on potential opportunities for specific support and

growth that is critical to their full development.

Dismissing Needs

Another way that girls in this investigation chose to resist support was by dismissing

pressing needs such as dealing with physical pain or illness. These girls seemed to prioritize

actions that showed them as tough and adult-like, and would sometimes illogically pass over

opportunities for garnering support from others or initiating self-care. Adults in these girls' lives

offered an outsider perspective and could recognize when girls denied themselves these

reasonable requirements. In a previous example, Lucy's field hockey coach, Jennifer, told the

story about how Lucy needed a "sub" during a game because she was having a hard time

breathing, and how teammates on the sidelines alerted her to help Lucy. During our interview, as

Jennifer reflected on the episode she uneasily stated that "someone else had to notice, and if they

hadn't, then, she probably would have been passed out before she could have asked." Jennifer's

story about Lucy not signaling for help, may not apply to all girls in this study, but it does reveal

how some girls can discount life sustaining self-care all too easily.

Jennifer thoughtfully explored the incident and how she imagined Lucy's inner self-talk

might have contributed to her choice to not call attention to herself when she was in need.

Jennifer reasoned, "But in her mind, she's probably thinking like 'oh God, I don't want to look

like a wimp.'" Jennifer's explanation of Lucy's choice to not signal to come off the field is not certain and represents one possible way of interpreting the event. However, it could also be that Lucy internally discounted her physical needs, in that moment, in exchange for sustaining a preferred image of strength or independence, or conversely, she may have felt like "being needy" was not an option based on her desire to fulfill perceived expectations of what she thought was socially appropriate behavior. Lucy's choice to not act, appeared to be like hitting an invisible wall, with no other behavioral options available, and which resulted in a "blank space" where there might have been a self-care social action instead. This kind of response did not appear to be calculated but was more like a car heading off a cliff with no brakes.

In a different type of situation, McKenzie's mother, Wendy, conveyed from a parent perspective the challenge that girls sometimes have when deciding between two desires and the way that certain factors hold sway over these choices. She spoke about her frustration when her daughter, McKenzie, had to make a decision about whether to spend time with her mother on her birthday or play an ice hockey game and spend time with her dad who is the coach. Struggling with the decision, Wendy knew that McKenzie would be bound by unspoken rules about following through on her hockey commitments, and that playing a ten month season also did not give McKenzie much leeway for social events. During our interview, Wendy put words to the complicating factors that played into McKenzie's decision, when she frustratingly said that McKenzie "should be able to come [spend time with me] without the repercussions or consequences of the fall-out from [her] dad being upset that [she's] going to miss [a] game." Wendy recognized the reasonable need for compliance with McKenzie's choice to play ice hockey but also saw the intertwined influence of McKenzie's father as coach, and her daughter's

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dogged level of commitment to the team. Wendy likened the situation to a "workhorse" being

"driven by [her] master."

Sometimes the source of social expectations is hard to pinpoint and sometimes they are

more visible. In this case, McKenzie's obedient commitment to ice hockey caused her to

discount other needs, like spending time with her mom on her birthday. From Wendy's account,

McKenzie appeared to dismiss her need to spend time with her mother because of the dual

responsibility to her team and her father, as coach. Wendy recognized the lack of influence

McKenzie had in the situation when she explained frustratingly that "[she] need[s] to be able to

make a choice, and you need to let [her] have that choice." For McKenzie, it was not only her

perception of appropriate behavior that motivated her to dismiss her needs; it was also the

presence of organizational structures and authoritative relationships that steered her away from

meeting or negotiating other possible choices. When girls like McKenzie dismiss their needs, it

may be that other competing demands outside of themselves hold more influence and steer them

to choose against their own preferences.

In another incident, Lucy's mother arranged for her to be dropped off at home every day

after field hockey practice by Jennifer, her coach, and who is also Lucy's cousin. Jennifer

explained how hesitant and unassuming Lucy was about the expectation of getting a ride home.

> Jennifer: So I'm like, "Lucy, it's fine, you can ask. This is all about the level of
> learning" and I'd have to be like "Lucy, it's okay." Oh! And (laughs)—I told you I
> gave her a ride every day and Ruth even asked me like, "Is it alright if you just drive
> her home every day after practice?" And I'm like, "yeah, definitely, of course. It's
> right on the way home." And, um, during the first like four weeks, every day she was
> like "coach, do you think you can give me a ride home?" And I'm like "yes Lucy! I
> told you it's okay" and I felt—like I just wanted to laugh at her, because I'm like,
> "Lucy, it's me, like it's okay. I can drive you home."
> Joann: Hmm. Interesting.
> Jennifer: Yeah. She just felt like it was—she was putting a burden on me or
> something. And it really wasn't a burden at all. And I don't think I—I made her feel

that way ever. So I think that was just natural for her to—she doesn't want to put anyone through trouble. (p. 10)

In this case, Jennifer's description of repeatedly agreeing to give Lucy a ride home every day after practice, was not so much focused on Lucy dismissing her need for a ride, but on how uncertain and possibly undeserving she felt about their arrangement. In her mind, Lucy felt like she had to ask her cousin every day, as if the prior agreement had been erased from one day to the next. This kind of resisting support shows how for a girl like Lucy fulfilling her own needs can be a struggle. Lucy's actions shine a light on how unsure and restricted girls' can feel about meeting their own needs.

Dismissing needs, as a social action, appears to reside at the other end of the spectrum from the previous social action of exceeding expectations. When these girls cannot exceed expectations, as they often think they should, they may feel compelled to discount other possible social actions which focus on meeting their own needs. Social actions may not hold equal status, and some appear to have higher status than others, which may in part account for some of these girls' preferences for certain behaviors over other behaviors. From the perspective of social demands, "what one has to give" may hold more value than "what one needs," and therefore, the individual priorities of these girls may come in second place when pitted against the insatiable demands of social interactions and social expectations.

Conceding Actions

"Conceding actions" highlight times when girls in this inquiry held back or passed over an opportunity to act upon or express a personal need or desire. These actions are hard to detect because they are "blank spots" where actions or words might have taken place, but instead, were traded for inaction and silence. Sometimes these girls chose to "opt out" of doing or speaking for various reasons such as evading peer ridicule, sensing gender limitations, or avoiding futile

conflicts. When these girls avoided opportunities to take up action or speak up, invisible social forces were frequently at work, which caused them to withdraw from a situation. Girls in this study were dynamic social actors but sometimes they sensed that taking action could be detrimental to them, so rather than act, girls relinquished opportunities to speak or respond to various events. McKenzie was familiar with these kinds of relinquishing moments and talked about them as episodes of "burying it down." For example, she noticed when her divorced parents had a new partner, the roles of parent and boyfriend or girlfriend got confusing. McKenzie felt that it was not the boyfriend or girlfriend's role to be telling her what chores she had to do, and this became a point of friction for her. She explained that, "It wasn't their role because I have parents. I don't need more." For McKenzie "burying down" her feelings of frustration during these moments was an example of forgoing a chance to speak up and be explicit about how she felt and what she needed.

Obviously, these girls do not hold back or pass over opportunities all the time but in certain circumstances they relinquished their own needs. In another way, McKenzie's inaction or silence can be viewed not as simply holding back but as "holding together" the emerging relationships that her parents were pursuing. She clearly understood the dynamics of divorce, and in those moments, chose to courageously give up her own needs for the hope of potential stabilizing future relationships for her parents and herself. Conceding actions represent actions of girls, whose status of being young and female, positions them to be on a lower rung of the social ladder, and may require certain accommodating responses as a reflection of their less powerful social standing.

Holding Back

"Holding back" refers to how girls in this study suppressed their actions and feelings for a variety of reasons. These girls sometimes suspended their actions whenever they encountered barriers and limitations to full expression of their needs and desires. As a researcher, these non-actions were like following a trail of bread crumbs that revealed a hidden border which could only be detected with keen awareness and further inspection. Like a dam, these girls' efforts to hold back, stops the flow of social actions and reveal speech or desires that are effectively backed up or halted. Holding back requires opposing effort, like holding one's breath rather than breathing, and may be equal to the exertion of more obvious social actions. Since this kind of effort is largely invisible, it may go unrecognized by these girls themselves or others around them. One way that I became aware of girls holding back, was when talking to them about the difference between their public and private selves. When they talked about their private qualities, I began to hear about the blank spaces where girls resisted getting needs met. McKenzie said, "I don't want to put problems on others" when talking about her private actions. For Courtney, "being not needy" was one way of holding back, and similarly, Lucy tried to "suck it up and avoid conflict."

In a more in depth example, McKenzie, who was a seasoned ice hockey player, described how she understood the difference between girls and boys ice hockey play, and in doing so, showed how gender differences in the sports regulations required her to hold back some of her ambitions. She said, "It's totally different with girls and boys" and elaborated on how "girls have more skill, because they work on their stick handling and boys focus more on checking." In McKenzie's mind, there was a noticeable distinction between the styles of games even though girls and boys use all the same equipment and facilities. She pointed out, "If you watch a boy's

game, it's nothing like a girl's game." Illuminating these differences she said, "Girls hold back more, whereas boys are like greedy and like puck hogs and [wi]ll shoot, whereas, the girls could use a little bit more of that." While McKenzie sees girl players "holding back" she also can't account for the style differences and stated, "I don't know. I'm really competitive, so it's like a way that I can like get that out and not be passive - because I'm not."

For McKenzie, playing ice hockey was the best opportunity she had for tapping her competitive spirit, yet she saw there was another level of competitive play that she could not tap into, since she was a girl, and instead had to play by separate rules which prohibit "checking" in the female sport. Whether McKenzie longed to play the boy style game or not was unclear, but she did pinpoint a difference in how girls were taught to be more cooperative and skillful players, while boys were taught to be more individually focused and aggressive players. Girls holding back and passing rather than taking the shot was clearly part of the sport culture for females. This example shows how an entire sports program requires girls to play a different less aggressive game, thus, girls' restraint characterizes the female game while unchecked aggression describes the culture of the male game. These dissimilarities reveal two versions of gender specific hockey cultures, one which seems to allow the full expression of an aggressive sport while the other one is a "softer" version of the same sport.

While holding back from physical aggression in girls' ice hockey is a requirement of the female sport, girls' daily lives are not so rigidly controlled. Sometimes girls' social actions are more like a toggle switch moving back and forth between assertive actions and restraining actions. For Patricia, this kind of ebb and flow was familiar in her moment to moment judgements of typical social interactions. As an informal peer leader, Patricia frequently acted to initiate or intervene on the social playing field. As someone who was attuned to social rules, she

sometimes found it hard to be on the spot for correcting peer conflicts. I asked her if it was

difficult to be in the position of calling out others inappropriate behaviors.

> Yeah. It definitely is. Like the other day, somebody was talking behind a different girls' back about like her haircut or something—I don't even know, something stupid. And I—like I felt like I should say something, but I didn't, because I didn't always want to be the person who was like "you shouldn't do that." Or like "why are you talking behind her back?" Because I don't want people to be like "oh Patricia, the one who always says that that's mean." But even though I know it's the right thing to do.(3, p. 4)

Although Patricia saw hurtful behaviors happening, she also felt torn about always being

the one to step in to deal with the trouble. In this situation, she held back and did nothing because

she was concerned with how intervening all the time would affect how her peers viewed her. In

another interview response, Patricia explained how she decided when to act and not to act.

> Joann: Yeah. So, how do you handle that?
> Patricia: Yeah. Like I see, it's hard, because like I see both sides. I like don't want to do it, but I know it's the right thing to do. I . . . sometimes I just . . . like if it's a little thing, I'll just blow it off and be like . . . you know, like pretend like I didn't even know. Or if it's a bigger thing . . . like the haircut, I didn't really say anything, because I was like, "It's not really any of my business, and I don't even know about it." And then, but like bigger things, I'll say something to them and be like "why . . . like that's not like nice. Like how would you like it if they did it to you?" (3, p. 4)

This last response provides a more nuanced look at the decision making and judgement

calls that occupied Patricia's mind during the course of each day. She assesses each type of

situation for the degree to which she viewed there was a need for intervention and how she

would be perceived in the act of intervening. In effect, Patricia observed many disagreeable

social interactions but intentionally held back from responding much of the time. Interestingly,

she stated in her response that she sometimes uses a strategy of "pretend[ing] like I didn't even

know" in order to not have to address social conflicts head on. This feigned pretense no doubt

came in handy and helped keep Patricia from always playing the role of the "goody goody"

which put at risk her social status among her peers. This kind of toggling – acting and not acting

– are everyday occurrences for girls in this study. However, it is only the choices to act that are visible, while the occasions when girls choose not to act, went largely unacknowledged, but represented an important way that these girls met their own individual needs rather than social needs.

Reserving Speech

"Reserving speech" is another conceding action that girls in this inquiry displayed through the course of data collection. Speech is an outward expression of inner thoughts, however, moving thoughts from mind to mouth may seem like a simple act but can reveal unresolved inner struggles for these girls that create barriers to full expression and action. When girls in this study were not able to speak up, it often reflected an uncertainty in responding, a desire to avoid conflict, or submission based on a lack of power in the situation about how to react. Unfamiliar experiences with novel situations sometimes stopped these girls from speaking, when they wanted to, and revealed barriers to mounting an effective response. For Courtney, wearing a t-shirt with the phrase "White Christmas is cool" on it landed her in an embarrassing situation when she was called a racist by a boy for wearing it during a play rehearsal. The t-shirt was from a previous play of the same name but Courtney was befuddled by the boys humiliating remark and failed to produce an appropriate protective response. Her surprise in that instance blocked her ability to give an adequate retort, and instead, she felt the sting of humility that was the intension of the speaker, and later wished that she had better defended herself with a quick come back.

Like Courtney, lack of experience and moments of uncertainty can combine to represent key challenges to girls' growth through adolescence and into adulthood. Girls' speech can be laden with pitfalls and social traps, if what is said is taken the wrong way or misunderstood.

Some girls in this study took a "sit back and watch" approach until they felt more confident in fully comprehending situations and executing appropriate verbal responses. For Lucy, speaking up in social settings sometimes felt like she was entering a "minefield and she preferred to hold back and let others do the talking while she engaged in safer more playful discourse. Without skillful verbal communication, girls can feel dependent on others to give them direction, stuck in relationships, and overwhelmed in managing the influx of new expectations during adolescence. When girls like Lucy remain silent, it can be attributed to many factors but rarely reflects a lack of awareness and internal analysis. It might be that simply "opting out" of verbal discourse, until a girl can get a better handle on navigating difficult situations, is preferred until they are ready to express their needs and communicate them more effectively.

For Lucy, who is the youngest of four children, and the only girl in her family, speech was often reserved for setting boundaries and non-personal talk. She infrequently spoke about her personal feelings and operated very independently so she wouldn't have to struggle to communicate her individual needs. She learned early through being picked on by her three older brothers that speaking up was frequently ineffective at stopping them from teasing her. Additionally, she learned that relationships were a source of antagonism and could harbor unresolved frustrations. To Lucy, communicating needs to another person could possibly set her up for a conflict that she might not win or a situation that she was unprepared to handle. Her world was built around the idea of conflict and the desire to avoid conflict. When she spoke during our interviews she described people as being "not mean" instead of saying they were nice or kind – if they were "not mean" then they represented "no conflict" to her and this was the preferred form of interaction she sought with people. Relinquishing her unspoken desires on a day to day basis meant that Lucy had to enact other strategies like being overly independent and

letting others needs and desires take priority over hers. Her lack of early success in speaking up had formed a "habit" of not expecting effective verbal encounters, and this decreased her verbal attempts, and thus, shaped her "avoidance" strategies.

For Alissa, who was a single child, verbal communication skills were more fluid and effective in social interactions. I asked her the question "do you sometimes feel like you have to change who you are in order to be with different people?" Her response revealed an interesting difference around speaking up with her mother versus with her peers.

> My mom has a very strong opinion about things. There are a lot of things that I think differently and we both have very strong opinions, so I kind of have to like reserve that with her. [I]f I disagree with her she always has something to say that like backfires on you. I don't say anything, because I don't want to like fight. [S]o I just kind of like don't say anything. I just stop talking and I just kind of let it go." (4, p. 10)

In this situation, Alissa knowingly yielded to her mother's forceful opinions and deliberately cut off her communication attempts. However, Alissa did have opinions of her own and seized other times and situations in which to speak. She said, "With my friends it's different because I'm their age, and I have just as much power of them as they do me." Additionally, she noted that with her mother she didn't always back down and sometimes pushed for her ideas. She explained that "sometimes I take that out, because I know that I want to fight for what I believe in." For Alissa holding back her opinions was not consistent but rather something she did in a strategic way – picking and choosing the best times and places in which to be heard.

The category of conceding actions appears to represent places in these girls' lives where overt social actions are avoided or blocked, and these responses look more like "blanks spaces" or a "pause" in behavior, rather than clearly observed action. For various reasons, due in part to differing relationships and social contexts, girls in this study sometimes withheld dynamic responses in exchange for other less observed strategies. Holding back and reserving speech are

two ways that girls enacted this behavior. When girls withhold actions, they are often conscious that they are doing so, like Courtney with the t-shirt incident, who wished she had "told off" the boy that called her a racist. While girls don't always respond the way they would like to during interactions, they are also keenly aware and often ready to seize an opportunity when the gates of social rules open and they are able to push through.

Rejecting Actions

"Rejecting actions" represent non-normative behaviors that girls in this study actively avoided and seemed to symbolize the limits of what was acceptable for girls' social actions. These "off limit" behaviors signify actions that may be considered "improper" for girls and included social actions that had to do with being loud, lazy or lying. These girls spoke of denying these actions and worked in a proactive manner to make sure that they would not be seen or associated with these apparently distasteful behaviors. Unlike other concurring actions where girls' behaviors were hidden or took place in private, these actions were thought of as openly unacceptable in girl's eyes, except of course when they were acceptable, like being loud at a party or sleeping in on Saturday mornings. Regardless, of these kinds of exceptions, the unspoken rule was always enforce, and girls who broke them found trouble when they crossed the line and were held accountable by socializing agents.

Rejecting actions seem to act as a feedback loop that redirects girls away from loud, lazy or lying behaviors and supports more gender appropriate behaviors such as talking softly, working hard and honest transparency. Similar to the other concurring actions, these behaviors also reinforce conforming actions and turn girls back towards more gender familiar types of social actions such as social cheering, doing rules or managing friends. Since these kinds of off limit behaviors were not readily observable through girls social actions, they were detected

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mostly through curious words and stories which were dropped into the interview conversation but seemed to have little relevance to the subject at hand. When a girl dropped a reference to one of these unsavory behaviors, it was like she was holding her nose with the aim of distancing herself as far away from it as possible. Rejecting actions can be thought of as either socially prohibited or non-feminine behaviors and include the categories of 1) sounding bossy 2) appearing lazy and 3) breaching trust.

Sounding Bossy

"Sounding bossy" refers to instances when girls in this inquiry were called out and silently warned for using assertive actions and words by either peers or adults. In various settings, these girls were either perceived as, or perceiving others, as acting "bossy." When these girls did not use gender appropriate behaviors, such as talking softly, they stood out, and like a knee jerk reaction socializing agents held them to task for gender crossing behavior. Sounding bossy seemed to require not only a forceful voice but also an authoritative voice – a voice of someone who had a certain purpose for speaking up. At the same time, when a girl in this study was sounding bossy it also meant that a she had gone a bit too far using her voice in a manner that was "out of bounds." Verbal and non-verbal feedback from socializing agents quickly let these girls know they had crossed the line. In this way, the seam of gender expectations opened up and exposed the limits of acceptable social actions, revealing an invisible boundary when girls acted upon their own motivations, only to be shown a red penalty flag instead. At surprising moments, these girls' assertive behaviors were perceived as inappropriate and socializing agents acted as boundary enforcers when they did.

As a co-captain of the middle school field hockey team, McKenzie, found herself beyond the boundary line one day on her way to practice with her team. It was expected that all team

members gather together in the middle school locker room before heading over to the elementary school field for their afternoon practice. McKenzie, and the other two team captains, noticed that one girl was missing, and McKenzie placed a call to the girl on her cell phone to find out if she was coming to practice. McKenzie's coach, Jennifer, relayed some of the details about what happened. She said that the girls' mother answered the phone and angrily asked McKenzie "why are you harassing my daughter?" to which McKenzie apologetically responded "we were just wondering where she was."

Coach Jennifer interpreted the mother's reaction as a misunderstanding that McKenzie was "bossing her [daughter] around" when McKenzie was simply checking in with her. After the phone call McKenzie related the incident to Coach Jennifer and said regretfully, "I didn't mean to act bossy or mean to [the girl] but I did call her." Coach Jennifer reflected in our interview that maybe McKenzie felt she had over stepped her role as captain in that situation. Perhaps sounding bossy is something that girls who are in formal positions of leadership are more subject to, and consequently, become targets for gender corrective push backs. In another incident, Coach Jennifer spoke about McKenzie again, and how another field hockey player told her that "McKenzie was kind of annoying us today." When Jennifer inquired about how McKenzie was acting "annoying," the girl responded that "she was being bossy." While the teammate saw McKenzie in this way, it is interesting to note that Jennifer, the coach, did not perceive McKenzie similarly, but instead, saw her as stepping up to her leadership role as co-captain which was something she had encouraged.

For Patricia, who was aspiring to be captain of the middle school basketball team the following year, she found that her assertive behavior sometimes rubbed others the wrong way, and was on the lookout for girls who might take her actions offensively. During one basketball

game, Patricia caught a disapproving glance from an older team member who she thought might have been slighted by her demonstrative suggestions in the team huddle such as saying "make sure you box out" or "hands up on defense." After the game, Patricia saw the girl leave hurriedly and decided to follow her to check in and make sure she hadn't unintentionally offended the girl. Patricia elaborated during our interview about her exchange with the other player.

> I'm not trying to be bossy, you know, I just get really into the game. She goes "oh no. That's totally fine." She's like "that's fine with me." She said—because I guess she—I don't know if she said she used to have someone on her team who was bossy in like a negative way, and she said "at least you're not saying that I stink and all that." I was like "oh no. I just get really into the game." So, but I wanted to make sure that she knew I wasn't trying to be [bossy]. (4, p. 11)

Patricia's description of the interaction reveals the degree to which she had to monitor her own actions, and apply damage control strategies when she perceived that she had crossed the behavioral boundary line. While the older girl did not say that Patricia was being "bossy," she was evasive about what caused her discontent with Patricia's actions. She indicated what kind of behavior would not be acceptable such as "saying that I stink," but she was also sending Patricia a non-verbal message in her word tone that she was not approving of such bold behavior. Additionally, Patricia softened her actual motives when she said, "Oh, no. I just get really into the game," rather than explaining that she was aspiring to be captain next year and trying to show her abilities. This encounter may have been more about an older player being put off by a younger players brazen grab for power than anything else. However, it is also worth noting that Patricia knew she was acting bossy, and felt like she had to proactively manage the potential negative fallout, as a consequence for behaving in a typically non-feminine way, to achieve her aim of becoming captain for the next year.

Appearing Lazy

"Appearing lazy" refers to illogical comments that girls in this investigation made in reference to concerns for being seen as idle by others for various reasons. These girls' use of the word "lazy" caught my attention during our interviews, and I began to wonder why it came up at all, and what it meant for the girls who used it. These girls did not say what they specifically meant by the word lazy, and I didn't ask but wished I had. At the time, I assumed we both knew what we were talking about and that the meaning was obvious. In a general sense, I took the meaning of the word to be the opposite of "working hard" or reluctance to take up responsibilities. Additionally, it was perplexing to me that any of the girls in the study could identify themselves as "lazy," in the true sense of the word, especially given the high level of engagement girls had in various activities and the substantive level of effort they applied to those activities.

A simple definition of the word lazy, from the Merriam-Webster dictionary (1991) is "not liking to work hard or to be active" but this meaning is vague and doesn't represent the possible range of lazy behaviors that girls might enact. In one way, if level of effort is average, then "lazy" might reflect the true meaning of the word such as being sluggish or slothful. However, if level of effort is above average, then "lazy" might look like someone with an "A-type" personality who was taking a coffee break. In this study, girls would best be described fitting the second example rather than the first, leaving me to wonder about the role that acting lazy played in these girls' lives.

Specifically, these girls were not actually being "lazy" in the true definition of the word when they used it in their language, and this was puzzling, if taken literally. Like other social actions that have been discussed in this category, appearing lazy seems to signal another

boundary line which must be observed by girls in this study. It seemed that the "fear of being lazy," rather than the experience of "being lazy," was all that was necessary to motivate girls to seek out non-lazy behaviors such as social activating, managing friends or exceeding expectations. Whether appearing lazy is non-feminine or simply unacceptable behavior is not entirely clear but it does seem to represent a behavior that these girls believe should be vigorously avoided.

For Alissa, who was a serious student, lazy had to do with the effort it took to become an adult and the resistance she felt about shouldering the work that came with it. During one interview, we discussed how academics were impacting her life in seventh grade, and she gave a response that happened to include a reference to being lazy, which caught me off guard and seemed like an unusual comment from such a committed student.

> I don't want to grow up. I don't know why. I don't know. I['m] very lazy in that sense. Not lazy - I just want to be in that state [of being younger]. When I'm really happy about something - I just want to stay there and just make it last and not have to like worry about "oh, I have this essay due" and "oh, I have this homework" and then it just piles up on you and then that feeling is gone really soon. So—at some points I definitely wish I could be a little younger. (2, p. 11)

Alissa's words revealed her ambivalence about the increasing demands of academics, the compulsory nature of growing up, and the fact that there was no longer an option to "languish" in childhood innocence. For girls like Alissa, the sustained climb of developing into an adult required something new, something that was not lazy - something that prioritized work over carefree moments. Alissa had picked up on this change, and part of her didn't like it and wanted to stay "lazy" for a little while longer. New expectations in her life now required her to go from one thing to another with few breaks, and these kinds of expectations don't *do* lazy, and Alissa knew this, thus, her ambivalent feelings about not wanting to grow up and sensing that being lazy was no longer an option.

For Patricia, who was a hugely committed athlete, I noticed that she worked just as hard at her academics and placed an equal level of attention on her studies. I asked her, "Why are academics important to you?"

> I think because if I look at some people and like "oh, they're just like really lazy." Like I don't want people to think that I'm like that. I want people to know that I'm a hard worker and I want to do good and try hard. I don't want to be thought of as somebody who doesn't like try to work hard at it. (1, p. 3)

Patricia's response to my question was curious, since it seemed to suggest that her primary academic motive was not wanting to be seen as lazy, and was the real motivation for her to "do good and try hard" in her studies. For Patricia, "trying not to be lazy" seemed to direct her back to more appropriate social behaviors, which in this case would be an opposite behavior like working hard. In a sense, the fear of being "seen as lazy" operated to form a barrier that pointed girls like Patricia back to conforming actions; otherwise, they risked potential consequences from socializing agents. In these two examples, it is the girls themselves who initiated their own inner warning signal to avoid "laziness" and pushed them to act in a manner that overtly displayed effort and away from any possible association with idleness. The origins of this social rule are not obvious and suggest that they are deeply woven into the fabric of social norms that exist in and around the lives of these girls.

Breaching Trust

"Breaching trust" is about incidents involving acts of trustworthiness and truthfulness that girls in this investigation described primarily during interviews in which they spoke about friend or peer interactions. While being trustworthy appeared to represent the measure of true friendship, and also signaled predictability in a relationship, the act of lying or being untrustworthy signaled difficult and distasteful social actions that were hard to avoid. Of all three rejecting actions, the sense I got from these girls was that lying seemed to rank as the lowest

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form of inappropriate behavior a girl could commit. Not because it was a less moral act but because lying represented words conveyed by others that were volatile and signaled social danger that over shadowed the potential consequences of acting either bossy or lazy. Girls who were acting loud or lazy could be called out and held accountable, while lying was a social action that was slippery to detect and prove since it could always be denied or covered over with another lie. Evidently, there is a moral element to "lying," and most children are taught from an early age not to lie, however, the idea of total transparency may not be realistic or safe, especially as girls get older, yet there is an expectation that girls are supposed to always be truthful. The rigidity of following this rule comes into adolescence with a moral heaviness that it held during childhood, yet rethinking this rule and learning to sometimes tell "white lies," especially when we think something we say will hurt someone, is actually appropriate. When girls in this study spoke about deceit, it was in relation to close friends and peers, and seemed to be connected to the underlying power dynamics within these interactions.

Olivia was a keen observer of friendship behavior and learned how important trust was in a relationship. She said of her newest friendships, "You have to learn to trust them and you have to learn how to trust them and when to trust them." Olivia's comment reveals the important foundation that a solid relationship is built on, and the vulnerability that lies beneath close friendships. Olivia had astutely discerned that some people were more "trustworthy" than others, and relied on her connections to identify what she called "friend material" or potential friends who had already been vetted by other "trustworthy" friends. In one example, Michelle recalled a difficult situation in school between two close friends, both of which became untrustworthy in her eyes. Describing one of the friends, Michelle said, "She's always been the tattletale. She always goes straight to the teacher." She elaborated and stated "but it got a little annoying

because you know that you can't trust her with anything." During middle school, girls still frequently go to authorities as a power play to advance their own purposes, especially when they have not yet learned to shoulder responsibility for their own actions and communications. Michelle explained, "I speak up a lot because I don't want there to be any lies." However, truthfulness is not always the solution in fragile relationships, and when she shared information with a friend that was truthful but also hurtful; she landed herself in a whole lot of trouble. It seemed that being part of a "rumor mill," such as telling secrets or simply holding secrets could result in a breach of trust either way.

Alissa found herself in a similar situation with her circle of friends. When her group was deciding which movie to see, Alissa felt like "we can't decide on anything." She described the group dynamics and how each person jockeyed for control over the final outcome with details of the happening. Alissa commented that one of her friends "lies to make sure that she gets her way." She further explained, "It's very annoying to have someone that does that – lies and doesn't tell you something." For Alissa, this confusing kind of dynamic pushed her to "step back" and relinquish her stake in the decision making process. For Patricia, making plans to go to the movies with a friend ended in an unexpected and awkward situation. She told me she had made plans to go to the movies with a friend but then later a different friend asked her, "What are you doing today?" and she didn't know how to respond. She frustratingly said, "I didn't really know what to say. It's hard to like balance your time between different people." She revealed her discomfort at having prior plans and explained "Because I don't want to lie, but I don't really want her to find out." Patricia's words showed how she felt caught between hurting her friend by telling her she already had a movie date or telling a lie to the friend in order to make her not feel bad. Like Patricia, finding oneself between a "rock and a hard place" was a familiar spot to be

for girls in this study, and represented prickly social interactions which had to be managed with often unpleasant outcomes.

Sounding bossy, appearing lazy, and breaching trust are three more social actions that illuminate the rejecting actions category and were demonstrated through the experiences of girls in this study. In this category, these girls' encounters were shaped by deliberate avoidance techniques and proactive actions, to defend against unwanted labels that could damage their social standing or relationships, and pressed them to choose actions that were socially normative. In sounding bossy, girls found trouble when socializing agents deemed their words went too far beyond social boundaries, and they encountered penalizing push backs. Appearing lazy seems to have the function to steer girls towards working hard and taking on social tasks. While breaching trust teaches girls to be wary of relationships and to tread carefully in social circumstances. These social signifiers had a powerful impact on the social actions of girls in this study, and represent social signposts with clear warnings that read "danger ahead – pass at own risk." These girls clearly understood the warning signs, and responded with shrewd attention to the rules, hoping to spare themselves the social consequences of crossing the behavioral boundary line.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights the theme of concurring actions and how they are displayed in the lives of girls in this study. As a group, these social actions share reverberating qualities with conforming actions while occupying a more shadowy location in girls' lives. Enduring stress, resisting support, conceding actions, and rejecting actions represent social actions that reveal hidden, avoided, or prohibited behaviors which reinforce the highly visible behaviors of conforming actions. This chapter illustrates often unseen social actions and their components which are part of girls' experiences in this inquiry, and include a breath of situations which are

located in both girls' public and private lives. The four different social action categories reveal some of the most obscure social actions noticed in girls' behaviors during this study. This analysis covered a variety of circumstances that related to girls' needs and desires, feelings and emotions, as well as, their refusal of engaging in socially prohibited behaviors. These social actions represent "corrective" behaviors, which were adopted by girls in this study to comply with social rules of conduct, and were shared by all these girls to varying degrees. While these social actions are located in the shadows of girls' lives, and represent a kind of buttressing quality to conforming actions, other different social actions are also at work and hold an important position in reference to girls' own goals and purposes. These more individually focused social actions are the focus of the next chapter, which will introduce the theme of "transforming actions," and explains in detail what they are and how they operate in the lives of girls in this investigation.

CHAPTER 8

TRANSFORMING ACTIONS

"It seems like [your parents] change, but you're the one changing. It's like they're babying you, but not, not necessarily at my house. Like my parents adult me. Like they say, 'you've got to do it.'"

Michelle (2, p. 15 – 16)

"I mean I care about what others think of me sometimes, and I also care about what, how others are feeling. But sometimes I kind of let that go and say 'well, what do I really want?' I really don't know . . . and what do I need also? Like what's good for me."

Alissa (3, p. 14)

The theme of transforming actions is distinct from the previous two social action themes and highlights these girls focus on self-oriented endeavors above other concerns. This chapter introduces the third of the three major theoretical social action themes which were identified in the lives of the adolescent girls in this study, in response to gender shaping influences. These social actions will be illuminated through additional instances from these girls' lives and will describe the properties, components, and conditions under which these behaviors took place, and help to illustrate specific aspects of these girls every day social actions.

The "transforming actions" theme highlights the self-oriented social actions of girls in this investigation which contrasts with the more collectively oriented social actions of the conforming actions and concurring actions themes discussed previously. The word "transforming," as it relates to this social action theme, is on one level about the momentous change that characterizes these girls' early adolescent experiences, in relation to their overall human development. On another level, it is about the necessary relocation of focus that girls must make from social oriented actions to self-oriented actions, in order to sustain their own existence. Transforming actions are about uncovering the unique qualities that set girls in this

study apart from each other and make them who they are as individuals. This perspective illuminates girls' distinctive needs and objectives, and deemphasizes their deep-seated orientation to social happenings. These social actions are neither hidden, nor overly conspicuous, but are an assumed part of these girls' evolving developmental process. The girls in this study share in the experience of constant change which provides an unremitting backdrop to daily life and is considered a normal aspect of their early adolescent growth. This adaptability to innate forces occurs within a context of social demands yet serves the developmental needs of each girl. In this study, these girls' unfolding distinctive qualities were revealed to the world, for better or worse and often required them to face and defend the person they were becoming.

The data collected from interviews with girls, adults, and site visits during this study revealed social actions that were sometimes self-focused and represented the inner most motivations of girls related to their own life priorities. These actions embody the individual "blueprint" that resides within each girl and serves a different purpose than other social actions which are more collectively oriented. While these actions are less showy than conforming actions or concurring actions, they are like an underground stream that runs continually through each girl's life guiding her unique evolution as a person. Some of these actions were observed in these girls' natural growth, and appeared as new skill sets, as they began to take charge of their daily activities more and more. Other actions were based on girls' emerging plans for their future self and life ahead. Since these girls' interests are self-focused and run contrary to expected social behaviors, these social actions were downplayed and inhabited the margins of girls' visible social actions. However, when girls were directly asked a question about themselves, they proudly stated personal aims and desires of their own making, and indicated their enthusiasm for setting personal goals as a priority. While transforming actions represent different purposes than

the previously discussed conforming actions and concurring actions, they are nonetheless significant, especially as they relate to the growth and aspirations of each individual girl.

More directly, transforming actions represent alternative social actions which prioritize these girls' individual needs over cultural demands. The social actions of the transforming actions theme reflect developmental and intentional acts focused on these girls' own growth and goals. These girls' innate capacity for transformation over the life course predisposes them to adapt to a variety of behaviors for different purposes and at different times. This mutability is most evident in these girls' developmental metamorphosis which signals the unfolding expression of a singular self. Girls' social actions related to this process include a focus on maturation requirements, personal objectives, and identity shaping endeavors. They are more closely aligned with these girls own needs rather than the needs of others or cultural expectations. Transforming actions can be thought of as small acts of "rebellion," and are self-centered in contrast to other social actions, which require these girls to be more selfless. Through transforming actions the viewpoint of the "self" becomes visible and pushes back against more dominant social demands. While the greater share of these girls energies were expended on social requirements, girls own demands frequently succeeded in the struggle for manifestation. With lopsided odds favoring social mandates, these girls' individual achievements represent tenuous holdings and hard won victories.

Transforming actions introduces additional topography to explore the lives of girls in this study, and a contrasting view from which to observe these girls' behaviors. While conforming actions and concurring actions represent the social orientation of girls' experiences in this study, it is the goal of this chapter to illuminate girls' self-oriented social actions and how they relate to the other social action themes. Similarly, this chapter will outline different categories of social

actions and illustrate the experiences of these girls through a variety of incidents. Additionally, this chapter will serve as the third and final set of social action themes detailing the experiences of girls in this study. Transforming actions represent non-normative behaviors and include the categories of 1) building capacities 2) shifting behaviors and 3) evolving singularity.

Building Capacities

"Building capacities" represents growth-related competencies which emerged for girls during this study. These changes were many and were noticed on several fronts including girls' increasing skills, physical growth, expanding responsibilities, cognitive development and intensifying social engagement. When I asked these girls about what was different about their lives as growing adolescents, they responded with equal parts "likes" and "dislikes." These girls spoke about the increasing feeling of power, as their skillfulness in sports or music expanded, or when their sense of control over their emotional responses to difficult situations improved. Additionally, these girls found a new sense of freedom in being able to stay up later or walk with friends to a corner store, while also recognizing new responsibilities in their lives such as household chores, baby sitting or more formal roles such as one girl who worked as a practice coach with a younger violin player. These girls expressed both excitement and apprehension when talking about their growing capacities. For girls in this study, adolescence represented a time of intense growth and development, and provided them with challenges and rewards, and was different than any other time in their life.

The transition from childhood to adolescence was filled with developmental leaps for these girls. Small incremental changes all added up over time and signaled new areas of growing abilities. I asked Michelle to describe a time in her life when she felt powerful or in charge. Her

response reflected a simple task yet signaled an important gateway for her emerging sense of young adulthood.

> Well, I've just started to learn—like love to cook and stuff like that and I felt pretty powerful when I could—like I used to only be able to mix it all together and stuff, but now I'm able to chop the vegetables or the fruits. And I'm able to put it in the oven; I'm able to do everything. I just need to master taking it out of the oven, because I'm like "burns my eyes!" And I still can't chop onions because I'm so close to the onion on my counter. My dad says we need to get me some goggles and then I'll be able to do it. (2, p. 1)

In another case, I asked Alissa to think about the past year of her life and to share "what was good" about it. As a seasoned violinist, Alissa responded to my question by describing her growing abilities under the attention of her new violin teacher, Kirsten. Alissa spoke about the increasing challenges that she was met with, as she encountered new learning expectations from her teacher, and her recognition that her techniques were improving. She elaborated in detail about her developing skills.

> [D]efinitely my violin playing, and just the encouragement I get from Kirsten, and it's just like it feels like now that we've really been on a roll and I've been really on a roll with learning new techniques and keeping up with that. I still struggle with like stopping and saying "okay, what am I doing wrong?" and "okay, I need to fix this" and you just have to step back and say "okay, what do I need to do?" But with the bowing techniques, they're wicked hard. Some of that stuff that I'm learning, Kirsten's like "okay, you know, you can do it now. [I'm] really gonna challenge you and with the pieces that we're learning but you're really going to learn a lot and you're going to." So like with ricochet and staccato and sautillé and all these other Italian names for bowings, [it's] encouraging to be able to do them now, whereas, two months ago I couldn't even come close. (2, p. 8)

Michelle and Alissa's words illustrate familiar learning processes that children and adolescents experience daily and are directly tied to their growing sense of personal power. Expanding capacities like these happen frequently and can be seen in every area of these girls' lives. Alissa's choice to play the violin was also an important element in her growing abilities as this reflected an interest that was her own and not dictated by school or parental expectations.

According to Deci and Ryan (2000), abilities can develop best when they have the opportunity to grow under an individual's own choice and motivations, and this seemed to be true for Alissa.

In another example, Alissa worked once a week as a practice coach for a younger violin player named Morgan. Similar to Michelle, I asked her about areas of her life where she felt powerful or in charge. She answered with a detailed description which revealed her growing sense of skillfulness both as a violinist and teacher. In her new role as teacher, she drew upon her own past experiences as a violin student to guide her emerging instructional skills which also reinforced her sense of increasing ability.

> I'm in the place of a teacher and I know what needs to be done, and I know like the scales of each song, because I've played them before and I've gone over them with her . . . I've got it down to a science, just because I've been playing for like seven years. But she doesn't, because she's, you know, two years and it's great to share my knowledge. . . . I'm in charge of like "alright" like saying "that's good, you know, that's good enough. Let's move on" or "let's stay back and work on this." I get really easily distracted, like wicked easily distracted and she's a little kid, and you know, thirty minutes is a lot of time for . . . a lot of people are surprised that she, I can actually control her, you know, for thirty minutes of that time practicing violin tediously, because I'm very hard (laughs). I'm not easy, and it's definitely not like hard, like hard, hard, hard. But they're like, "oh that's awesome. Good job." But, you know . . . I know what's going on. (4, p. 4)

Alissa's detailed account revealed her growth as a violinist and her emerging ability to share her knowledge with others. She described not only what she knew about violin but also the skills she was gaining as a teacher. For Alissa, and her student Morgan, they were on a similar path of development but at different places, much like different rungs on a ladder.

Expanding obligations, such as Alissa's practice coaching job, go hand in hand with adolescent development, and as these girls' responsibilities grow, they grow with them. Unless there are barriers, girls will step up to new opportunities and develop deepening capacities. This is an expected and natural course of action for growing teens like Alissa. Additional responsibilities represent challenges for girls in this study; however, their growing capacities

often provide them with the emerging skills to handle these new demands. The sometimes

mysterious unfolding of these girls' growth and development, represents an important backdrop

to their everyday lives, yet at the same time, signal significant developmental accomplishments.

During interviews, I had the privilege to ask girls to reflect on what this time of growth was like

for them. I asked Alissa the question "What's different about your life now than before middle

school?"

> I do have more responsibilities, and not like they're enforced, but they're implied
> now that I'm older, and it's kind of like the way of life, you know. They're implied
> but now . . . I can do my homework and do all that stuff without being told . . . it's
> just like growing. And, I've definitely grown in myself and knowing about myself
> and like interacting with others and communication skills and all that stuff really.
> I've grown and matured in that sense. (2 p. 10)

Not every girl is able to step back and find the words for the changes happening in their

lives like Alissa. For Patricia, recognizing changing interests, and being more involved with

choosing her activities, is reflected in a response she made to the question "Is there anything you

miss about life before being a teen?"

> That's kind of a tricky question. . . I think I liked it at the moment . . . like I liked
> elementary school when I was in it . . . like I don't know. I think that's just how, like
> what I did then, was what I liked. Like I used to do Girl Scouts and . . . liked it then,
> but now I'm like not into that. So, I think [that] what I did then is . . . and what I do
> now is what I like to do . . . I don't *have* to do Girl Scouts anymore. Like I don't
> *have* to do what I don't want to do, whereas before . . . like your mum [says] like,
> "oh, you've got to do Girl Scouts. Go to Girl Scouts" and now it's like "well, like
> what if I don't really want to?" Like you can have like an adult conversation with her
> and say like "it's really not my thing. Like that's not what I want to do" and then
> switch and try something new. So there's more . . . you have more of the choice now
> than in elementary school. (2 p. 14)

Patricia's response reveals her recognition that growing up is a process of change which

also includes the ability to adapt to those changes. When she said, "what I did then is what I

liked," it shows her understanding of how her interests can change and evolve over time, in light

of her newly emerging abilities. As Patricia got older and her abilities advanced she not only had

more activity choices but a broader capacity to engage and challenge herself in those activities. For some girls, looking back was an opening for them to connect with authentic feelings around the time of childhood; however, in this instance Patricia didn't share these kinds of feelings but rather assessed her own developmental progress and located her emerging autonomy in managing her own life choices. Patricia's awareness of her new capacity for choice making reduced her need for parental involvement but also put her squarely in charge of that aspect of her life.

Shifting Behaviors

"Shifting behaviors" highlights these girls' growing awareness and conscious choices to change their actions based on the desire to relinquish old patterns. Through their own experiences, girls in this study learned from their mistakes or from painful situations they encountered, and then, chose new behaviors that moved them forward in their development. These shifting behaviors are reflected in these girls growing sense of control over parts of their lives such as their emotional responses to apparent failures and letting them roll away without protracted angst. These girls' ability to grow and learn from their own difficult situations required a reflective stance and an inner yearning to want to modify their ways. For Alissa, this kind of introspection was apparent when she said, "I've really changed with how I judge myself and how I'm self-confident, you know. I'm so more self-confident in that I don't have to be friends with everyone. But I, I mean I am, and that's kind of what's making me be friends with everyone. It's so weird." For Alissa, growth appeared from a perplexing social process and difficult realizations about herself and the world around her. For girls in this study, new perspectives seemed to come from hard won insights, like Alissa's, that opened the way for them to behave differently and let go of old or ineffective ways of interacting.

During a writing exercise before our interview, Patricia wrote about ways that she acted in private and ways that she acted in public. Afterwards I asked her to elaborate on them and speaking about her public actions she said, "I put 'it's okay to make mistakes'. . . I used to always be embarrassed to like raise my hand in a class, but now it's just like if you make a mistake, like everybody does it. It's not like a big deal." I pressed Patricia to say more about how she was able to make the shift from not being able to make a mistake to it being okay to make a mistake.

> Joann: Do you remember what made the difference in shifting your sort of attitude about that?
> Patricia: I think probably middle school, when I realized that like . . . stuff's getting a lot harder, and that it's, I mean you're not going to learn if you don't like raise your hand and ask questions or like in class, or do something like even outside with your friends. . . . Like it's just like everybody does it, I guess. So like I realized that I'm not the only one and that it might be more embarrassing to not say it. Do you know what I mean? Like to not say it, and then be thinking that that was a mistake to not say it. (3, p. 1 – 2)

In a different way, McKenzie was pushed to change her actions when her parents split up which added layers of complexity to her life including the need to communicate better and stand up for herself within her own family. During interviews with McKenzie, she spoke frequently about the experience of her parents' divorce and both the challenges and benefits that came from it. Through this complex event, McKenzie learned many skills and became a better speaker and self-advocate. McKenzie talked about how things were before her parents' divorce and said, "So, it was definitely like more difficult to talk after the divorce than before the divorce. Like before we kind of kept to ourselves and like dealt with our problems our own way and then the divorce like, that just wasn't going to work, being quiet and like keeping it down." But after the divorce McKenzie said that "We definitely talk a lot more now like about anything, rather than like before it was sort of like we kind of kept, me and my sister, sort of kept like our [feelings to ourselves]." McKenzie attributed her shift in behavior to the immensity of the problem she and

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her family faced, and the effort they put into working through building a new family structure. She said that the previous dynamic of keeping feelings down "changed when we had these bigger problems to overcome."

One of the specific ways in which McKenzie changed her behavior was reflected in how she handled her emotional responses to others. She gave the following response to the question, "In what areas of your life do you feel powerful and in charge?"

> [L]ike my attitude, and that sort of goes with how I allow things to affect me. Like what I allow to bother me and what I don't allow to bother me. So, whether it's problems with friends or my family or whatever, I could sulk and be angry and sad and stuff. But I talk about it, and like I get how I feel out, so that I'm not keeping that in and like having that weight on my shoulders. (4, p. 1)

Taking charge of her inner world was profoundly important to McKenzie, since there was much in her life that was out of her control, especially living between two homes in a very scheduled way. She further explained her swing in behavior and said, "Like to be moving forward and not like dwelling on what happened and like moving on to what's going to happen, and like making what the problem is better, problems that [are] in my power to be able to fix and where it's sort of out of my hands."

In another situation, Alissa described changing her behavior when a strong feeling sent up a signal that something was wrong. The excerpt below was her response to my question, "How is your life different than it was before middle school?" Alissa described her disappointment at not receiving the praise and approval that she came to expect as a child, and then, how as an adolescent she became acutely aware of the absence of that support. She explained her growing realization about how she handled it.

> I've grown a lot and like being okay with not having praise . . . like praise all the time, and not feeling so out of shape, bent out of shape, when I don't get the response that I want from someone. . . . I've grown . . . definitely because my mom and my dad and my family have helped me . . . feeling way less . . . I guess self-conscious and like just bent out of shape. That's the only word I can think of! Bent

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out of shape . . . like when I want to hear something from someone but . . . like the response I want like "good job". . . I still get bent out of shape . . . but it's definitely changed and it's helped me a lot . . . because it's not the end of the world, you know, and I just keep working harder. (3, p. 3)

In this next excerpt, Alissa addresses more specifically how her behavior actually changed in response to a follow up question that I asked.

Joann: What have you found most helpful to adapt or adjust or cope with the changes in your life?
Alissa: Sometimes I'm having a really crappy day and I don't want to talk and I don't get beat up by "ugh, she's not talking to me" and there's this whole thing, whole ordeal, we get in a fight and I'm just like, "alright. That's fine, you know, if you don't want to talk, that's fine and I'll be here." . . . It's like this sarcastic "alright, whatever." [T]his easygoing kind of attitude that—with friends, you know, that definitely makes me a stronger person. I don't need to be like a kiss-up to everyone and I don't need to be a kiss-up to have friends and just enjoy having company with them without being really tense about "ugh, am I saying something wrong?" or whatever, it's all good. (Laughs) (2p. 6)

For Patricia, McKenzie, and Alissa, learning to shift their actions came from shedding old patterns that were no longer working for them. The realization that learning can come by making mistakes motivated Patricia to give up pretending that she understood everything she was learning in school without needing occasional clarification. For McKenzie, the overwhelming family crisis she found herself in pushed her to be open to changing her previous position of dealing with problems "our own way." Alissa's recognition that she couldn't control other people's reactions helped her formulate a new strategy to "just enjoy having company with them without being really tense." Each of these girls chose to change their behavior and followed a progressive path that helped them evolve. These kinds of transforming actions don't necessarily come easily for these girls, and are the result of increased awareness, precipitating difficulties, and the search for another way.

Evolving Singularity

"Evolving singularity" represents the differing personal priorities and identity choices girls in this study made in an effort to align themselves with their own personal truths. These included both temporary and permanent decisions girls made in pursuit of their own life objectives. Evolving singularity focuses on girls' pursuit of talents, chosen goals and the search for opportunities to achieve those goals (Waterman, 2004). For these girls, the adolescent journey is also an exploration of the "self" and a search to answer the questions: Who am I? What am I good at? What will I do? Courtney engaged in her own self defining search when she reflected, "My parents are both Democratic, and I think that I am going to grow up to be a Republican." The journey towards achieving one's own potentials underlies these girl's social actions despite various routes and side paths that they may take in order to achieve them. When cultural demands pull these girls energies away from their own needs, it can be hard for them to prioritize their own aspirations. During our final interview, I asked McKenzie if she had any life philosophies that guided her in the day to day challenges she faced as a growing adolescent girl. Her answer to my question was the question, "What's going to make *me* happy?" McKenzie's return question highlights her yearning to focus on her own personal priorities rather than other competing demands. Evolving singularity signals an important path centered on these girls individual aims, which must be fought for amidst the fray of social urgencies, and continually challenge their ability to emphasize their own needs above all others.

When girls in this study make their own needs and objectives a priority, they support their own development as a unique person. When they do not, their development can be thwarted or stalled, while others may benefit from their highly social oriented actions. The tension these girls feel to balance the needs of the culture, with their own needs, is readily evident in their

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social actions. In one example, Michelle felt the strain when she entered a new middle school and had to make new friends. Her preference for slouchy boy clothes and short hair did not represent the stereotype of a girl and seemed to complicate her friendship making process. She recognized this fact during one of our interviews and said, "I mean I'm still sort of tomboyish." Her identity choices made her a target of peer questions like "Why don't you grow your hair out?," however, her defensive retort was an emphatic "because I hate it long." Michelle's outward appearance shaped her potential friendships and this was evident when she said, "I'm making a good group of friends who don't care about the way I look or the way I talk or the way I walk. They like me for who I am." Michelle's words point to the difficulty she found in reconciling her looks with her own identity preferences, and she further summed up her experience when she said, "don't judge a book by its cover – I have to be me." Michelle's words suggest that appearances don't always tell the whole story about a person, and that the truth of a person's identity may not be so easily explained by how they present themselves. Her remarks convey the cultural pull of normative appearance expectations and her struggle to define herself on her own terms. Actions like Michelle's that go "against the grain," require girls to clarify and defend their choices when they don't easily fit within a recognized cultural script, and yet, Michelle's conviction, "to be me," was clearly evident and revealed her struggle to honor the unique person that she was becoming.

In a different circumstance, Olivia expressed how her growing understanding of herself guided her to opportunities that prioritized her own talents and goals. In the following interview sequence I asked Olivia to elaborate on what she wrote about, in regards to feeling powerful or in charge during a writing exercise that she completed before our interview. Her response ties into how her sense of self was shaped by the opportunities she pursued and how she responded to

them, and in this particular instance, how her perception of herself enabled her to further

influence her evolving talents and personal goals.

> Olivia: And for my powerful side, I put like my attributes and characteristics. Like I feel like I know who I am and I'm in charge of who I am.
> Joann: I'm interested in your attributes and when you talk about knowing yourself. Do you mean knowing yourself in the sense of being clear about who you are?
> Olivia: Yeah.
> Joann: What you like, what you don't like – that kind of thing?
> Olivia: Yeah.
> Joann: Can you say a little bit more about that?
> Olivia: Yeah. Well, like, um, with my attributes. I try to stick with my attributes and become a better person and keep the person that I am. And, I know that I can do that, and I can try harder and become a better person.
> Joann: When you say become a better person - get to know who you are better?
> Olivia: Yeah. So I feel powerful enough to be able to continue that.
> Joann: If you were to say an area of your life where you feel the most powerful, like just, you're in charge, you know, Amanda's in charge, you know, or a situation or circumstance, a time?
> Olivia: Well, in D.I.
> Joann: Destination Imagination?
> Olivia: Yeah. I like got a lot of comments on my leadership skills. And, like, I like to be in charge and kind of, which we talked about a little bit before, like meetings, some of the meetings, and giving out more ideas than other people, and kind of directing and, like, just being in charge and making sure everything went right.
> Joann: How did that happen? Did the adults help set that up? Did they see that you had those qualities and encourage it?
> Olivia: I think it was a little bit of everything because my coach told me that it would be a good idea if I helped to lead too. And, like I felt like there wasn't, like, set leaders, so I could like stand up and kind of just become one of the leaders to try and help out more. (4, p. 6 – 8)

In this interview sequence, Olivia instinctively explored the question of "what am I good

at?" This pursuit was driven by a search for her personal "truths" and was grounded in her

understanding of "knowing who I am." In this situation, Olivia saw an opportunity and stepped

up to follow her own interests but at the same time attributed her motives to wanting to "help out

more." Girls, like Olivia, are keenly conscious of the socially expected role of "helper" for

females, and so she framed her personal aims in a way that was in keeping with these

expectations. In this way, she navigated her interests in a social milieu that required her to also

attend to specific gender conditions, thus, she stepped up to a leadership role while indicating her motive was to serve others needs while downplaying her own goals. This kind of dual attention to both social and personal needs was a typical way that girls in this study went about satisfying their own goals.

For McKenzie, who was a staunch athlete, her growing sense of self was greatly influenced by the sports that she chose to play. She felt like her ice hockey team was "like a family" and that her hockey friends were noticeably different than her school friends. With her ice hockey friends she felt understood, and said that "people that play sports are definitely more, don't want to have to deal with drama, like to have fun and have a good time, and aren't afraid to stick up for themselves." McKenzie acknowledged during one of our interviews, that part of what she gained from playing sports was "social skills," and the opportunity to focus her energies towards meaningful pursuits and away from distracting social drama. Her choice to take up pursuits that extended her talents and personal goals, kept her own priorities clearly in front of her. In fact, part of her desire to continue playing ice hockey was because it filled her competitive cravings, despite the shocked responses she sometimes got from peers when she told them, "I play ice hockey," and she saw the surprised looks on their faces. McKenzie eagerly valued the benefits of playing ice hockey, regardless of the social backlash she received occasionally, for playing a sport that was perceived by some as a masculine activity. Further, by deliberately following her own talents and goals, McKenzie was actively shaping and building her own identity and destiny.

For Michelle, Olivia, and McKenzie, navigating relationships and chosen activities, represents chances for them to assert personal preferences and goals, and to exercise their impulse for self-definition. For Michelle, the challenge of finding friends that accepted her for

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"who I am," pressed her to make choices related to her personal appearance, and further expressed her emerging identity as a growing girl. In Olivia's case, she followed both her interests and the feedback she got from others around her, to seize an opportunity for developing her enterprising leadership capacities. McKenzie's chosen "sport home" of ice hockey provided the nutrient filled environment that satisfied her desire to build her talents and skills alongside other girls with similar ambitions. Each of these girls found opportunities that enabled them to define their interests and identities, while at the same time, doing it in a socially dynamic setting.

Conclusion

This chapter illustrates the theme of transforming actions and how these social actions are revealed in the lives of girls in this study. Together these social actions offer an alternative perspective from the conforming actions and concurring actions themes discussed previously, which serve a largely social purpose. Building capacities, shifting behaviors, and evolving singularity are all categories that represent social actions which have as their main concern the individual growth and aims of each girl. This chapter explored the singular journey of development and becoming, which is distinct for each of the girls in this study, and included a range of manifestations in these girls' lives. This analysis spanned a variety of situations that relate to girls' developmental changes and evolving identities. For these girls, transforming actions represent self-oriented behaviors related to their fundamental emergence and the pursuit of their highest potentials. These social actions provide a grounding element to these girls' lives, in contrast to, the more socially oriented social actions that make high demands on their time and energy. While transforming actions are not the most pronounced features of girls' everyday behaviors, they represent a continuous stream of occurrences that surface again and again for each girl, reminding her of her growing abilities and potentials, and shaping her distinctiveness.

When the social actions of the girls in this study are collected together in thematic ways like this, it is possible to drill down and simultaneously expose the minute details of girls' lives; however, while this divided and separate approach yields valuable information and examined perspectives, it fails to provide a more integrated view of the collective meanings of these actions when taken together. As such, the social oriented and self-oriented social actions of girls in this study, form a more integrated and complex reality that reflects these girls' attempts to navigate individual and collective demands. Understanding the aggregated effects of these combined social actions will be explained through the concept of "strategic gendering," which I propose and illustrate through three separate cases of girls in this investigation and will be the focus of the next chapter.

PART IV

STRATEGIC GENDERING & BEYOND

CHAPTER 9

STRATEGIC GENDERING

"[Lucy's] so driven playing field hockey, but quiet."

Jennifer, Coach (p. 7)

"If I still had long hair I'd probably still have a few boy clothes."

Michelle (1, p. 9)

"It's good to share like the love of getting good grades."

Alissa (2, p. 5)

The goal of this chapter is to move from analysis into the realm of understanding and interpretation of the experiences of the adolescent girls in this study. In line with the objectives of grounded theory research (Charmez, 2006); I aim to conceptualize the findings of this investigation in a manner that captures these girls' experiences of gender shaping forces into an integrated representation. Thus far, the social actions of girls in this investigation have been viewed as discrete behaviors and taken as actions which exist separately from one another. While this kind of deconstruction helps to unveil the nuances and details of each social action and supports a clearer understanding of the individual behaviors of girls in this study, this approach splits girls' actions in a manner that differs from the totality of their experiences. When these girls' social actions are taken as a whole, the resulting outcome is a blending of actions that form a kind of inventive and intentional behavioral display that is much different than the sum of the divided parts.

In this chapter, I introduce "strategic gendering" as a way to grasp the contradictory nature of girls' social actions and the "dynamic tensions" they produce related to
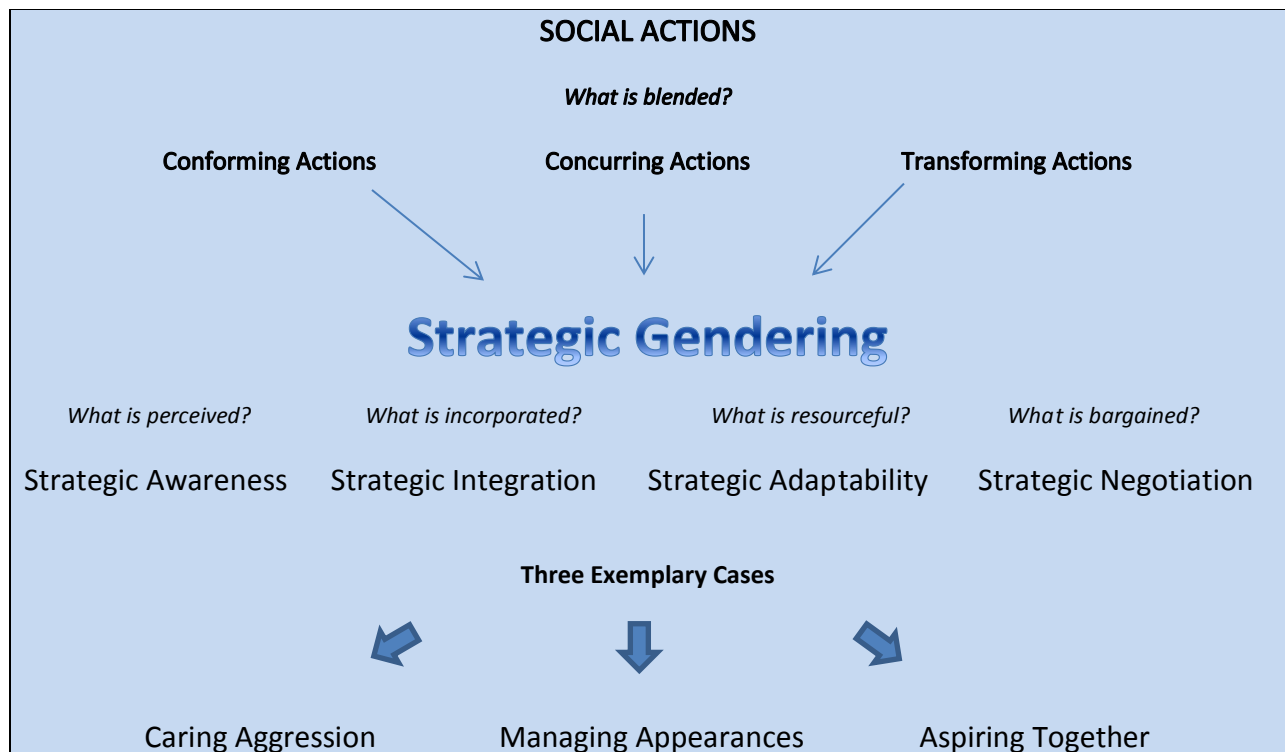
girls' social and personal commitments and priorities. The incongruity of these forces can occasionally be seen in the paradoxical behaviors of girls in this study who strive daily towards satisfying the competing demands of self and "other." Strategic gendering refers to an adaptive negotiation of these girls' social actions which they influence and that simultaneously link their goals with cultural expectations. This chapter will further explicate strategic gendering and illustrate three "integrated cases" of individual girls in this study which describe how their social actions manifested into specific patterns of negotiation between individual and cultural demands. Additionally, strategic gendering and these specific cases will be considered in light of conceptual meanings and practical implications, with further discussion related to possible future research directions, as well as, potential applications for educational, family and therapeutic settings.

The main conclusion from this investigation suggests that when the identities and social actions of the adolescent girls in this study are shaped by gendered preconditions, one way that they respond is by initiating chances for their own autonomy through "strategic gendering." From sustained reflection and examination, strategic gendering emerged from these girls sometimes confounding actions and words which captured my attention during the course of this inquiry. Strategic gendering illuminates the observable blending of previously described social actions of girls in this study into a calculated comportment employed by these girls for the purpose of attaining personal objectives.

Strategic gendering can be thought of as an intentional response, whereby, girls guided how their social actions got expressed and prioritized on a moment to moment basis. These girls' choices and responses to social influences created distinctive social action displays that reflected how each girl navigated gendered demands. This chapter will further describe strategic

gendering, and how it relates specifically to the lives of three girls in this study, with the goal of illustrating how the often seemingly contradictory behaviors of these girls can also be viewed as calculated social actions in response to gender expectations (See Figure 2). Finally, strategic gendering can be thought of as an overall strategic approach which these girls employed and includes the categories of: 1) Strategic Awareness 2) Strategic Integration 3) Strategic Adaptability and 4) Strategic Negotiation.

Figure 2: Strategic Gendering Expansion

SOCIAL ACTIONS

What is blended?

Conforming Actions   Concurring Actions   Transforming Actions

Strategic Gendering

What is perceived?   *What is incorporated?*   *What is resourceful?*   *What is bargained?*

Strategic Awareness   Strategic Integration   Strategic Adaptability   Strategic Negotiation

Three Exemplary Cases

Caring Aggression   Managing Appearances   Aspiring Together

Strategic Awareness

Strategic gendering is marked by observable social actions in the lives of girls in this study which reveal the key role that negotiation plays in their efforts to balance both self and social interests. However, these actions are motivated by a keen awareness of these girls' surroundings and subordinate social status, whether consciously or unconsciously, which drives their strategic gendering responses. While most girls in this study refuted or denied an awareness of gender inequality in their experiences, their social actions told a different story which revealed the "gender stratified society" (Harding, 1993) they inhabit, by exposing the bulk of their social actions as typically feminine. However, these girls own innate guidance helped focus their actions and priorities, and signaled a kind of instinctive awareness which served girls need to sustain their place as both social and individual actors. This kind of subtle awareness was evident in these girls' experiences and was noticeable, for example, when Alissa said that she, "Experience[s] sadness when others are feeling sad."(2, p. 1) Alissa's deep level of social sensitivity was not shared by all girls in this study to the same degree but reflected other girls' general experiences overall. When talking to Michelle about social pressures, she discerned that people might not reveal their opinions but said, "You can tell that they are thinking about it but they don't say it." (4, p. 10) For Alissa and Michelle, social awareness is like monitoring the weather and helps to guide their day to day social responses and set their preferences and priorities. Strategic awareness is an important component of strategic gendering and represents these girls' built-in social antenna which serves girls' need for gathering data that supports their choices and personal aims.

Strategic Integration

Strategic integration represents a distinctive orientation for girls in this study which is reflected in their particular relationship to the culture. As a consequence of girls' subordinate status, as female, their prospects and survivability are linked with the culture that sustains them, and as such, they build their lives resourcefully on the boundaries of dominant culture. These girls' social actions reveal their "dual commitments" to self and culture, as well as, the "duality of purpose" that underlies their motives. The core of these girls' engagement with the culture can be understood through their "struggle for existence," which acknowledges the outsized cultural demands which are placed upon them, and each individual girl who must fight for her own survival. These girls' lives are lived in the real minute to minute negotiation of individual needs, with an unyielding cultural script that challenges them to find a path to self-fulfillment, in spite of uneven chances and discouraging odds. As a result, these girls incorporate themselves with the culture that sustains them, rather than reject it, because their options and potentials are linked with cultural resources. This process of "social integration" reflects girls' relationship to the culture and is marked by a "practical" need to conform to societal biddings so that these girls can achieve goals of independent action. This strategic partnership with the culture provides these girls with a fuller range of social entitlements, while at the same time, generates possibilities for their autonomous actions. This process reflects a "girls-with-culture" relationship rather than a "girls-against-culture" position, and highlights the subtle ways that they go about strategically "working the system" (Raby, 2005) to meet their needs. Strategic integration is a key component of strategic gendering and represents a crucial orientation that is specific to these adolescent girls' social position.

Strategic Adaptability

Strategic adaptability refers to these girls' inventive tactics for sustaining their own needs and desires in partnership with the dominant culture. With little power and few available resources, these girls utilize their beliefs, relationships and opportunities to finesse their way through a complex world. Taking stock of their options, girls in this study focused on creative potentials and adaptive possibilities, for furthering their own agendas within limited means. Like trees growing in a dense forest, high stakes competition for resources trigger girls' adaptive impulses, which shape their flexible approach to life. For Patricia, as a leader among her peers, always standing up to group conflicts was tiring and risky on a social level, even though she knew it was the "right thing to do." So, Patricia frequently looked the other way or feigned ignorance to bypass potential negative social consequences for herself. She said, "I'll just blow it off and . . . like pretend like I didn't even know." (3, p. 4) For Patricia, this kind of adaptive tactic made it possible for her to balance her own need for social acceptance while also supporting social norms of "doing the right thing." When pared down, these kinds of actions signaled these girls' will to survive, and their acceptance of a "livable" life, which they carved out for themselves while linking their destinies with that of the culture. Strategic adaptability is an important component of strategic gendering and reflects these adolescent girls' dynamic capacity for change, in light of the necessity to struggle against uneven gender demands.

Strategic Ne**gotiation**

As the hallmark of strategic gendering, strategic negotiation has to do with social actions that deliberately moved girls in this study towards specific social and individual goals. These girls' social action goals seemed to reach for a kind of acceptable balance between socially expected behaviors and girls' own ambitions. Striking such a bargain between these two
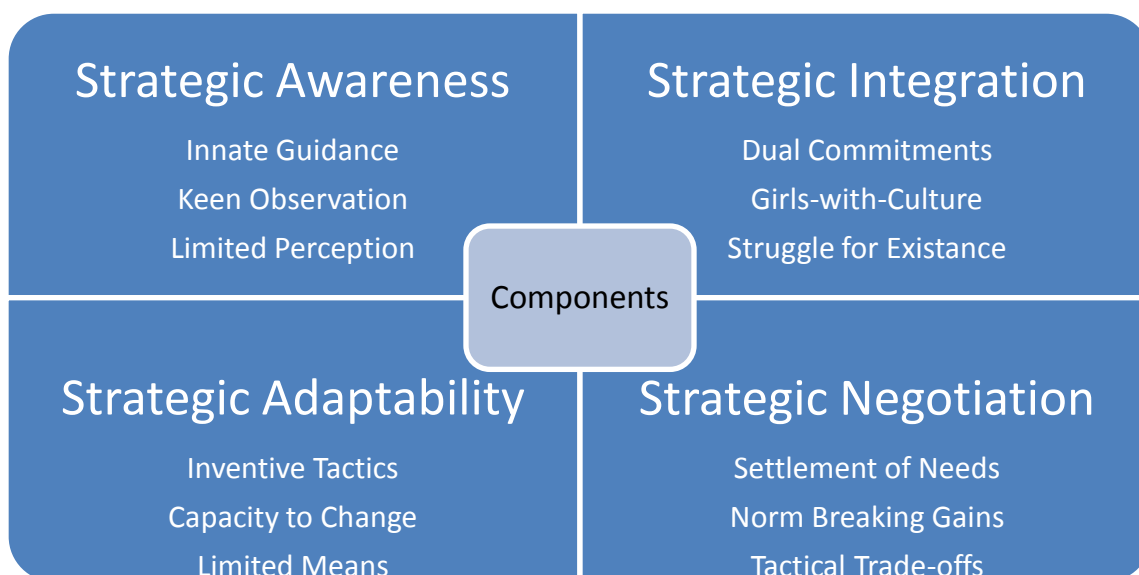
competing demands, however, created dual purposes that was reflected in girls' observable

behaviors and exposed the underlying designs of each. By positioning themselves at the fulcrum

between social and individual demands, these girls were able to repeatedly pursue their own

affairs by effectively satisfying the requirements of cultural expectations, and in doing so,

created space for their own unique interests and concerns. These girls, in essence, discerned that

by satisfying the needs of the culture they could also meet their own objectives through a kind of

"settlement of needs" which resulted from these dual commitments; the product of which were

social actions that represented a kind of strategic negotiation between girls and culture. Strategic

gendering is created by girls' "tactical tradeoffs" and "norm breaking gains" and is an outcome

of the competing "tensions" that exist between all of the previously discussed social actions

enacted by girls in this study – the agentic girl, conforming actions, concurring actions, and

transforming actions.

Norm breaking gains reflect how girls are able to pursue their own ambitions despite

persistent gender expectations such as when McKenzie plays in a male dominated sport like ice

hockey. While tactical trade-offs can be thought of as what these girls give up in order to achieve

"momentary gains," such as a Michelle who trades appearing "girly" in exchange for keeping her

short hair. When these girls strike such bargains, with norm breaking gains and tactical trade-

offs, the negotiated outcome reflects a kind of "workable balance" between girls' individual

desires and cultural expectations. In this way, the girls in this study, whose lives reflect the

"cultural impasses" that surround them, generate opportunities for independent action rather than

being sidelined. As Olivia said, "I like to be out there, and I guess you could say 'playing the

game' rather than being like the water girl or something. I like to be the coach." (2, p. 16) For

girls like Olivia, preferences for being an active player instead of being in a supporting role, call out her capacity to negotiate these kinds of desires.

Strategic negotiation reveals the most conflicting, perplexing, and divergent patterns of observed behavior, in the social actions of the girls in this study, and illuminates the complex and subtle way that these girls responded to gender shaping forces. Strategic negotiation highlights these girls' capacity to act intentionally based on their internal awareness, dual commitments, and adaptive methods. These girls' negotiated social actions reflect these qualities and frame the overall agentic response which girls in this study employed when confronted with gendered demands. These girls' social actions can be ultimately understood through the perspective of vulnerable actors, whose existence are predicated on the goal of survival, through integration with the culture, and involve keen awareness, inventive tactics, and negotiated social actions. Strategic negotiation is a core component of strategic gendering and represents these girls' active capacity for engaging in meeting their own personal objectives while satisfying cultural demands.

Figure 3: Strategic Gendering Components

Strategic Awareness	Strategic Integration
Innate Guidance	Dual Commitments
Keen Observation	Girls-with-Culture
Limited Perception	Struggle for Existance
Components	
Strategic Adaptability	Strategic Negotiation
Inventive Tactics	Settlement of Needs
Capacity to Change	Norm Breaking Gains
Limited Means	Tactical Trade-offs

Viewed from this particular angle, these girls' distinctive displays of behavior help to illuminate how their social actions were shaped by gender expectations and girls' own individual choices (See Figure 3). The following three "integrated cases" of specific girls' experiences, illustrates strategic gendering and the ways it manifests in various areas of their lives. Strategic gendering can be thought of as a merger between these girls' normative and non-normative behaviors and the joining of their personal aims with social expectations. The three cases which depict girls' strategic gendering include: 1) Caring Aggression 2) Managing Appearances and 3) Aspiring Together.

Caring Aggression: *The Gentle Warrior*

> "I see Lucy steal the ball and dribble it down the court; she quickly passes it to Patricia. After a failed shot by a team member Lucy steals the ball from a Stapleton girl in a rough scuffle. Lucy takes the ball down the court and in a desperate attempt to score she heaves the ball at the hoop but fails to reach her mark. Lucy retrieves the ball but is immediately surrounded by Stapleton girls who create a total block."

> Girls Public Middle School basketball game
> (Fieldnotes, January 23, 2009)

> "Lucy seems light and not very aggressive today – she frequently pulls faces and acts goofy - sometimes she looks like a rag doll with her arms and legs moving in random ways. Her antics appear to be a way of interacting with her friends but seem to undermine her actual level of competence. She seems to float around like a fairy and appears more delicate than in the school game I attended last week."

> Girls Livingston recreation league basketball practice
> (Fieldnotes, February 4, 2009)

In the winter of her seventh grade year, Lucy played on two basketball teams – one was her school team and the other one a town sponsored recreation team. During my observation of her middle school basketball game "I noticed that Lucy is aggressive despite her slender build. Externally she is calm and comfortable and in charge of her movements and like all of the other girls on her team her hair is pulled back in a ponytail." (Fieldnotes, January 23, 2009) Lucy used

the words "athletic, funny and smart" to describe herself in our first interview and my own observations of her confirmed these words to be highly accurate. However, Lucy was so much more than the sum of those three words, and I came to understand her best in the context of the sports she played and how she played them. The two quotes above capture some of what I came to learn from Lucy, which is that she displayed two different ways of behaving at various times in a way that appeared to reflect different social expectations. In fact, I learned that these two aspects were almost like two sides of a coin, with Lucy flipping between the two types of behaviors regularly.

At first, I got to know Lucy through Lucy's eyes and learned that her communications about herself were unusually understated, which left me wishing for more details about her thoughts and inner landscape. She answered my questions with phrases like "I'm not really mean, I'm not that bad at [sports], and I don't slack in school." I soon came to learn that Lucy was indeed not mean, bad or a slacker and her actions were quite the opposite of these words, especially after having spent more time with her. Lucy's humility was a key aspect of her persona and formed the foundation of her most visible behaviors. She presented herself as overly self-reliant and didn't like to ask anything from others. She told me that if she was having a hard time with something her first inclination would be to "fix it myself."

By seeking another perspective from Lucy's mother, Ruth, I gained more insights about Lucy's everyday behaviors. One quality that Ruth identified was that Lucy was "kindhearted." She elaborated and said, "She's always giving things up, to say, 'oh, well you didn't get that? Here, take mine.'" (p.1) Ruth also said that Lucy had the "ability to reach all levels and be friends with such a wide range [of people]." (p. 3) Ruth's additional descriptors gave more depth to Lucy's own humble perception of herself and provided another angle for me to understand her

from. In an interview with Lucy's field hockey coach, Jennifer, I found both concurring and differing reports. Similarly, Jennifer noted that Lucy had a "big heart" and "cares a lot about others." Then, Jennifer talked about Lucy as an athlete and how on the field she showed a more powerful aspect of herself which was somewhat unexpected for such an unpretentious person. She said, "She's so aggressive playing field hockey. She's so aggressive on the field, but then . . . you would never guess that by her attitude and her gentleness [sic] about her." (p. 6)

Jennifer's image of Lucy as an "aggressive" athlete soon began to ring true as my interviews with Lucy continued. An area of focus in this study, is how and when girls feel most powerful in their lives and the interview questions on this theme served to reveal more of this other part of Lucy little by little. After a brief writing exercise on this topic, one of Lucy's responses about feeling powerful was "I wrote 'sports' for powerful because I feel that I do pretty well in sports and I can feel in charge when I play them."(4, p. 1) I asked Lucy to elaborate:

> Lucy: Well, my cousin Jennifer, who you were probably going to interview soon, she was my coach for field hockey. And she said when she played, she used to think like she was in a . . . she was a warrior in a war, and she would just go out there and . . . like she's fighting in a war. I thought that was a good thing to think like. And so in sports, I just try and go out there and do my best. And I just try to work my hardest to help my team out and do as well as we can.
> Joann: So that's interesting because that sort of warrior image . . . do you . . . is that something that you've kind of adopted for your own use, in terms of keeping that in mind?
> Erin: (Laughs) Yeah.
> Joann: Does that give you like a model for how you should behave when you're in sports?
> Erin: Yeah. Just . . . it just reminds me that you should try your hardest and give your fullest effort in sports, so you can do well and succeed in that. (4, p. 2)

In this exchange, Lucy painted a divergent image that helped me to see her more fully and I followed up her response with further questions. Our conversation continued on to how Lucy's field hockey team had just finished up an undefeated season and how that situation

became a powerful arena for Lucy's own sense of personal power. I asked her to think back on the season and talk about what she attributed the team's success to and she replied:

> Oh, I think all of us just collect together and we were able to work with each other really well. And we all had . . . very good skills, and we were pretty equal together. Some may be better than others, but all together, we just played well with each other and would pass the ball and encourage each other to do the best that we could. (4, p. 3)

Lucy's words sounded familiar from other conversations I had with several girls in my study who were also serious athletes. Lucy said that her team members were "pretty equal together" and her words reflected the kind of culture that appears to be expected on her team – a culture where no one player stands above the rest in terms of importance and attention. This sentiment was echoed in the words of another study participant, McKenzie, in what she said about her ice hockey team.

> Right, well, I wouldn't say that we really like have a captain of the team, like somebody who's like in charge overall or like would mean more than the other. So, we're all really like equal, as in like, not really status, but like what we do. Like we all encourage each other, we're all like . . . give advice. Like, "Alright, this is what we did. This is what we need to do to get better and to not make the same mistake again." And so, we're sort of all evenly matched. We all like fit into place like evenly. (4, p. 8)

The idea of collaborative play was both refreshing and surprising to me since the culture of sports, at least in my own experience and what I witness in professional sports, is that there is often a focus on a few select "star" players who dominate play time and team resources. Yet, I was hearing something different in Lucy and McKenzie's accounts of their sporting experiences. For Lucy, in particular, it seemed to reflect her own equalizing attitude of "here take mine" except it was operating on a team level – her team expectations highlighted the cooperative nature and leveling effects of the team interactions.

I kept thinking about Lucy's "two sides" – the gentle Lucy who has a "kind heart" and the aggressive Lucy who shows up on the sports field and plays like a "warrior." This "gentle

warrior" appeared to be reading from to two different play books – one that expected feminine behaviors and the other seemed to permit typically masculine ones. For Lucy, those two play books seemed to be about as far apart as they could be in terms of contrast but she didn't allow that fact to keep her from playing out of both rule books – she found a way of behaving which satisfied these multiple expectations – a kind of juggling of what is expected, what is denied and what is allowed in the social environment. While Lucy acted in seemingly contrasting ways her actions appeared understandable from the perspective of how girls must operate in order to satisfy cultural demands and their own pressing needs. Coach Jennifer painted a vivid picture of Lucy meeting this challenge in a demonstrative way.

> It just, she gives it a hundred and ten percent, except take her off the field and she's so gentle, *so* gentle, and just maybe if she did elbow someone by accident, you would see her say like, "Oh my God. I'm sorry, I'm sorry." It would be like the hardest hit ever, but she'd be like, "Oh! Are you okay? I'm sorry, I'm sorry." And they're like, "Whoa! Where did that come from?" So, yeah like get her active and something switches up there. (p. 7)

Despite Lucy's restrained approach and caring personality, she seemed to be able to balance all that was socially expected – looking and behaving within the boundaries of feminine behavior - with what was conditionally allowed – playing aggressively in a traditionally male sports arena in a heartfelt way. The rules of girlhood rang true for Lucy, and she had learned them well, however, she was also able to grasp opportunities for breaking through gender specified activities and tapped into her physical strength through athletic pursuits. Lucy had found a balance by acting feminine and pursuing the sport she loved with a "hundred and ten percent" effort. The social rules required that she be caring to others while in return she got to excel at her chosen pastime.

Summing Up

In the same way that wind shapes a high mountain tree, bending and pushing it in a specific direction, so too, are girls like Lucy influenced by the cultural forces that shape them. While Lucy embodied the gender expectations of the culture, so did the girls' sport environment in which she played. Both were shaped by the winds of the culture, and revealed a particular kind of caring aggression that was honed by unseen expectations of femininity, and the acceptable limits of powerful masculine play. What is revealed is a permissible comportment for a team of girls who play sports – work hard but be equal – compete with a kind heart. Girls like Lucy similarly reflected this demand – be aggressive but caring – be a gentle warrior.

Managing Appearances: *The Identity Navigator*

> "[I am] trying to convince people that I'm a girl."

> Michelle (3, p. 6)

> "If I had long hair, I'd probably still have a few boy clothes. Just like a collared shirt with like stripes on it that's really soft. I had one of those. That was the last piece of boy

clothing I got rid of, and I was really sad to let it go. But I realized I'm going to be going to a new school and I want to make a good impression. And then once I make friends, then, I can wear whatever I want. I mean sort of for that first like three months, I was worrying about what I looked like . . . if I looked like a girl or a boy."

Michelle (1, p. 9)

Entering the Public Charter School in seventh grade was difficult for Michelle after attending a small local Montessori School since pre-school. The transition came at a time of heightened social awareness and forced her to grapple with her gender neutral appearance in a more direct and substantive way. By the time I had started interviewing Michelle, she had gotten through the toughest part of making new friends at her new school, however, the challenge had raised questions for her that were fundamental to her behaviors and identity. With these experiences still fresh in her mind, she described the issue at the heart of her struggle when she said, "I mean I am a girl, but I don't look like one." I captured Michelle's appearance in my fieldnotes after our first interview and depicted her as having "very short brown hair, a small build and ha[ving] an impish looking face with a broad smile and bright blue eyes." (Fieldnote, p. 3) I didn't think much of Michelle's looks at the time since girls at her age have appearances that range considerably. Her appearance did not invite attention but I began to understand what she meant and found that this concern continued to be raised by her again and again in our conversations.

As a seventh grader, Michelle's self-stated interests ranged from "loving to cook" to golfing with her dad to running on the school cross country team. She also described herself as a "neat freak" and "shorty" since she was below average in height. I had the opportunity to interview Michelle's mother, Mrs. Kenworth, to learn more about Michelle and asked her to describe her daughter in three words to which she responded with the words "caring,

independent, and athletic." Mrs. Kenworth also offered some other appearance descriptors of Michelle, adding that she was "bright-eyed and dimpled." She noted other aspects and said "she just has energy that is unusual" and that "She can be intense about things." Mrs. Kenworth elaborated on this last quality and said "When she wants something . . . and she gets in her head . . . she just won't let go of it." In fact, her family has called her "HMS Relentless" in a fun loving way to capture this notable aspect of her personality. When I queried Mrs. Kenworth about how Michelle spoke up for herself, she commented that "she's pretty bold" and gave an example of a time when she told her mother, "I want to start a golf club or a golf program at school." In fact, Mrs. Kenworth noted that sometimes she had to remind Michelle to "start paying attention and show concern for others" since she could sometimes have a tendency to be more self-absorbed.

I learned that on the outside Michelle looked like an average middle school girl who was on the cusp of a developmental phase which was marked by feminine yardsticks such as body changes and behavioral adjustments. I recognized similarities in Michelle's situation in my own past when I had also experienced the challenges of having preferred short hair as a girl growing up, and perhaps this made me take her appearance in stride in my early assessment of her. Michelle acknowledged her preference for short hair and explained, "I realize that it was my choice and it's still my choice. I'd rather have short hair and people call me a boy, rather than have long hair and people call me a girl but be burning up in my hair." (1, p. 4) However, her words and experiences revealed a concerted effort on Michelle's part to grapple with these newly weighted gender expectations which could no longer be denied. Michelle recounted, "I would go into girl's stores with my friends and I'd be in the girls section, but all these girls would stare at me and giggle and stuff like that. It's like, 'Why is a boy shopping in the girls' section?" In addition, her transition into a new school made her feel "freaked out." These overwhelming

discomforts and fears prompted Michelle to avoid possible tricky social encounters at school,

and impelled her to work at "making a good impression" with new friends by tweaking her

clothing and behaviors. During an interview she spoke about some of the social pressures she felt

at the time.

> Joann: Do you think . . . are you the one that feels that pressure to grow up faster? Or do you think other people put that pressure on you?
> Michelle: I would be fine if I stayed flat forever. I don't care. I think its other people. I mean they don't put the pressure on, but I mean like you can tell that they're thinking about it, but they don't say it. So it would just be nice.
> Joann: Right. To, um . . . to make those other people happy?
> Michelle: Yeah.
> Joann: uh, huh. (Laughs)
> Michelle: Silence their inner mind.
> Joann: Mmhmm. And then if they were happy, would that make you happy?
> Michelle: Yes. It's probably not the best idea, but yes.
> Joann: And why do you say, "Probably not the best idea" now that you're thinking about it?
> Michelle: Well, once everybody is like . . . well, you don't have to be what other people want you to be. You have to be what you want to be. But what I want to be is what other people want me to be. So it's just an ongoing circle. Like a mailman delivering another mailman's mail. But it could end with a P.O. box.
> Joann: Right. Well, it sounds like this um – part of it depends on the community you're in.
> Michelle: Yeah.
> Joann: Like whether you know people – and when you're less known, maybe people judge you more?
> Michelle: Yeah. I know I do that a lot.
> Joann: Do you?
> Michelle: Yeah.
> Joann: Can you give me an example?
> Michelle: No.
> Joann: Well, we all judge, right?
> Michelle: Yes. Don't judge a book by its cover, or don't judge a donut by its hole. (4, p. 10)

In this interview sequence, Michelle put into words some of her struggle with the social

expectations of growing into an adolescent girl. She identified the unspoken demands that she

felt others placed upon her by wishing she could "silence their inner mind." But, then, in a turn-

a-round, she seemed to give in to the very same pressures and declared, against even the advice

of well-meaning others "to be what you want to be," and decided what she wanted was "what other people want me to be." At the time, this comment seemed confusing since Michelle was on record as saying, "I have to be me." Yet, Michelle ended the sequence by saying, "Don't judge a book by its cover, or don't judge a donut by its hole," and this last comment may be her own answer to her self-presentation predicament – she may not be who she appears to be.

Interestingly, before switching to her new school Michelle had a different experience with social acceptance that seemed less filled with pressure. As a child at the Montessori School that she attended, she sometimes got inquisitive questions like, "Are you a boy or a girl?" from unbiased children whose questions lacked the judgement or sting that comes from older students. In talking about what was different from her old school to her new school, Michelle recounted her former experiences and the ideal level of acceptance that she remembered at her old school and the new different reality that was in front of her at her new school.

> Michelle: Well, no . . . but there was no judging at my old school, because everybody's known each other since preschool. So it can, not exist. Like it can, not be there, not can't, but can, like it's possible. Like if you're living in the same environment from day one . . . to day three thousand, four hundred and eighty-six, then, you'll be the same. But if a newcomer comes in, it gets a lot harder. Like just one new person, it's there it goes. Kaboom!
> Joann: But do you think if you were still at Montessori School, like for seventh and eighth grade, do you think that that pressure would just be a new pressure?
> Michelle: No.
> Joann: You still think it would be an issue?
> Michelle: [T]here wouldn't be an issue. I don't think there would be. I'd be . . . fine. But like at the new school, with lots of preppy girls . . . not flat, and all that stuff. Come on. (4, p. 11)

The shift in social expectations for Michelle was profound and was heightened by the timing of the switch between old and new schools. The feeling of the shift is captured in her use of the word "Kaboom!" and expressed the shock and significance of the new world order she had entered at the Public Charter School. Michelle expressed that she was "fine" the way she was at

her old school, but felt at the new school that the person she was didn't fit the social environment, causing her to have to work hard at shifting her persona and behaviors.

All the subtle and not so subtle messages Michelle got from peers, family and strangers began adding up. From her brother who had long hair and challenged Michelle to grow hers out, to her father who told her not to cut it any shorter when she wanted a buzz cut, to all the people that gave her a "weird glance." In a deliberate and quiet way, Michelle began working to satisfy some of these new expectations of appearance and behavior. Before she started at her new school Michelle asked her mom if she could shave her legs and she said that it "made me feel a lot more like a girl." She also observed that her school didn't have a dress code and strategized that "I can wear tank tops that make me look like a girl." Additionally, she anticipated, "I think in summer is when I can really show that I'm a girl, because I can wear like short shorts with like a bikini top, and then I'm a girl." In a longer quote she described relinquishing her old boy apparel and adapting to more feminine garb.

> Like, I just loved boy clothes when I was younger. They were so much more comfortable, because like I was a little chubby-ish and I hated having tight things and it like just drove me nuts. That's why I wore boy clothes, because they're all baggy and they're nice and comfy. Um, but it's just, I'm realizing that they make girl clothes that are comfy and they look like girl clothes. Um, I've just got to find the right ones at the right stores.   (1, p. 8)

In another response Michelle began to test new ways to appear more like a girl and began to find some success along the way.

> So, like I've been going shopping with my friend at like Aeropostale and Hollister and stuff, and teenage girls that I don't know, have never seen before, they look at me like, "Why is a boy shopping in the girl's section?" And but I've been finding ways around that, like getting girl hats—like just wearing them to the side. And it's been working out pretty good, because no one gave me that funny look. (1, p. 4)

In a different way, Michelle's behaviors sometimes became the focus of her efforts rather than her appearance, and this was revealed when she talked about what she called her first

"boyfriend, girlfriend relationship." This novel experience presented what Michelle called "the first new territory we've had in a long time." She elaborated on this new experience and said, "You're still trying to figure out how to act, still trying to figure out how to talk, how to walk, how to do everything all over again. And, you've got to do the perfect amount of all of them, and it's like really hard." Michelle explained some of this difficulty when she went on a bowling date with her boyfriend, Adam. She elaborated, "When you're getting to know a boy a as friend . . . I mean you could easily be yourself, and you could easily do whatever you wanted. But it's just like something that clicks in your brain, 'maybe I should try to impress him.'" (4, p. 16) Michelle continued, "Sometimes I try to act a bit more girly when I'm with him."

While Michelle endeavored to transform herself into a more clearly defined girl, she was also determined to not let appearance pursuits keep her from expressing who she was and keeping true to other interests and preferences. When people would mistake her for a boy, she said, "whenever someone calls me a boy, I never speak up," however, this dynamic began to change and Michelle started to say, "Hey, I'm a girl!" instead. Even though making new friends was a huge hurtle, Michelle was resolved to find friends who accepted her for her authentic self.

> Well, I wouldn't change for them. Because if they didn't like the way I look, I'd just say, "Too bad. That's not the way friendship works. If it's going to be awkward going to the mall, then we won't go to the mall." So it's just . . . my friends from Montessori School, they've been through it when I grow out my hair and cut my hair. And they know that I'm a lot happier with my hair short. So we go to the mall, we go fun places, and sometimes I'll look like I'm their boyfriend but I dress in girly clothes and I wear hats and bandanas, so it's fine. (1, p.7)

Here Michelle seems to point to the limits of what she is willing to do to fit in with social expectations and what she will not do. With her new "feminine embellishments" she had found a strategy that addressed her identity dilemma, however, that pressure was never entirely gone for Michelle. When I asked her about the burden of keeping up with how she reacted to social appearance expectations she said the following:

I feel that pressure . . . I feel the pressure, but what I do about it is I buy clothes I like that are girly. I mean yeah, I would still be wearing boy clothes if I went to Montessori School, probably. But that's just because they're comfortable. It's not because I don't want to be a girl. It's because they're comfortable. But like . . . the way I act is the way I've acted since I was like three. It's just [be]cause . . . I can't act any other way. I have to be me. It's totally set in, it's like in stone.   (4, p. 12)

Since the shaping effects of gender expectations were readily noticeable to Michelle, she knowingly struck a kind of deal between herself and the culture which manifested in a quid pro quo that exchanged her desire for having short hair for the conforming action of wearing "girl" clothes. When Michelle expressed that the person she is, which is set "in stone," was not available for further cultural manipulation, she drew a line in the sand acknowledging her essential dominion and her desire to protect her core identity. This agreement paved a way forward for Michelle, allowing for continued social interactions that might have been thwarted if she had not acquiesced, and at the same time, her actions called out her inner most qualities to be revealed and defined through a formative experience.

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What was Michelle's norm breaking gain?

Michelle set limits on the degree to which she tolerated gender conforming appearance pressures while at the same time asserted her personal principles of seeking authentic relationships in friends who could see past narrow gender expectations.

What was Michelle's tactical trade-off?

Michelle made gender shaping appearance choices which prioritized her need for social acceptance rather than her own individuality and resulted in reinforcing gender norms.

What was Michelle's negotiated outcome?

Michelle's strategic negotiation was visible in her attempts to resolve her own need for self-definition with social demands on her appearance. This "workable balance" of dual commitments generated a behavioral response that can be described as "managing appearances."

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Summing Up

In the way that chameleons adapt to ever changing environments, so too, can girls like Michelle alter their own appearance to blend into the expected social environment. Similarly, Michelle perceived the gendered demands that were placed upon her, and in a deliberate manner went about constructing her appearance to fit with the social milieu around her, just like the chameleon. However, in a different way, Michelle did not blend entirely into her environment but chose to strategically adapt rather than forego all of her own needs, and instead, blended in well "enough" while holding onto her core identity and ideals. This meant that while she changed colors, she did it in a calculated way that created space for her own need to resist "false friendships" and uphold personal principles.

Aspiring Together: *The Sensitivity Specialist*

> "It's good to share like the love of getting good grades."
>
> Alissa (2, p. 5)

> "I really feel like I need to be nice to everyone [be]cause some people aren't, and just, it kind of stinks sometimes when people are left out."
>
> Alissa (1, p. 1)

> "I do that a lot in things in my life, when someone feels hurt or if someone feels happy, I'm so happy for them."
>
> Alissa (1, p. 9)

In the fall of her eighth grade year, Alissa was engaged in the intensifying activities of academics and violin pursuits. Alissa was eager to embrace these opportunities and told me, "I love learning." As a member of a big city youth orchestra, Alissa was taking a music theory class and was totally immersed in it, and despite it being "wicked hard," she explained, "I like meeting new people and sharing the same common goal and sharing the same love for music." In our first interview, Alissa described herself as "sensitive, determined, and loving." She said that she was "sensitive about how people are feeling" and this attribute made her highly tuned to the social

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dynamics around her. Alissa was abundantly social and explained, "I love to make people laugh and enjoy their day . . . make someone smile." These words began to paint a picture of the girl who I was just beginning to learn more about and how her orientation towards others, personal qualities and drive came together to define not only her own sensibilities but reflected the social milieu around her.

Alissa was an involved academic and valued her diligent like-minded friends and said, "It's so awesome to have friends like that." Alissa described how in between classes she liked to check in with her friends in the hallway and ask, "Oh, what'd you get on the test?" This kind of social and academic support was normal for Alissa and she seemed to thrive on it. When I asked her to describe a time that she felt powerful Alissa responded, "I just study on my own and it's like 'oh, I got an A.'" While Alissa was keenly capable in her studies, she described other opposing qualities about herself, "I'm kind of complicated, sometimes I'm really easy going, and then . . . I'm not really determined to do stuff, but sometimes I'm really determined to get this and do it right and I don't know, I have two sides to me." (1, p. 8) In contrast to Alissa's "easy going" side she explained, "I am very argumentative and aggressive sometimes when I don't think something is right." These "two sides" seemed to highlight the push and pull of Alissa's key inner assets and framed her approach to social interactions.

From another perspective, Beth, Alissa's mother, used similar words to the ones that Alissa used to describe herself which were "warm, intelligent, and loving" and then added "fun" saying "we have a blast together." (p. 3) Beth described Alissa as having "a very disarming nature" and reported that Alissa would ask her, "Why am I so emotional? Why am I so sensitive?" As a parent of a single child, Beth had a greater involvement in her daughter's life that included transporting Alissa around to school and violin activities. My own observations of

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this mother and daughter pair during site visits included witnessing energetic interactions which were marked by excited conversing and loud laughter which was occasionally mixed with a few everyday tears. I came to understand that their relationship was a close one and remembered Alissa commenting, "I'd be lost without my mom" during one interview. Beth expounded on Alissa's heightened social sensitivity when she said, "She reads situations pretty well, we have good nonverbal communication."

Alissa's violin teacher, Kirsten, added three more descriptors such as "sweet, responsible, and conscientious" and elaborated that Alissa had a "really good sense of responsibility." However, Kirsten's most noteworthy observation about Alissa had to do with Alissa's mother. She said, "I'm just very impressed with her personal relationship between her mother and herself." Kirsten commented in detail about what was most intriguing about their relationship.

> Often times they'll come in here and they'll tell me about projects that are going on at school and stuff . . . what strikes me is that the collaboration between the two, you know, it's not like Alissa's got this project, it's more like, we're working on this project . . . Alissa's working on this project and we're all working on it together and she's been doing this with her dad . . . that strikes me because I think that's really unusual that it becomes a family project, especially at her age. (p. 2)

Kirsten continued and said more about the curious nature of Alissa's relationship with her mother and family.

> It's always a group effort with them, it's not just Alissa's doing something on her own, and her mom practices with her still which is very unusual, I think it's awesome, um, most teenagers would never let their parents practice at this point, um, so, because they just want their independence, they don't want to spend any more time with mom or dad than they absolutely have to, you know, so, but they like each other, they all genuinely like each other, which is weird. (p. 2)

Kirsten's comments about Alissa and her family highlight the relational nature of their interactions. Her observations revealed unexpected behaviors, which to her seemed out of place and she perceived as "unusual and weird," and ultimately noteworthy. Her insights pointed to a communal or collective orientation that Alissa shared with her family members.

During my interview with Beth, I got the feeling that she and Alissa were quite close and not dissimilar. At one point Beth explained to me where Alissa might get some of her "sensitive" and "loving" qualities. She said, "A lot of what I do is helping others, reaching out and making other people happy, meeting their needs." This seemed to echo Alissa's own words of wanting to "make someone smile." During our talks, Alissa elaborated on her most dominant quality of being "sensitive" in response to a writing prompt.

> I love to see people being happy and, you know, not feeling sad. [M]y second one is, "Experiencing sadness when others are feeling sad." So those two kind of tie together. I think the one I'd really put in my heart—an empathy kind of thing? And I've had it for my life, you know, not just recently. It's been with me and it's not like when I see someone feeling sad I'll be, "Oh, what's the matter?" I do that sometimes with my friends and stuff, but there's just some part of me that really wants them to feel better about themselves and—I don't know. I just want to say, "It's okay." You know. "You're going to be okay." (2, p. 1)

Alissa's awareness of her own heightened feelings led to a recognition of the role she played within her friendship group. She explained, "I'm the helper. I'm the caregiver of my friends . . . of our friends. And I'm the one that says, 'It's okay. Here, I'll help you. What do you need?' I think that I share an important role in their life." This function was important to Alissa since it marshaled her most dominant personal quality in a useful and effective way within her social world, however, spreading too much "love" began to be wounding to Alissa and left her feeling vulnerable. She began to shift her social actions to develop more of a "thick skin" during day to day peer interactions.

> Alissa: I'm so more self-confident in that I don't have to be friends with everyone. . . . I mean I am . . . and that's kind of what's making me be friends with everyone. It's so weird.
> Joann: Can you say more about that?
> Alissa: What?
> Joann: What you just said "I don't feel like I have to be friends with everyone, but it makes me able to be friends with everyone."
> Alissa: Yeah.
> Joann: What do you mean by that?

Alissa: Well, I don't get beat up every time someone . . . like when someone doesn't respond. . . . Sometimes I'm having a really crappy day and I don't want to talk . . . and I don't get beat up by, "Ugh, she's not talking to me." Like, "Ugh" and there's this whole thing, whole ordeal, we get in a fight . . . I'm just like, "Alright. That's fine. You know, if you don't want to talk, that's fine. And I'll be here" and it's . . I don't care. Fine, go away. (Laughs) You know? And it's . . . this like sarcastic like, "Alright, whatever." [T]his easygoing kind of attitude that, with friends, you know, that definitely makes me a stronger person. I don't need to be . . . like a kiss-up to everyone. And I don't need to be a kiss-up to have friends and just enjoy . . . having company with them without being really tense about, "Ugh, am I saying something wrong?" Or whatever, it's all good. (Laughs) (2, p. 6)

For Alissa having an intense social awareness was both a struggle and an asset, however, this fact did not impede Alissa but rather pressed her to fuse her desire to help others with her own aspirational drive in a unique and very social way. She explained, "Like my friends call me up and say, "Hey, you know, I need help with this" to which Alissa eagerly responded to their requests for homework help. Other determined qualities of Alissa's were apparent in her violin aspirations when she told me, "I'm striving for greatness." This same drive "for greatness" was embedded in her academic motivations and dovetailed neatly with her social concerns. She commented that "because I'm kind of a perfectionist, especially in school, if they're not . . . if they're struggling with something, I will step in. And if . . . you know, it's my obligation whenever I'm in a group project to kind of lead them. So, that's just who I am. And I think that's . . . healthy . . . not just to sit back and let people do the work. I like to do the work." (4, p. 15)

Alissa's driven academic focus and her effusive social engagement found a home in her school social group that she called the "cool nerds." She explained what this meant to her and how it worked.

So, it's good to share like the love of getting good grades. It's so awesome to have friends like that. And we're really . . . we're all really, really competitive with grades. So, but we really like . . . encourage each other with grades . . . like we got our essays back, me and Liz, my other best friend . . . are in the same class in English, so when we get our essays back, it's like intense. It's like dun-dun . . . it's like really, really scary. And he passes them out like really, really slow. So we're

like, "Oh my God!" And so we're like holding hands, we're like, "Ahh!" and, you know, we're like the nerds. But we're like the cool nerds. (2, p. 5)

Alissa elaborated on how being a "cool nerd" was a balance of social fun and academic seriousness. She clarified, "Our lunch table is like silly and we're like . . . we act like complete idiots sometimes. But we always have like these really mature conversations about stuff . . . like random stuff. So it's fun. And like we had a really serious conversation—but we were laughing through it . . . like World War Two. (2, p. 5)

The social dynamic of engaging in homework support, which Alissa spoke about was not isolated to her and her friends, but was shared by other girls in the study. When these girls felt stuck they often sought each other out and took each other's academic concerns in a serious way. Patricia, who was a seventh grader, elaborated on how she handled feeling stuck on a homework assignment.

> I've . . . like last night, my friend was stuck on her homework, so she called me and . . . we did the problems together over the phone. So having somebody else . . . like knowing somebody else is stuck too, helps me to get through it, like say I'm not the only one. Like this new math thing that we started, like most people are having trouble with it. So like it doesn't . . . I'm not worrying about it as much because I know the teacher's going to have to go over it more because a lot of people are having trouble with it. So I think knowing somebody else is in the same boat helps to get through it. (4, p. 3)

For Alissa and Patricia, offering and seeking academic support to keep up their own grades, as well as, those of their friends seemed natural and made total sense – surrounding themselves with peers of similar focus would ensure a better outcome for themselves and their friends – almost like riding the same wave to shore. This choice was both practical and astute and signified a shared sort of enterprise that tapped these girls' innate social qualities along with their rising academic aspirations. Despite having the support of her "cool nerds" friendship circle, Alissa still felt the subtle judgement that can come from peers who viewed others as being too "perfect" or striving too much. Alissa was afraid that she wouldn't be liked, and therefore,

curbed her behavior so that she wouldn't stand out as an academic know-it-all. She told me, "I'm not perfect. Sometimes, you know, I don't want to help someone because I know that if I give them that idea, then . . . you know, but because I know I'm not perfect. But, and um, so and I hope that everyone likes me for who I am."

Alissa's awareness around how she thought she might be perceived colored her social actions and caused her to hold back sometimes and push through at other times. This insight guided her daily choices and formed her behavior in certain ways, like pushing on a gas pedal and alternately stepping on the brakes. I could see Alissa wanted to share her masterful academic mind but was at times afraid to risk appearing too nerdy, and being marginalized socially, yet her social acuity drew her towards wanting to help others – these tensions produced a sort of socialized form of academic aspiration that folded Alissa and her friends into a collective wave of academic ambition. She talked about how she dealt with these sometimes opposing forces.

> You know, I'm the one that they always call for homework, all three of them, you know. I corrected three essays because we had a big essay due on Tuesday and I corrected three of them. They emailed me them . . . I'm just that kind of person . . . I love helping people and I love sharing my knowledge . . . I'm really not trying to say, "Oh, I'm better than you" because I hate that. I hate when people do that. But it's just like, "I know something, you know, and I want you to know it too, so we can do this together." (2, p. 1)

Alissa's pride in being able to help her friends can be heard in her words, yet at the same time she tamps down what some might see as bragging – she navigated dangerous social terrain, and instead, reframed her powerful skills into a collective action which downplayed her vital role in the process. Rather than be seen as boastful or cocky, Alissa parlayed her editing skills into a "power sharing" endeavor, instead of what could be taken as an unequal interaction. Alissa's social sensibilities played a critical role in transforming her own high aspirations into a collective project which benefited everyone involved. Alissa had chosen to sure up her own social status while attending to her own academic ambitions. The bargain that the culture demanded was that

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Alissa's academic potency be restrained by the conditions of femininity, and in the process of doing so, she carried others along her resolute path.

> *What was Alissa's norm breaking gain?*
>
> Alissa pursued her academic priorities, despite social pressures to the contrary, and maintained her social standing with like-minded friends.
>
> *What was Alissa's tactical trade-off?*
>
> Alissa downplayed her academic aspirations in order to prioritize social relations, rather than pursuing her academic goals in a more self-focused way, which resulted in reinforcing gender expectations.
>
> *What was Alissa's negotiated outcome?*
>
> Alissa's strategic negotiation was apparent in her efforts to join her personal academic aspirations with gendered social demands of "caretaking" other's needs. Inventively joining these two demands resulted in a collective endeavor that can be described as "aspiring together."

Summing Up

Alissa's chosen pursuit of the violin reflected her own attunement towards the world around her. The same sensitivity she used to find the right bow string to pluck was the same skill set she used in her academic and social interactions. Her ability to listen and respond to social cues provided her with the tools she needed to navigate her social and academic worlds, while balancing her innate qualities and interests with the conditions of being an adolescent girl. For girls like Alissa, forward movement towards adulthood was a creative and ever evolving process of squaring personal traits and ambitions with specified social norms. Keeping her aim of "striving for greatness" on the forefront of her actions, while using her social kindnesses to raise the ambitions of others around her, were key strategic actions Alissa used to navigate her way towards achieving both personal and social aspirations.

Strategic Gendering Discussion

Strategic gendering pulls together all the previous social action themes - the agentic girl, conforming actions, concurring actions, and transforming actions - into a particular perspective on the lives of girls in this investigation. From one vantage point, the social actions of these girls are like the confluence of many streams that flow together and create something different and greater than the individual rivulets. Strategic gendering represents a response to gender demands that is ongoing and finds a path to expression through the competing purposes of these girls' lives. The examples of strategic gendering which were described - caring aggression, managing appearances, and aspiring together – all expose the contradictory social actions of three adolescent girls in this investigation. These individual girls own determination and resourcefulness helped them to barter and cajole their way to achieving, at least in part, individual aims and desires while maintaining social standing and avoiding social exclusion. The evidence of cultural impacts, and these girls' responses, can be witnessed more easily through their stories which help map out specific gender effects that are wound tightly into each girl's life experience.

Strategic gendering is a kind of "lived" interpretation and represents practical judgements that girls in this study made not because they were aware of gender inequalities in their lives but because they were confronted by urgent demands that had to be satisfied (See Figure 4). Some interpretations of girls' relationship to the dominant culture suggest a separate and opposing dynamic with idealized and future oriented concepts such as resistance to patriarchal power (Bartkey, 2002; Bordo, 1989; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Raby, 2005) or goals of equality. While these concepts have merit and should be pursued through collective social movements, these girls' lives were lived in the "near moments" of day to day negotiation of their individual needs

with dominant cultural forces which obscure reality (Foucault, 1980) and force them to struggle against unfair chances and overwhelming odds.

Figure 4: Strategic Gendering: A "Lived" Interpretation
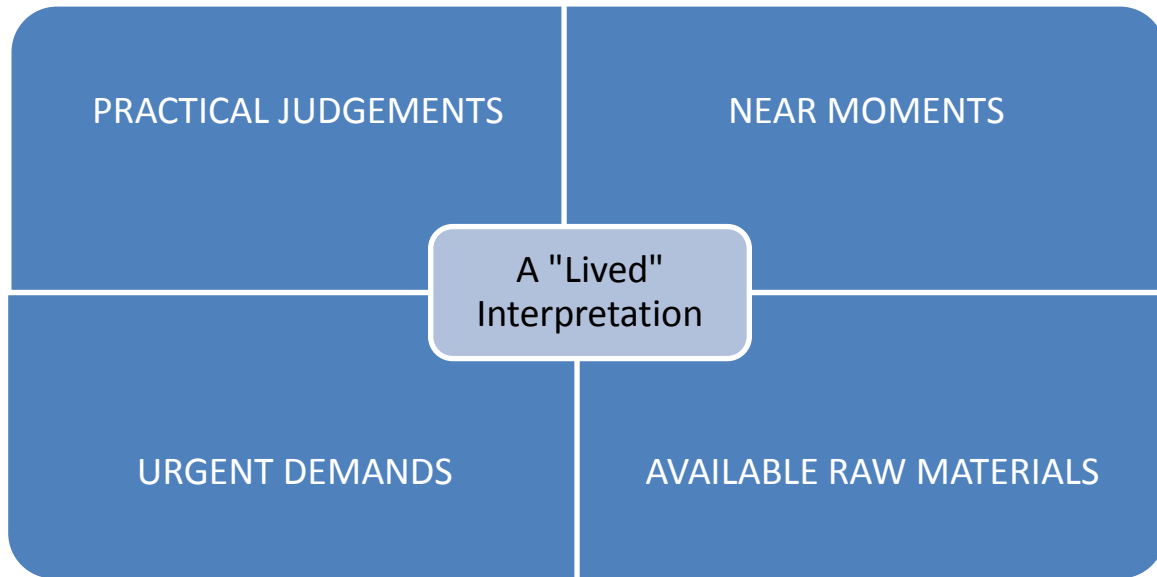
Current discourses which suggest that we live in a time that is "beyond gender" (Thurer, 2005) and popularized images of girls as "powerful and successful" (Pomerantz, Raby, & Stefanik, 2013) may limit these girls ability to perceive "correctly" the sexism that surrounds them, and may have particular meaning for girls who are white and middle class. When these girls' backgrounds match ideals of femininity - white, middle class, submissive, and pretty – and they share in the associated privileges which are implied - it may be hard for them to grasp the reality of sexism. These particular girls' responses reflect the raw materials that were available to them such as beliefs, relationships, and opportunities to react to life's challenges and to pursue their own aspirations. While these girls' vision may be constrained on one level, their own innate awareness, inventive responses, and negotiated social actions represent the available tools and strategies that girls in this study put to use in responding to gender challenges.

Another way to view these girls' strategic responses to gender inequalities can be understood through the same messages of "assumed equity" and "girls' empowerment" narratives. These girls' strategic gendering reflects their ability to negotiate their social actions by capitalizing on ideas of gender equality to leverage social status and power within various social settings. In a low status position, these girls exploit the ideals of "gender equity" to arrange higher status through participation in previously male dominated domains such as sports and academics. In this way, these girls embody a gender identity which more closely fits with the ideals of equality and reflects a more contemporary definition of femininity today, which Carlson (2011) suggests includes more of a "balance of masculinity and femininity" (p.80). This kind of approach employed by girls in this study, seizes an opportunity through claims of equality, to shift gender expectations and oppose narrow definitions of femininity. While these girls' strategies do not overthrow cultural forces, they do help them to strike a "better bargain" for themselves than they would have had otherwise.

For girls in this study, social action responses to everyday gender expectations revealed that historical concepts of "resistance" to dominant cultural dynamics are not evident in their behaviors such as refusal to conform to gendered norms. Instead, their beliefs are built around the ideas of "assumed equality" and "girls' empowerment" which mobilize their norm breaking behaviors, and increased their movement into previously male marked domains. However, this apparent "progress" may be more like a veneer which covers a reality of continued sexism in our society and was not on the radar of these girls. Further, new definitions of femininity which are marked more and more by masculine and feminine traits, allowed these girls to behave similarly to males, and as such, added to confusing sexist realities. Lacking a "discourse of resistance," (Raby, 2005) these girls operated on the beliefs that were available to them, while their actions

reflected the near moments of their lives rather than being informed by future oriented ideals of achieving gender equality. These girls' "inextricable" relationship between themselves and the culture, signals their need to strategically negotiate and carve out space for their own existence, while going it alone and foregoing collective support.

Thus, these girls' social actions are marked by limited awareness, which provides a narrow scope of reality, and fuels their need for adaptive tactics, to avoid personal and social consequences based on unequal gender realities. While girls "momentary gains" support their perceptions of equity progress, underlying realities of sexism may reveal differences between girls' beliefs and their lived experiences. From a feminist perspective, the hallmarks of a patriarchal culture include: the systematic nature of sexism, an adaptable patriarchy, and humans capacity to reinforce or subvert it (Kleinman, 2007). The systematic nature of sexism recognizes girls' unequal status which places them in a subordinate social location. The adaptability of the patriarchy can be seen in the way it changes the rules, and in this case, can be seen in popular narratives of girls "empowerment" which obscures the persistent realities of sexism in our culture, despite the perception of progress. Finally, these girls' capacity to reinforce the patriarchy can be seen in girls' identities, which support feminine behaviors even while they act in more masculine ways. Additionally, these girls' limited awareness of gender inequalities reinforces the patriarchy by undermining past and current efforts to resist the oppression of females.

The potential consequences from this analysis may have both short term and long term effects for both individual girls' lives, and females collectively, through the erosion of previous advances in equality efforts for girls and women. As a result, supporting ways to help these adolescent girls break through the "awareness block" that limits their vision of reality is critical

to their long term health and development. Additionally, exposing "false parallels" of "supposed" gender equity is vital for these girls' well-being, as well as, future generations of girls, in order to sustain ongoing efforts to overcome sexism in our society.

Overall, strategic gendering offers a different view of these girls' social actions that complicates other more historical and traditional versions of girls' reality. The presentation of individual cases focused on three girls who were involved in this study, and represents only a rudimentary attempt to expose the many differing social actions of these girls and how they impact their lives. Strategic gendering provides an interpretation of the way that these girls attended to gendered demands while holding onto their unique aspirations, which are particular and precious – finding a balance of social actions that could sustain their needs and satisfy cultural demands, all at once.

Possible Research Directions

This research project has focused on white middle class adolescent girls and their experiences and responses to gender expectations. Mapping the social actions and the agentic abilities of these girls has been a key task of this project, while creating an interpretive rendering of their social actions has resulted in "strategic gendering," which captures these girls' responses to gender shaping influences. While much has been learned through this exploration additional questions and possibilities have emerged which warrant further investigation.

- *Additional Data Set* – analyzing the data which was collected six years after the initial data collection. I went back into the field to gather more data on five of the original seven girls in this study, as well as, five "important" adults related to each girl. This data was collected in the form of interviews which have been transcribed and are waiting for analysis and interpretation. This data represents a unique opportunity to explore the lives of these girls "six year later" and to compare findings from a "then and now" perspective, essentially looking at how these girls lives have "changed over time." Being able to chart differences in these girls (now women) sense of identity, agency, and social actions would provide a rich longitudinal look that would reveal how their personal priorities and responses to cultural demands have transformed.

- *Strategic Gendering Follow Up Studies* – exploring "strategic gendering" with other populations of females to better understand how females with various backgrounds such as age, race, class, ethnicity and geographic region enact and display this particular concept.

- *Contemporary Femininity and Strategic Gendering* – investigating the relationship between concepts of contemporary femininity and which assumes a "balance of masculinity and femininity" (Carlson, 2011) and how this definition supports strategic gendering while at the same time obscures the need for exposing sexist cultural practices.

- **Empowerment Discourses and Strategic Gendering** – exploring the consequences of "empowerment discourses" on the lives of adolescent girls across populations of race, class, ethnicity and geographic region with a particular focus on revealing the contrast between girl's beliefs and their actual "lived" experience.

- *Replication of Methodology in Different Studies* – replicate the methodology of this study with various populations. This study reflects a context driven model which was predicated on following girls' social networks, as well as, multiple data forms including interviews, site visits and elicited texts. This context specific approach allowed me to gather substantive and detailed information from multiple perspectives and helped to ensure a valuable and credible research project. This study could provide a model for other populations and settings for researchers who are interested in qualitative approaches to research.

Possible Practical Applications

While pursuing further research will support the creation of more new knowledge, applying the lessons of this research project will be equally valuable to practitioners and lay people who may benefit from this information. This research may be particularly useful for educators, psychologists, parents and scholars who are interested in learning about and supporting adolescent girls' healthy development.

- **Teacher, Counselor and Parent Education** – providing educational workshops for teachers, counseling professionals and parents which focus on the impacts of gender expectations in the lives of adolescent girls with a particular focus on adolescence as a period of "gender intensification," girls agentic potential and social actions, strategic gendering, and awareness raising around the disconnect between girls "empowerment" narratives and sexism today.

- **Curriculum Design for School Based and Community Based Programs –** developing educational curricula and programs which target adolescent girls need for awareness

around gender equity issues in a postfeminist era. Create innovative educational designs which breakdown barriers to adolescent girls' awareness of sexism. This can take the form of classroom curricula or out of school educational programs. Key strategies can be drawn from "strategic gendering" components such as strategic awareness, strategic adaptability and strategic negotiation. Supporting adolescent girls to create space for their own independent actions through negotiating norm breaking gains and tactical trade-offs. Topics and program types might include: negotiation skills, leadership training, sexism in the 21st century, leveraging perceptions of equality in your life, and supporting girls' personal career goals. This kind of curriculum development might happen in the context of schools of education where students are being prepared for roles as teachers.

- **Engaged Programs for Adolescent Girls -** developing girl specific programs, workshops, events and information campaigns for raising awareness to sexism in the lives of adolescent girls in an age of "beyond gender." Focusing on building adolescent girls autonomy and agentic capacities, while teaching them about power dynamics and sexism, through engaged programs involving direct experiences. These might include: adventure, leadership and mentoring programs.

Conclusion

In this study, I have presented an interpretive representation of the major findings of this research project. Strategic gendering captures the contradictory behaviors which were revealed in the lives of the adolescent girls in this study. As an adaptive negotiation between these girls' individual goals and cultural expectations, strategic gendering, illuminates the observable blending of social actions identified in this investigation. Four separate strategic gendering components were described including: strategic awareness, strategic integration, strategic adaptability, and strategic negotiation. Strategic awareness highlighted these girls' perception of their subordinate status and surroundings and drives their strategic gendering motives. Strategic integration described girls' dual commitment to self and culture, and the unique standpoint that they hold. Strategic adaptability focused on girls' capacity for inventive actions which help to sustain their own objectives, in light of cultural demands. While strategic negotiation, describes how these girls' social actions strike a bargain between their individual needs and cultural

expectations. Together these four aspects make up the main features of strategic gendering, and form an overall response strategy which was enacted by the girls in this study.

Three individual cases of girls in this investigation illustrated the specific ways that strategic gendering appeared in their lives. These cases displayed three distinct manifestations of strategic gendering and were depicted through numerous incidents and descriptions of these girls' social actions. This chapter also discussed the impacts of strategic gendering and the specific meanings for these particular girls, including: a "lived" interpretation, leveraging social status through gender equity narratives, balancing "momentary gains" with potential long term losses, and the struggle for awareness due to "beyond gender" discourses.

Further, I have explored possible research directions such as following up on additional collected data, conducting further studies focused on strategic gendering with diverse populations and settings, as well as, applying the context specific methodologies of this study to future research projects. Possible practical applications were also considered and included workshops for educators and lay people, curriculum designs for schools and after school programs, and engaged educational programs for adolescent girls.

It is my hope, that I have helped to uncover and brought to light, some of the specific details that make up the lives of the seven early adolescent girls in this study, and how each were shaped by the many interrelated social and personal dynamics in their lives. Charting these adolescent girls' social actions revealed "strategic gendering," which is a response that is focused on these girls' negotiated social actions, and offers new insights for redefining agency and reframing these adolescent girls' standpoint, in relation to our culture.

While this chapter concludes the key findings and interpretation of this study, the lives of the girls in this inquiry do not end here. Through unexpected circumstances, I found myself

going back into the field more than six years later, and met up with several of the participants in

the original investigation. The following Epilogue offers a brief look into the lives of five of

these young adults several years after the main study was completed.

EPILOGUE

Nearly six years after this investigation began, I returned to the field to meet with the original study participants that I had encountered previously, for the purpose of collecting more data. After contacting all the study participants, five of the seven agreed to meet with me for a one time interview of approximately one and a half hours. These interviews took place at a variety of locations including kitchen tables, a living room, a library meeting room, and one college campus dormitory. The intension of these interviews was to collect information about these study participants current lives which would help to reveal "change over time" related to the original research question and emerging theoretical themes. The brief updates that follow represent "snapshots" of my fleeting moments with these young adults, and offers a glimpse of how they are each continuing to negotiate their unfolding lives.

Alissa

Alissa was 19 years old, and in her second year at a large university in the northeast region of the US, when I encountered her six years later. She was on winter break and volunteering at a homeless shelter nearby, while at the same time, shadowing a doctor who specialized in treating the homeless. I drove to the campus to meet with Alissa, and called her on my cell phone for help, to find a parking space in the congested urban environment surrounding her school. She immediately came to find me and walked purposefully across the street in front of me, and I knew it was her only because she came within the timeframe I expected, not because I recognized her. She was bundled up, since it was a bitterly cold day in January 2015, and she had on a black bubble style coat, a grayish headband, jeans, and black boots. I jumped out of my car and shouted, "Alissa," and she quickly walked towards me and said, "Hi." She got into my warm car, to direct me to place I could park, and we fell right into chatting like old friends about the weather and catching up on our news.

We walked through campus to Alissa's dormitory, which was red brick with white columns in the front. She gave me a brief tour before we found an empty meeting room to settle into for our interview. We peeled off our layers of clothing and sat at the corner of a large wooden conference room table. I took in Alissa's appearance, and noticed she was of medium height, had long dark wavy hair, and big brown eyes. She had on a large wooly sweater and her cheeks were flushed from the cold outside. We were both eager to get started and I gave Alissa two separate writing exercises, just like six years ago, and then I asked her to tell me about what she wrote. She described herself using three words which included "curious, compassionate and determined." We compared these words with ones she had previously selected, which were close in meaning and included "sensitive, determined, and loving." Alissa laughed at the similar words

and in a self-deprecating way added that "determined" could also be another way of saying stubborn.

Alissa plunged into telling me about her next writing response but prefaced it by saying, "I've had a lot of self-existential crises this last semester in terms of like 'who do I want to be?' and 'who am I becoming?'" Alissa talked freely and unreservedly, she seemed to be processing her thoughts which were well put together but still undergoing internal scrutiny, even as she spoke. Alissa's transition to college and living away from home had had a big impact on her. She said changes like these, "unearth a lot of crap in your life, that you didn't realize that you had, that were eating away at you slowly but once you get to a certain point . . . the cliff drops off and you have to decide." Alissa spoke about a painful experience of being "teased and hurt by my Christian friends" during high school, and how she began to question her faith in God. She pointed to her "sensitivity" as playing a part in this experience and said "I could really let people really hurt me [then]."

As we spoke, Alissa's experiences over the past six years began to paint a picture of difficulty marked by perseverance. She seemed to be in a dynamic phase of self-learning and discovery which was triggered by her new independent life as an adult. Seeking answers to her unpleasant past experiences, she gave up God, only to be back in Gods graces, and was continuing to search for clarity about her own truth and a way forward. She seemed to be both cautious and courageous at the same time – protecting her sensitive and loving heart while being open to new ideas and experiences. She explained "I am the young woman who doesn't like to feel unwanted but is also afraid of being too independent and closed off." Reconciling her need for social interactions, with her own independence, appeared to be a current struggle for Alissa.

Alissa's sensitivity seemed to be her strength and her weakness – what made her care about others and the world so much also made her vulnerable to losing sight of herself and her own needs. As we finished up, Alissa told me stories of her recent semester abroad in Ghana West Africa, studying the slave diaspora and working on an archeological dig on a former slave trader site. She explained that she needed to shake up her life, and this experience provided her with new perspectives and learning, that was fueling her search for answers. Alissa told me about a motto that she thought of often to guide her these days, she said, "love is a choice," and this small phrase seemed to help her navigate the confusing, and as yet, unresolved doubts that remained in her mind about the choices and direction her life would take.

Alissa and I said our good byes after hearing in detail about her adventures in West Africa. I could have listened to her stories all day but I pulled myself away to honor our time commitment. I gathered up my materials and Alissa walked me to the door of her dormitory where we paused. Not knowing when we would reconnect, we gave each other a big hug like old friends, who hoped we would see each other again someday. Before we separated, we looked directly into each other's eyes for a moment, and I could see Alissa's raw vulnerability, and felt my own desire to want to shelter her somehow. Instead, I forced myself to head out into the cold air with a feeling of uncertainty, and the gratitude of having shared briefly in the inner workings of Alissa's life journey.

McKenzie

McKenzie was on Thanksgiving break in the fall of 2015 when we met for our interview. She was 20 years old and in her second year at a state university in the northeast region of the US. I drove up the familiar winding driveway to her mom's house in the woods and located the hidden back door which was obscured by a wind break and piles of dry wood for the stove. I

knocked on the door and McKenzie quickly came to greet me. We gave each other a quick embrace and were both excited to see each other after so long. We located ourselves in a spacious living room area with large windows and a beautiful view of a forested landscape below. It was a cold November day and nearly the exact time of year when I last saw McKenzie six years previous. There was a dark tiger cat that looked well fed, who greeted me affectionately and threatened to steal our attention if I didn't send her away.

McKenzie was dressed in grey tights, a white long sleeve shirt with a green fleece vest, LL Bean boots, and had her long blond hair pulled back in braids. She seemed much taller now than before, and was maybe 5' 7" tall with a slender build. Her eyes were bright and thoughtful as she sat in an overstuffed brown chair while I sat opposite her on a similarly looking couch. There was a round coffee table between us and I placed my materials and digital recorder on it, and pushed the device towards McKenzie. We dove right into the interview as we were both eager to get started. McKenzie was on school break, and staying alone at her mom's house for a few days with no agenda, which made our time together feel relaxed and free of competing demands.

I read back to McKenzie some of her responses from six years ago and she said, "That's really funny to hear what I sounded like in middle school, oh, my gosh." We both laughed and she went on to say, "I've defiantly grown up a lot since then." We talked about areas of her life where she felt powerful both past and present. In regards to her love of sports, she described the moment when she has control of the ball as powerful and said, "I get to dictate the play, the flow of the game, what's going to happen next and that's something that you don't really have in a lot of other situations."

I noticed that McKenzie's voice was louder and steadier – she spoke with even more forcefulness than she did six years ago. Her responses were thoughtful and sometimes she paused to find what she really thought or felt about the question I had just asked. Her words seemed practiced and sure, and seemed to come from an authentic place inside her. Our conversation flowed easily and I felt like I was talking to an adult, and was happy to know there was more understanding between us - about the adult world - we both now shared.

We moved on to talking about stuck areas of her life, and McKenzie quickly identified a current area of struggle and said, "I'm not going to play field hockey anymore." In her mind, she had already made the decision to end her collegiate sports career, but following through by telling her parents, and then, eventually her coaches, seemed both difficult and liberating at the same time. She spoke about her parents reaction to her decision, and said that the difficulty in telling them was not necessarily about her choice but more about "[them] accepting the fact that it's my life and I'm go[ing] to do . . . what I want to do whether or not it's what they want me to do." McKenzie elaborated on the source of her unease and expressed, "I'm a pleaser - I like to make my parents happy – make my family happy and it's often difficult for me to kind of let them down – not that I'm letting them down because their obviously proud of me and they support me and they love me." She said that after her parents' initial surprise over her decision that they "totally get it and are okay with whatever I want to do." McKenzie recounted how playing field hockey limited other opportunities that she felt she was missing out on, and was looking forward to trying new sports, like downhill skiing and involving herself more in her academic area of interest which was environmental studies.

We ended our interview with a question about McKenzie's hopes and fears for the future. She thoughtfully responded and said, "I am really excited to find the person I want to be – what I

want to do and the people I want to surround myself with." McKenzie spoke as if her life was just beginning, and maybe it was, with her in charge and ready to take the controls. I had exceeded my allotted time and could see that I was wearing McKenzie down with my questions, so, I gathered up my notes and digital recorder, and thanked her for sharing her powerful experiences and personal insights with me. McKenzie politely walked me to the door and we said quick good byes, and I headed for the warmth of my car feeling both fortunate and indebted to McKenzie for our shared time together.

Michael (formerly Michelle)

Michael was 19 years old when we met up at his parent's country home on a winter's day, nearly seven years after our last meeting during my pilot study. I drove up the ice covered driveway and walked gingerly to the house and rang the doorbell. I was excited and nervous all at once, since I knew that Michelle had "transitioned" into Michael over the intervening years and did not know what to expect from our imminent reunion. Michael opened the door, and I quickly searched his face, and saw that he was indeed the same person that I knew from years before. He smiled and put out his right hand to welcome me, but I opened my arms and he quickly melted and accepted my warm gesture. He was no longer the "shorty" twelve year old girl I remembered, and now stood at five feet five inches tall. Michael was wearing a grey hoody, with baggy jeans, and was in stocking feet. His facial features were darker and he had curly black hair that was tousled on top of his head. Michael's appearance, while similar to before, now had the distinct recognition of being a young man.

We quickly sat down at the round kitchen table, and both of us started talking eagerly about the small details that we remembered about each other's lives. I soon learned that Michael had just gotten up from sleeping, and was experimenting with a different sleep cycle which

involved staying up all night and sleeping during the day. We launched into the interview and Michael was eager to engage with me and the questions that I had prepared for him. I asked Michael to describe himself in three words, just like I did seven years ago. He responded with, "funny, smart, and nervous," and then, we compared these to the words he had given previously, which were "lots of energy, shorty, and neat freak." Michael elaborated on the word "nervous" and said that it described him "ninety percent of the time" while the words "funny" and "smart" only accounted for ten percent. Michael explained that he had ongoing issues with anxiety and how it shaped his decisions and social encounters.

Michael was in his second year as a college student and talked about his discomfort with being on a residential campus, and how after his first he year decided to go to a state school closer to home. However, this situation did not work out for Michael either; who came home most weekends due to difficulty with awkward social interactions, and told me that he would be taking evening classes at an extension school for the upcoming spring semester. He described his career and academic interests as being in computer programing, economics and math. As Michael talked, I could sense a difference from when I interviewed him before – he seemed more thoughtful and cautious – perhaps not as sure about himself as he was when he was twelve years old. When I asked him, "What is the most striking thing that is different about you now compared to then?" he responded, "I lost track of what's important – that girl power or boy power - I knew it [then]." Michael's comment gave me a brief insight into how difficult the intervening seven years must have been for him.

While we sat together, I took in Michael's appearance and noticed that his hands were more delicate looking than his otherwise masculine appearance. His fingers were long and slender and his nails clipped and well kept. His facial features also drew my attention, and I

noticed that while he had some dark facial hair on his chin and cheeks, it was more emerging than fully grown. These small clues might give away Michael's transgender nature, if one were to look for them. While biologically a man now, he carried himself with shoulders a bit rounded and head tipped down slightly, in the way that a person carries a heavy burden. During our interview, Michael slipped in details of his life that covered the ensuing years since I last saw him - his story of transitioning from a girl to a boy, and then, to a man. I was intrigued by the specifics but just let Michael spill out what parts were important for him to tell, and as he did, I got a partial picture of a period that must have involved difficult choices and decisions for him.

As our interview progressed, we talked about the areas of his life that he felt powerful, and he quickly identified similarities and differences from past to present. Overall, Michael said he felt more in charge of his life and was taking responsibility for his decisions without his parents input. He said, "I am responsible for myself. I am a person now." He talked about recently getting his driver's license and had a small blue car that his parents got for him. On the flip side, I asked about areas of Michael's life where he felt stuck. After reading back some of the responses he gave when he was twelve, to the same question, a kind of light went on for Michael as he recognized his old words and excitedly said, "I was really really on top of it – it's great." He seemed delighted to have rediscovered part of himself that might have gotten lost over the years.

Not surprisingly, Michael still seemed to be searching for understanding about his gender identity; however, at the same time, he also seemed comfortable with the ambiguity about his still evolving self. As we finished up, Michael asked me if he could get a copy of my interview notes which contained his responses from seven years ago. He said he was creating records of his experiences and seemed smitten with the reminder of his old self through transcript quotes I read

to him. He said, "I am envious of the power of my old self. I could accomplish anything." He continued to reflect, "I would love to go back to that feeling of independence and strength. I have a lot of work to get back to that."

Collecting my materials from the round kitchen table, I got up to leave. Michael followed me to the front door, and this time, I put out my hand to give him a shake good bye but Michael did not take it, and instead held out his arms to give me a hug. I felt a connection of understanding as he embraced me, and realized that our talk might have meant even more to him than it did to me. Perhaps being an impartial witness, to another person's struggle for becoming, might be a gift that I could not fully comprehend. As I departed, I felt I had witnessed something both difficult and powerful – a life that was striving for "trueness" and the journey of struggle to get there.

Patricia

Patricia was home on winter break from college, when I drove to her parent's house in Livingston to conduct our interview. She was 19 years old and enrolled as a first year student at a state university in the northeast region of the US. It was a cold day in January 2015, and I parked my car next to their sprawling, well-kept two story house, with an in-law apartment attached where her grandparents lived. I walked quickly up to the front door and within seconds Patricia opened the door and greeted me with a big smile on her face. As I entered the house, we gave each other a hug and I could tell that Patricia was excited to see me. We quickly walked to the kitchen where I remembered the familiar surroundings. I sat down at the kitchen table with red circle shaped placemats and Patricia got two tall glasses of water and placed them in front of us. Patricia and I chatted briefly sharing our news and I learned the she was working as a substitute teacher over her break.

Without hesitation, we got to work and Patricia completed two writing exercises similar to the ones she had done six years ago. She undertook the task readily and finished up her writing after three minutes of silent work. We compared the words that she used to describe herself now which were "outgoing, competitive, and loyal," to the ones six years before which were "outgoing, helpful, friendly, and caring." We pondered about how the two sets of words were similar and different. Patricia spoke about how she felt "loyal" now to her close high school friends, who were also off at college, and how her feelings for her home town had grown significantly since she had been away for a semester. In response to the writing prompt, "I am the woman who . . ." she shared a couple of phrases one of which was, "puts pressure on myself to be as successful as I can be, doesn't know how to relax" and she also wrote, "is thankful for all the opportunities I have been given, works hard."

As we talked, I took stock of Patricia's appearance and noticed her dark straight hair, grey sweater, and a maroon and gold scarf around her neck. She also wore pearl earrings, several silver bracelets, and her high school class ring on her left hand. I read back some of Patricia's responses to questions I asked last time we met about areas in her life that she felt powerful. After hearing her words and listening carefully she said, "It definitely sounds familiar, it's funny, it was like seven years ago and it seems so immature and young – like hosting a party. What? That doesn't even make sense." She described how she still felt powerful in her life and said, "I was three sport captain senior year – field hockey, basketball and lacrosse." She elaborated and said, "Then, I went up to school and I started up an [intramural] field hockey team up there. I got a bunch of girls I didn't know together and started a Facebook message and was like I'm looking to play, if anybody [else] is." I asked Patricia about her former life as a competitive athlete, and the change from being a three sport captain in high school, to playing intramural field hockey.

She replied, "I don't really have one. Which is kind of sad, I went to the basketball game last night [at my old high school] and it kind of kills me to be in the stands."

Patricia spoke about the occupational therapy program she was enrolled in at college, and how it was "very competitive" to get into, which is also why she chose it. Patricia talked about her classmates, and how they shared a similar determined attitude, and how it made her feel like she was in the right place. As she talked excitedly about the program, I noticed she appeared to have swapped a competitive sport focus, for a competitive academic one, and the familiarity she found with her likeminded student cohort. While Patricia had given up competitive sports for more relaxed recreational activities, she seemed to have held onto her finely tuned competitive temperament in approaching her academic pursuits.

As we continued our discussion, we turned to talk about areas of her life where she felt stuck. At first she said, "Now seven years later, I don't think I have issues that are similar to then." But after a few moments, Patricia responded, "Knowing how to relax, I put so much pressure on myself. I am so busy. I just don't know how to sit down and watch TV." She continued and said, "It bothers me that I can't do it. I'm wired for stress. I'm wired for like being on the go all the time." Reflecting on the effects of stress over past years, Patricia noted, "I got very run down, [getting] sick with a cold and exhausted. It used to happen all the time." I thought about how busy Patricia was in high school with all her activities, and could understand her inability to relax now based on a past life of non-stop happenings. Whether she was "wired for stress," or she had learned to manage a life "with stress," seemed to be revealed in her history of repetitive illnesses. Listening to Patricia, I was silently happy that she was taking a break from intense physical activity, and hoped that she would come to appreciate the respite from the demands of competitive sports.

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Patricia and I turned our conversation towards the topic of hopes and fears. We listened to some of her responses from six years ago, and she was bemused by the fact that one of her goals at age thirteen had been to buy a car, and how she wanted to apply the stipend that she got from this study to help her purchase one. She said "I did by a car when I was sixteen. I paid for all of it, and my parents paid for the insurance." We both got a chuckle out of how focused and industrious she was at age thirteen. Patricia spoke of her desire to live in her home town. She said, "It's always been for me to live in [Livingston]. I don't know why but my friends always made fun of me." She recalled a phrase that she heard and repeated it, "I couldn't wait to get going but wasn't quite ready to leave," which expressed her feelings about wanting to return to her hometown after college. We talked about how she was different now than before, but Patricia found more about herself that was the same, and struggled to find much difference in herself and her responses.

As we wrapped up our interview Patricia expressed that she hoped to hear more about my study and for me to stay in touch with her and that I should visit her, if I was ever on her college campus. We gave each other a good hug, like we were old acquaintances, and I stepped out of the front door onto a sunny porch. From behind I heard Patricia say, "Be careful of ice, if there is any," as I walked towards my car. At that moment, I turned my head back slightly and glanced at her over my shoulder, and saw her standing in the doorway, my mind did a fast forward, and I imagined Patricia as a grow woman in her own home, living the life that she had just described to me.

Lucy

Lucy and I met at the Livingston library on a cold January day in 2015. We met in a small conference room that had a small round table, and the sun was shining in a large window.

Lucy seemed eager to talk with me and was more relaxed than I remembered from six years ago. She was 19 years old, and on winter break from the state college that she was attending, in the northeast region of the US. Her face seemed radiant as we chatted catching up on what we knew about each other's lives. I asked her about college and field hockey, and she inquired about my daughter, who she knew and shared Irish Step dancing with for many years.

Lucy wore an oversized yellow hoodie with the letter "L" on the upper right side, and I assumed the "L" was for Livingston. Lucy was casually dressed, and was wearing grey leggings and sneakers. Her dirty blond hair was pulled back and she wore a blue head band along with some decorative blue and silver earrings. She had no makeup on and her overall appearance was clean and comfortable. As we talked, Lucy was pleased to be reminded of what she had said six years ago, in response to my question about areas in her life that she felt powerful. She said, "I'm glad you read that – I forgot about that." She told me that she still felt powerful in sports which were previously an important area of her life. Lucy expressed with pride that she got to be a starting player her first year, on the field hockey team at the college she attended. I pressed Lucy for a specific example of what feeling powerful meant to her and she said, "When you shut a girl out and you're the only one who gets the ball – it's the best feeling."

Lucy reflected that she did not feel as confident in sports now, as she did in seventh grade, and said that there are "always new challenges and new matches to play." She explained that sports are "so mental," and that aspect has been a big challenge throughout her sporting career. Lucy indicated that her primary motivation in playing was to help her team succeed, and I could not help notice that when she talked about field hockey, there was a lack of focus on herself and her own needs and objectives. I peppered her with questions searching for deeper

personal meaning with the expectation that for a dedicated collegiate athlete there must be some ego involved, but I failed to find it in Lucy.

I noticed that Lucy's voice was more embodied and confident as she spoke, than what I remembered from the last time we met. Her voice seemed more level and unapologetic, and came from a place of lived experience. Previously, I felt I might have overpowered her with my questions and expectations, and now, I felt that she was more prepared for our discussion. I felt happy inside with the apparent "progress" she had made, and enjoyed listening to her talk about herself and her experiences. Yet, I knew that the happy and bubbly exterior that Lucy showed was not all of her, and we delved into talking about some of her struggles both past and present.

In the present, she said, "I don't know what I want to do for the rest of my life." She talked about her indecision with college course choices and felt like she didn't have a clear career direction. She said she was going to take some nursing courses but wasn't sure if that was right for her. Lucy also talked about a serious field hockey injury she got – a cut from a field hockey stick to the knee which became infected with "MRSA," which is an antibiotic resistant strain of bacteria. The incident made her feel scared and like she had "no control over it." On top of it, Lucy feared that she might not be able to play field hockey, and they would replace her position with someone else. Lucy felt disempowered and like she was "letting people down." These concerns seemed to trigger Lucy's feelings of responsibility to her team, as well as, her desire to maintain her position as a player.

Lucy and I talked about other topics but we end our interview with a question about "What is most strikingly different about you now as compared to then?" She said that she was less naive than she was at twelve years old. When I pressed her to explain she noted, "Things aren't that simple." She said that once she thought girls could do anything but that there are

limitations and "things are a lot harder to achieve" than she thought they would be. She spoke about how she had to give up on some of her former dreams, and how she realized "I'm not going to be some amazing [person] who wins the world championship." Looking back she said, "It's a lot harder than your twelve year old mind thinks it is."

As our time came to a close, Lucy began to well up with tears – a little at first which she fought back, but then the tears just started to flow. She said, "I don't know why I am crying." I told her she was not the only one of my study participants to cry a little during these sessions and these words seem to console her. We walked out of the library together into the parking lot where we said our good byes with a hug and went our separate ways. I thought of Lucy's tears as a signal that she felt affirmed or understood by someone or she had learned something deep about herself. I also wondered if having an authentic conversation about her life, both the good and the difficult, might not be something she experienced very often. Perhaps, it was a special opportunity for a young woman to be taken so seriously by an adult, who had no expectation other than for her to be totally who she was – that might be something worth crying about, too.

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APPENDIX A: SUPPLEMENTAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Identity Focus

- How would you describe yourself in three words?
- How would you complete this sentence? *I am the woman who . . . .*
- Background Info: fathers/mothers jobs then; ethnic background; born where?(optional)

Response Follow Ups

- Do you remember saying, ". . . . ." in response to my question "In what ways do you feel *powerful* in your life right now?" Does this older version of you sound familiar? How would you answer that same question today? How are you different or the same?
- Do you remember saying, ". . . . ." in response to my question "In what ways do you feel *stuck* in your life right now?" Does this older version of you sound familiar? How would you answer that same question today? How are you different or the same?
- Do you remember saying, ". . . . ." in response to my question "What are your hopes and fears for the future?" Does this older version of you sound familiar? How would you answer that same question today? How are they different or the same today?

Developmental Changes

- What opportunities or experiences have shaped you in important ways since then?
- What is the most striking thing that is different about you now compared to then?
- In what ways are you becoming the person you want to become? What gets in the way of fulfilling the person you want to become?

Gender Focus

- Do you remember when I asked "In what ways are girl's experiences different than boy's experiences?" Your response was ". . . . . ". How would you answer that same question today?

Sharing Early Research Interpretations and Response (to social action and girl archetype charts)

- Which of the social actions rang true for you then? Ring true for you now?
- Which of the girl archetypes rang true for you then? Ring true for you now?

*__These__ social actions represent the most prominent behaviors identified in my research with girls and came from listening to girls speak about their experiences and my own observations of them in different settings. While some social actions were enacted more strongly by some specific girls, all girls shared these behaviors to varying degrees.	**Working Hard** Working hard is about the increasing level of effort each girl must expend in her daily life during adolescence to keep up with changing expectations as she gets older. **Expansion:** This increase in effort seems to be felt across all areas of girls' lives including school, home, sports and friendships.
Speaking Up Speaking up is when a girl is able to verbally express herself in various settings and with various people to effectively communicate her needs or desires. *Expansion*: Speech is an important tool for boundary setting, stating personal opinions, negotiating relationships, communicating a decision, intervening on someone's behalf and asserting individual needs and plans.	**Doing Right** Doing right is about how girls identify with and act upon their sense of what's right and wrong in their everyday experiences. **Expansion:** This social action concerns girls' relationship to issues of fairness and justice, social norms and following rules in their everyday lives.
Seeking Opportunities Seeking opportunities represents the rich period of transition during adolescence that provides girls chances for taking on new roles and discovering their emergent potential. **Expansion:** Girls pursue roles such as supportive friend, team player, peer problem solver, decision maker, curious student, social organizer, peer leader, self-advocate and career explorer.	**Social Smoothing** Social smoothing represents girls' role as an organizer of social happenings and helping to knit together every day human interactions. **Expansion:** This behavior highlights girls as emotion workers, peer problem solvers, community helpers, and social planners.
Asserting Self Asserting self represents girls growing ability to "step up" and behave in a more powerful way to get her needs met. **Expansion:** Assertive skills are necessary for taking on new responsibilities, making choices, standing up for oneself and others, and creating plans and making them happen.	**Working Friendships** Working on friendship represents the effort a girl puts into making and sustaining the relationships she has with her friends. **Expansion:** Girls devote substantial time to managing their current friends, making friends, coordinating activities with friends and attending to friend troubles.

APPENDIX C: GIRL ARCHETYPES

* **These** representations were derived from observing girls social actions and using girls own words to describe their experiences. These illustrations capture dominant behaviors and qualities of singular girls and are shared by other girls to lesser and varying degrees.	**SENSITIVITY SPECIALIST** This archetype is especially emotionally oriented and highly attuned to others feelings. Incidence: Cassie sees a relative who feels hurt, she feels hurt for them. Quote: *"I really feel like I need to be nice to everyone"*.
IDENTITY EXPLORER This archetype is engaged in an active inquiry about the individual qualities of the "self", including gender identities. Incident: Jesse sadly realizes that she has to give up her old "boy clothes" and start wearing new "girl clothes" as she joins a new middle school. Quote: *"[I am] trying to convince people that I'm a girl"*.	**CAPTAIN OF HER OWN** This archetype has a strong core identity, has self-governing qualities and a firm focus on personal goal setting. Incident: Kaylie calls her mom from school and tells her she got a stick in her ear but not to worry and could she make her a doctor's appointment for the next day. Quote: *"What's going to make me happy"? "Get myself to that better step"*.
CHEER CHAMPION This archetype pays attention to the needs of others and engages in active verbal support. Incident: Alyssa helps her friends with homework and gives them verbal encouragement. Quote: *"If someone needs cheering up, I can do it."*	**RIGHTFUL DEFENDER** This archetype actively engages in righting wrongs by speaking up and intervening in social situations. Incident: Natasha intervened at the lunch table when a girl was being picked on after asking a "dumb" question. Quote: *"I know it's the right thing to do"*.
FRIENDSHIP FIGHTER This archetype works actively at building, maintaining and resolving friendship troubles. Incident: One lonely summer Morgan realizes she only has two tentative friends and begins the difficult journey to find new ones. Quote: *"You have to start working on your friendships"*.	**GENTLE WARRIOR** This archetype recognizes the fluidity of both feminine and masculine behaviors. Girls often embody both nurturing and assertive qualities and display them in different settings or at different times. Incident: When Lucy played against a team of older girls she brings out her assertive side to stand up to them. Quote: *"Try your hardest and give your fullest". "Think like a warrior"*. Incident: When Lucy accidentally elbows someone during a game she is deeply caring and apologetic. Quote: *"Are you okay? I'm sorry, I'm sorry"*.

APPENDIX D: IRB MODIFICATION LETTER

October 28, 2014

University of New Hampshire
Office of Sponsored Research
Service Building, 51 College Road
Durham, NH 03824

Regarding: IRB #4121

Dear Julie Simpson,

I would like to request a modification for my doctoral dissertation project entitled *"Navigating Adolescence: Exploring Girls Agency and Choice-Making in Social Contexts"*. The modification I am requesting is to add follow up interviews to my current project.

After a lapse in my dissertation work due to health reasons I am proposing to modify my research project to add more data to encompass this longer timeframe. Since my work is still in the early analysis phase it is possible to collect more data and fold new insights into my final interpretations. This change will allow my project to continue utilizing my original data while adding a retrospective dimension that would not have been possible previously. Adding one additional interview (one and a half hours long) with each research subject five years after the original data was collected will provide additional material for analysis and a unique glimpse into the lives of middle school girls 5 years forward. New data will complement existing data as well as provide possible new perspectives that will deepen interpretations and provide a longer lens from which to better understand the lives of girls today.

I don't anticipate any changes to my research protocol since I am conducting more interviews with the same research subjects and the interview questions will be following up on previous questions and responses from girls prior. I have attached a sampling of possible questions that will be used in my interviews. I don't foresee any new risks to research subjects and the benefits will remain the same. Additionally, informed consent forms will be given only to the subjects themselves since all of them are over the age of 18 now. I have also attached an updated informed consent letter that I will use.

My proposed action plan is to: 1) reestablish contact with research subjects to inform them of my desire to conduct an additional interview 2) Coordinate and set up interviews 3) Begin interviews as soon as possible with a completion date of no later than June 2015.

Finally, I have a new Dissertation Committee Chair, Paula Salvio, in the Education Department. She replaced my previous Chair, Michael Middleton, who left the department last June. Happily Michael has agreed to remain on my committee as an external member.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Joann Stemmermann
Doctoral Candidate, Dept. of Education
390 Berlin Road
Bolton, MA
978-779-5572

APPENDIX E: RESEARCH MATRIX

Primary Research Question: How do adolescent girls experience and respond to gender expectations in their lives?					
Sub Questions	**Purpose of Question**	**Sensitizing Questions**	**Data Collection Methods**	**Data Source**	**Data Analysis**
How are girls' experiences related to their core self-concepts?	To understand girls perceptions of themselves as social actors in different settings and activities.	* How do girls understand themselves as social actors? * How do girls identify themselves in different settings? * How do girls identify themselves with different people?	**Primary Method** Multiple in depth interviews with girls. **Secondary Methods** Site visits and observations in various settings. Written work generated by girls.	**Primary Source** Interview transcripts **Secondary Sources** Fieldnotes Written artifacts	**Primary Analysis** Feminist Framework including: four step reading of text; memo writing; interpretive summaries. **Secondary Analysis** Ethnographic Framework including: open coding of fieldnotes; memo writing; develop core themes; focused coding; integrative memos.
How are girls' experiences related to key relationships in their lives?	To understand the link between girls experiences and important individual relationships.	* What are the key relationships girls have in their lives? * What are girls' key relationships like?	**Primary Methods** Interviews with key adults. Multiple in depth interviews with girls. **Secondary Method** Site visits and observations in various settings.	**Primary Source** Interview transcripts **Secondary Source** Fieldnotes	**Primary Analysis** Feminist Framework including: four step reading of text; memo writing; interpretive summaries. **Secondary Analysis** Ethnographic Framework including: open coding of fieldnotes; memo writing; develop core themes; focused coding; integrative memos.
How are girls' experiences related to key social networks in their lives?	To understand the link between girls experiences and expectations and norms of key social networks.	* What are the key social networks in girls' lives? * What expectations and norms characterize each social network?	**Primary Method** Site visits and observations in various settings. **Secondary Methods** Multiple in depth interviews with girls. Written work generated by girls.	**Primary Source** Fieldnotes **Secondary Sources** Interview transcripts Written artifacts	**Primary Analysis** Ethnographic Framework including: open coding of fieldnotes; memo writing; develop core themes; focused coding; integrative memos **Secondary Analysis** Feminist Framework including: four step reading of text; memo writing; interpretive summaries.
How are girls' experiences related to the gender hierarchies in which they live?	To understand the relationship between girls experiences and pervasive gender inequalities.	* How do girls respond to gender expectations? * How do girls understand gender inequalities in their lives?	**Primary Method** Site visits and observations in various settings. **Secondary Method** Multiple in depth interviews with girls.	**Primary Source** Fieldnotes **Secondary Source** Interview transcripts	**Primary Analysis** Ethnographic Framework including: open coding of fieldnotes; memo writing; develop core themes; focused coding; integrative memos **Secondary Analysis** Feminist Framework including: four step reading of text; memo writing; interpretive summaries.

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

For Main Study

Study Participant Interview

Tone Setting for Interview

- Thank you for your participation in this study.
- You can call me Joann or Ms. Stemmermann
- You are the expert on your experience; I am here to listen to your stories.
- Think of this as a conversation not a test, there are no right or wrong answers
- My role is to ask questions and mostly listen while you talk about your experiences
- You are always welcome to ask any questions about my research or about me at the end of each interview
- If you see me writing notes, they are simply reminders or follow up questions that I want to ask and don't want to forget.
- Try to be specific, expressive and open about your responses.
- Today is the first of four interviews, as well as, two site visits and two important people interviews which we will discuss at the end of this interview.
- You will do a brief writing activity before we start the 60 minute interview today. I would like to collect the writing and record the interview.
- Do you have any questions for me about the study or for me personally before we start?

Interview #1

Adolescent Transitions Theme

Life Bubble Mapping Exercise

- Can you tell me about what's on your life map and describe it for me?

- What three words would you choose to describe yourself?

- What's really going well for you in your life right now? What's not going so well for you in your life right now?

- What do you like about being a teenager? What don't you like about being a teenager?

- How is this year different than last year?

- Is there anything you miss about your life before being a teen?

- What have you found most helpful to adjust to changes in your life?

- What are your hopes and fears for the future?

Interview #2

Choice-Making Theme

I am the Girl Who . . . Freewrite Exercise

- Can you tell me about two or three things you wrote about in your freewrite?

- What is a choice you make every day that is easy for you? What is a choice that is difficult for you?

- When you have to make a choice, like which clothes to wear, how much do your needs, such as feeling comfortable, factor in to your decision versus other needs, such as wanting to fit in? In other words, when you make a choice how much do you consider your needs versus other people's needs?

- How are girls' experiences of adolescence different than boys? Are there challenges that girls face that boys don't and what are they?

- When you think of who you are and the expectations others have for you, do you sometimes feel like you have to change in order to be with them? Can you think of an example?

- Can you think of any part of your life as an early teen that is uncomfortable for you and that you don't know how to handle?

Interview #3

Agentic Identity Theme

Powerful/Struggle Writing Exercise

- Can you tell me what you wrote about in each of the two sides of the paper?

- Can you tell me about a time when you felt powerful or in charge?

- In what ways are you completely independent?

- Can you tell me about a time you acted courageously?

- Can you tell me about a time when you felt stuck or struggled?

- How do you overcome these situations?

- Do you have a particular piece of wisdom that you try to live by or helps guide your life?

Interview #4

Difficult Situations Theme

Public/Private Exercise

- Can you think of a difficult situation you encountered and how you handled it? (i.e. someone was being mean to a friend) Such as when you had to make a choice to take action or speak up for yourself, and tell me what that was like for you?

- Can you tell me about a difficult time you wanted to speak up or take up action for yourself but did not and what held you back?

- Tell me about how frequently you want to take up action or speak up versus how often you actually do act or speak up?

- When you think about today or this week, can you think of an example of a time you spoke up for something you needed or wanted? Can you tell me about it?

- Can you tell me about a time when you tried to take up action or speak up and you encountered resistance?

- If you were designing a study like this what would you do differently and what would you keep the same?

Adult Interview

Tone Setting for Interview

- Thank you for agreeing to speak with me about XXXXXX.
- I am an educational program designer who is doing research on girls in order to develop programs that better serve the needs of adolescent girls.
- Study Focus: I am interested in understanding "how girls handle the challenges of adolescence through the actions they choose in their everyday lives".
- I have come to you because you are an important person in XXXXX's life.
- Read informed consent form, ask if any questions, get signature (2 copies)
- Discuss consent agreement, stopping at any time, remains confidential.
- This interview will take about 45 minutes.
- Do you have any questions for me about the study or for me personally before we start?

Think about this as a conversation not a formal interview – there is no right or wrong answer. I am interested in your perspective on each of these questions based on the context in which you know XXXXX.

How would you describe XXXXX in three words? Can you think of a "snapshot moment" that would help me get to know XXXXX?

In what ways does XXXXX speak up or stand up for herself? Can you give me a specific example?

How does XXXXX get her wants and needs met in a general sense? Can you give a specific example?

In what ways does XXXXX take a more passive role?

When you think of girls XXXXX's age how is she similar or different in speaking up or taking action on her own behalf?

In your view, when and where does XXXXX seem to be most independent and self-directed?

How would you describe your relationship with XXXXX?

How would you describe XXXX's interactions with peers? With Adults? With Girls or Boys?

How does XXXXX's handle challenges she comes up against?

Site Visit: Patricia & Lucy
Place: Livingston Elementary School Gym
Time: 7:15 pm
Date: February 4, 2009

I drive up to the Livingston Elementary School in the dark and park my car near the yellow curb as close to the gym as I can. The school is not new like the nearby Middle School building and appears worn and is at least thirty years old. I see a couple of cars pull up to the curb, drop off girls and then drive away. I follow the girls through the gym door and immediately hear the echo of voices coming from inside the gym. I enter the gym and observe five girls on the court running around and shooting basketballs and a cluster of parents near the door. The gym is bright but has that old school dinginess about it, like looking through dirty glasses. Patrick, Patricia's dad, approaches me and we make brief but friendly introductions. He has a shaved head and wears a green long sleeve Celtics t-shirt with a whistle hanging from his neck and blue striped gym pants. Lucy's mom, Ruth, greets me with a smile and is apparently a coach as well. She is dressed in casual work clothes and has on white sneakers. Ruth and I chat momentarily and then I look for a place to sit down to take in the scene. I locate myself on some tan and blue gymnastic pads stacked up near the wall. Ruth comes and sits next to me and we chat some more about my research and her pursuit of a master's degree in education. After a few minutes Patrick approaches Ruth and is concerned that there are so few girls at practice. He laments to Ruth "How many e-mails do I send to remind them about details. It's just downright disrespectful."

I see Lucy is wearing a tie-dyed t-shirt and light blue shorts. Patricia is wearing a dark blue t-shirt with the words "no hair, no beard, no soul" on the front and "no loyalty #18" on the back. She's also wearing dark blue shorts with yellow and white stripes. The five girls who are present and the two coaches hang out in center court and chit chat a while before practice begins – they seem to be waiting for more girls to arrive. A simultaneous cheer goes up when one girl arrives and the other girls joyously run to welcome her. While some of the parents linger at the court edge another girl shows up and Coach Patrick, as the girls refer to him, calls out "You ready kid?" As things finally get into full swing practice balls are abandoned on the side of the court while girls focus on the instructions of the coaches. There are seven girls in total at the practice and they vary in size and shape. There is a larger and taller girl with a white t-shirt that has a basketball on the front. She is wearing read and silver knee length shorts. A tall black girl wears yellow and dark blue shorts. Another girl is dressed in white and black sweatpants rolled above the knee and has blond hair pulled back in a ponytail.

Soon all the girls line up to practice free throws from the foul line one after the other. Ruth helps gather balls to help supply each girl throwing from the foul line. She seems to be half coach and half player as she interacts with the girls but let's Patrick direct their activities. When everyone has had a couple of rounds of free throws the girls fan out and practice in pairs on their own. Patricia and Lucy practice together and look like they are having fun – they don't get many free throws in and they seem to spend most of the night in close proximity to each other. Coach Patrick joins the girls and after he sinks six consecutive baskets he challenges them to "beat that!" Patrick rotates to the other pairs of girls giving out quips of encouragement and advice. I hear the basketballs thud loudly and irregularly, slowing with each consecutive bounce – with five balls in play it sounds like booming thunder. A girl playing by herself near me shoots and

misses the hoop entirely and laughs at herself, "nothing but air" I hear her say to herself. There is a mood of friendliness, fun and informality amongst this group. There are lots of random comments and outbursts from the girls – it sometimes feels like they are playing in their backyard rather than at the school gym. I over hear Patricia comically say "I think that is not fair" as she misses a free throw. I see the girl with the white t-shirt off by herself as she runs to try and touch the rime just for fun. Lucy seems light and not very aggressive today – she frequently pulls faces and acts goofy - sometimes she looks like a rag doll with her arms and legs moving in random ways. Her antics appear to be a way of interacting with her friends but seem to undermine her actual level of competence. She seems to float around like a fairy and appears more delicate than in the school game I attended last week.

Coach Patrick calls out "Let's go three on three" and motions for Patricia to sit out while the other six girls set themselves up to start a practice game. As the girls play Coach Patrick instructs them in how to set up a play, first on the right side of the net and then on the left side. A girl makes a basket and three girls high five each other to celebrate the moment. Patricia jogs back on the court to rejoin the players as another girl sits out. In defense mode Patricia operates low to the ground and moves her feet swiftly as she makes her body wide and impenetrable. She is the shortest girl on the team but seems determined not to let this fact affect her performance. Coach Patrick seems to call out as many criticisms as encouragements. After a girl makes a shot I hear him comment, "She's especially good at shooting". When it's Patricia's turn to dribble and make the play her dad yells out a challenge to her, "use the left hand". Patricia responds by putting her right hand behind her back and focuses herself to take on the test. Lucy gets pushed to the floor during a rebound attempt but is unhurt – she seems unfazed by the incident and smiles as she gets to her feet.

Shifting gears Coach Patrick calls out "Everyone on the line!" After the girls line up he gives a blast of his whistle and the girls obediently run up and down the court two times. When they are done Coach Patrick intentionally asks "Who wants more?" One girl offers up a response, "I could go for a drink". Patrick quickly agrees and motions them with his arms as the girls walk off the court to take a break. Coach Patrick ends the practice by demonstrating to the girls how to do "reverse layups". The girls enjoy the drill and cheer each player on who makes a winning basket. During Patricia's attempt at the reverse layup her dad calls out "you're cheating" to her. In a defensive response Patricia quips back "I don't understand it". Soon Lucy makes the difficult "reverse layup" and hollers out "whoa" to the cheers of her teammates. Soon some adult men start entering the gym and appear to getting ready for a practice session of their own. The girls' team winds up their practice gathering up balls and reconnecting with parents.

Things to Reflect on: coaches are parents of two girls; how is Patricia like her dad in his role as lead coach and Lucy like her mom in her role as assistant coach; Lucy's behavior is different in this practice, whereas, Patricia seems consistent with the school game I saw; the dynamic between Coach Patrick's intensity and desire to focus the girls (using whistle and criticisms) and the girls desire to have fun and be less informal (acting goofy and having fun).

1) *Life Bubble Map*

Purpose: The purpose is to map out each girls social world according their perceptions and experiences. This drawing/schema will be used to identify meaningful activities, locations and relationships for each girl. It will also be used to prime the first interview and get a sense of each girl's social landscape.

Instructions: Using the concept of bubble mapping, have each girl put themselves in a circle at the center of the page and then draw key activities, locations and relationships using lines and circles connected to her. There is no "right" way to do this and each girl can take as much time as is necessary to complete the drawing. Tell each girl that they are welcome to add more if they want later.

Materials: pad of drawing paper, pen or pencil

Approximate Time: 5 minutes

2) *Writing Exercise: I am the Girl Who . . .*

Purpose: The purpose is to elicit girls own ideas about their sense of agency before they begin to talk about it with the researcher. These writings will be used as a data source and as a prompt for interviewing each girl.

Instructions: Key to this exercise is the concept of "free writing" and the ideas which flow from individuals' stream of consciousness. Ask girls if they are familiar with this idea and review what "free writing" is and how to do "free writing". Be sure to remind them: to write whatever comes to mind after the written prompt; write for the entire 5 minutes; write at a comfortable speed; write through stuck spots by writing down "I am stuck" for as long as it takes to continue with their thoughts and to not worry about proper sentence structure and spelling. Then, give each girl a pad of writing paper and a pen or pencil. Ask her to write the words "I am the Girl Who . . ." at the top of a blank page. Tell her to start writing for 5 minutes and then tell her to stop when the 5 minutes is over. Repeat this exercise.

Materials: pad of paper, pen or pencil and watch

Approximate Time: 5 minutes

3) *Public/Private Split Exercise*

Purpose: The purpose is to reveals girls sense of public and private self and how her public presentation may differ from her private experiences. This activity will be used as a data source and to prime the interview.

Instructions: On a piece of paper have the girl draw a line down the middle and label each side with either "public" or "private." Then, instruct her to brainstorm in each column a response to the following questions: What parts of yourself do you show the world? What parts of yourself to you keep private?

Materials: pad of paper, pen or pencil and watch.

Approximate time: 5 minutes

4) *Powerful/Stuck Split Exercise*

Purpose: The purpose is to reveal girls' sense of agency and the ways she feels powerful or stuck in her life. This activity will be used as a data source and to prime the interview.

Instructions: On a piece of paper have the girl draw a line down the middle and label each side with either "powerful" or "stuck". Then, instruct her to brainstorm in each column a response to the following questions: In what ways do you feel powerful in your life? In what ways do you feel stuck in your life?

Materials: pad of paper, pen or pencil and watch.

Approximate time: 5 minutes

APPENDIX I: A Within and Across Case Analysis Plan

Analysis Mode	Purpose	Strategy	Sources	Product(s)
Within Girl	Identify important individual aspects of girls experience	Close reading of each girls interviews and writing pieces using Grounded Theory framework	Girl interviews Elicited Texts	Individual case profile including stories, themes and representative comments Reduced data set
Across Girl	Identify variation and themes	Analytic writing on emerging theoretical categories	Girl interviews Adult interviews Fieldnotes Elicited Texts	Analytic narratives with across case integration of theoretical categories
Within Girl Social World	Identify contextualized aspects of each girls social experiences	Close reading of all research data and reduced data sets	Girl interviews Adult interviews Fieldnotes Elicited Texts	Individual case social world profile including additional stories, themes and comments
Across Girl Social World	Identify comparative aspects of girls experiences across theoretical categories and social world	Reading of all data sources, analytic narratives and reduced data sets	Girl interviews Adult interviews Fieldnotes Elicited Texts	Essential elements, profiles of girls and social world, exemplar cases

APPENDIX J: RESOURCE LIST FOR GIRLS

Alateen
Phone: 617-843-5300
Support group for teens with alcoholic parents, family members or friends.

Massachusetts Department of Social Services
Child-at-Risk Hotline
Phone: 1-800-792-5200
Call this number to report child abuse and neglect.

Nutritional Hotline
Phone: 1-800-322-7203
Referral service for nutrition resources throughout the state.

Anorexia Bulimia Care
Phone: 617-735-9767
Can provide information and support to people affected by eating disorders.

The Boston Area Rape Crisis Center
Hotline: 617-492-7273
Business Phone: 617-492-8306
Offers counseling and referrals to survivors of rape and their families. They provide educational information and contacts for other area organizations.

Dating Violence Youth Hotline
Hotline: 617-547-HURT
Gives information and support to victims (or friends of victims) of dating violence.

Gay and Lesbian Helpline
Hotline: 617-267-9001
For information and support.

Samariteens
Hotline: 617-247-8050
Confidential hotline staffed by teenagers who befriend other teenagers who are feeling lonely, depressed or suicidal. Accepts collect calls.

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