“Who Are They to Judge?”: (Re)Conceptualizing Voice and Resistance in Girls’ Lives through Girls’ Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

KATRINA R. BODEY: "Who Are They to Judge?": (Re)Conceptualizing Voice and Resistance in Girls' Lives through Girls' Perspectives
(under the direction of Julia T. Wood)

This dissertation explores what the concepts of voice and resistance mean to girls. I conduced 18 online interviews with 18- and 19-year-old girls. The girls in this study suggested that voice can be viewed (a) as fully internal, (b) as internal thoughts made public, and (c) as internal thoughts made public and taken seriously by others. Some of girls' definitions challenge the idea that one's perspective must be accepted and approved by others in order to count. Additionally, these girls offered possibilities for (re)conceptualizing resistance. They descriptions highlighted that resistance can be internally or externally motivated. They noted that they commonly resist messages about sex, drugs and alcohol, physical appearance, and politics. They offered various modes of resistance, including setting and focusing on goals and self-development, escaping, and serving as a mentor or role model. These motivations, targets, and modes of resistance challenge androcentric models of resistance that suggest resistance must be externally motivated and focused and take place in a public, antagonistic way. These girls' perspectives suggest that both voice and resistance may be better thought of as processes rather than single acts. In the dissertation I argue that imposing the dominant definition of voice and resistance upon girls is part of a larger pattern that silences girls' voices, dismisses their actions, and, perhaps even more, problematically, teaches them to do the same.

DEDICATION

To my sister Marjorie, who is one of the most amazing girls I know.

To my grandfather, Richard Paul Bodey, who always knew my voice mattered and taught me to believe it myself.

and

To all of the girls who believe they have something to say and especially to those who believe they do not.

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First, I want to thank the participants of this study. These girls gave over an hour of their time to share intimate details of their lives in order to increase our understanding of what it means to be a girl today. These girls are the heart and soul of this project.

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Julia T. Wood (advisor)
Jane D. Brown
Steven K. May
Patricia S. Parker
Lawrence B. Rosenfeld

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CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION

> Girls negotiate a different leisure space and different personal spaces from those inhabited by boys. These in turn offer them different possibilities for "resistance," if indeed that is the right word to use. (McRobbie & Garber, 1976/2000, p. 24)

> One way to think about all the pain and pathology of adolescence is to say that the culture is just too hard for most girls to understand and master at this point in their development. They become overwhelmed and symptomatic. (Pipher, 1994, p. 13)

> "I am very passionate […] I speak my mind." (Jordana, participant)

> "I think that because of the pressures [girls] have in todays world they don't speak up out of fear of being judged." (Ashlyn, participant)

Women's and girls' studies scholars have been noting for decades that girls' voices and resistance have been left out of analyses of youth culture. More than 30 years ago, Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber (1976/2000) encouraged scholars to pursue an exploration of girls' resistance. Twenty years later, Mary Pipher (1994) proclaimed that girls lose their resistant voices in adolescence. These two topics—voice and resistance—are closely connected and salient concepts in girls' lives and in the study of girls' lives. Despite increased scholarly attention to girls' voices and resistance, there have been very few studies in which girls' definitions and perspectives have been included. In this study, I attempt to do just that. In this chapter I first define what I mean by the term "girl" as well as note the

limitations of the category. I then describe the study, noting its value. Finally, I provide a preview of chapters two through six.

What Is a "Girl"?

The girls in this study were 18 and 19 years old. Before attending to the ways girls view and enact power and resistance, I must first address what "counts" as a "girl," or as a "young woman," not only as a subject of research but also as a more general social category. Although many scholars resist the term girl as a referent for females who are beyond puberty, many females in this category embrace the label. Many of my students have told me that they do not want to be thought of as women or young women because it conjures an image of adulthood, seriousness, and age that they do not feel describes them. While I am opposed to using diminutive terms because I think they are often an act of subordinating the one being labeled, I am also committed to respecting the names and identities people choose for themselves. For this reason, I use the word *girl* to define the people I studied in this research.

In the following paragraphs, I give further attention to the character of categories, including the category of girl. Categories help us make sense of the world while simultaneously constraining and homogenizing what they attempt to describe. As Harris (2004a) notes, "membership in the girl category is extending out at both ends" (p. 191) with increasingly younger and older females being included. It is certainly an option to define girls in a legal sense: females who not yet considered adults. This definition means that any female under the age of 18 is a girl. From a developmental behavioral perspective, adolescence is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood that extends to age 22 (early adolescence: 11-14, mid adolescence: 15-18, late adolescence: 19-22). From this perspective, girl is defined as a female person under the age of 22. Additionally, some

people define girls as those females who have not yet undergone a physical transition into womanhood—either by beginning to develop breasts or, more often, starting to menstruate—and women as those females who are biologically mature. Using this definition, girls are defined by a biological process rather than a chronological age.

All of these definitions provide options for categorizing girls. However, each of these definitions relies on the assumption that an identifiable chronological, developmental, or biological factor marks the transition from girlhood to adulthood. These perspectives are limiting because they define individuals based on a general standard that s/he may or may not identify with at all and may or may not be relevant. Depending on the goal of the categorization, some of these approaches may be appropriate; however, when considering who is a girl in terms of girls' studies, these definitions leave out (and include) girls in potentially problematic ways. Moreover, these definitions are predicated on a binary of sex that is inaccurate for some people. Transgendered and intersexed people are made invisible by defining girls as people born with vaginas. Much of the work in girls' studies arose out of frustration over the androcentric biases that characterized existing literature and research on human development (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Harris, 2004b). Thus, using these definitions has the potential to reinscribe the problems early girls' studies scholars were attempting to correct.

Rather than thinking of girl as a biological category, I recognize that it is a socially constructed category used to refer to people who share—or are perceived as sharing—some common experiences. Obviously, individuals in any category have some unique experiences and characteristics, but members are recognized by others as having one or more qualities in common that can be used to define them as a group. Though many scholars acknowledge

that know categories are not natural or given, human beings often live our lives as if they are real. "Girl," as I use it, includes those who share a common set of social expectations and pressures (i.e. are labeled girl by others) as well as those whose feel or think that the category of "girl" has a personally applicable resonance (i.e., those who choose to label themselves as girl). This definition is consistent with Driscoll's claim that "girlhood in late modernity is constituted in processes rather than stable terms such as 'demographics' or 'identity categories'" (2002, p. 304).

Certainly, this definition does not escape the possibility of homogenizing girls. Like Harris (2004a), though, "I want to expose [the] very notion of a normal girlhood by drawing attention to some of the contemporary ways that an imagined common experience of girlhood is constructed" (p. 192). I believe this can be done by broadening our conceptions of power, resistance, and voice and listening to what girls are *saying,* rather than merely allowing them space to speak.

Description of the Study

For centuries, women's and girls' voices have been less valued than men's and boys' voices, and the former have been socially constructed as incapable and weak. Bordo (1997) writes of girls and women:

> Loss of mobility, loss of voice, inability to leave the home, feeding others while starving oneself, taking up space, and whittling down the space one's body takes up—all have symbolic meaning, all have *political* meaning under the varying rules governing the historical construction of gender. (p. 168)

As girls age, they face escalating pressures to become increasingly competent at femininity. In Western culture, many of these pressures affect all girls, albeit in different ways

and to different degrees. As Bartky (1990) notes, "The larger disciplines that construct a 'feminine' body out of a female one are by no means race- or class-specific" (p. 72). Scholars such as Brown and Gilligan (1992) and Pipher (1994) worried that girls were losing their resistant voices and becoming weaker as they entered adolescence. It is clear from the work of Brown and Gilligan (1992) and Pipher (1994) that some girls *do* feel that they lose their voices in adolescence. Because femininity is still associated with passivity in our culture, many girls feel that they cannot be as outspoken during their teenage and adult years as they may have been during childhood. Durham (1999) noted, "adolescence is traditionally viewed as a time of rebellion against authority—but not for girls. Adolescence is marked in gendered terms: for girls, it is a time of learning to conform to norms of femininity rather than a time of limit-testing" (p. 220).

Despite these constraints, there is inadequate evidence to support the claim that girls are helpless victims with no choice other than to bend to traditional notions of femininity and other pressures. Yes, they certainly face pressures. Despite what Pipher and others would have us believe, however, culture is not simply unbearable for all girls. Many can—and do—respond.

There are two major problems with assuming that all girls loose their voices when they enter adolescence. First, this hyperfeminizes girls in ways that reproduce problematic stereotypes that all girls are feminine and feminine people are meek and timid. Second, most existing theory and research on voice assumes a masculine version of voice and, therefore, may be unable to recognize that girls may be "raising their voices" in ways that fall outside of conventional views of what voice is. For instance, girls who write in their diaries or chat online may be exercising a type of voice that scholars, parents, adults, and even other adolescents have

not learned to recognize. Because scholars have given little attention to the possibility of feminine forms of voice, we have little idea what those might look or sound like.

Whether one argues that girls have or must regain their voices, girls' studies scholars agree that girls' voices matter and should be heard. As I explore further in the next chapter, voice is a concept that is bound up with the ideas of power and resistance. On the one hand, having a voice is seen as a powerful thing for girls and is a tool that can be used to resist problematic social and interpersonal messages. However, because definitions of voice have been fairly limited and limiting and have consistently excluded non-masculine forms, any failure to enact masculine forms of voice has ironically been seen as being powerless and thus incapable of resistance.

The goal of this study is to increase understanding of what it means to girls to have voices and to engage in resistance. This interest has always been important to me, personally and academically, and it has been fortified by my commitment to third-wave feminist politics, which seek on-the-ground, everyday change that has material consequences, including challenging conventional understandings of femininity, resistance, and "normal." Talking with girls about how they think about and engaged in voice and resistance recognizes that girls are active agents who have potential to increase our understanding of girls and their lives. Additionally, I believe that studying how girls and women enact change on micro-levels can help us appreciate how systemic change can grow and is growing from their everyday actions. In this project I sought to talk with girls about how they consciously sculpt, sustain and perform their identities to create change, challenge dominant discourses about femininity, create stability in their lives, and accomplish other goals.

I approached this project from a dialogic and critical feminist perspective. A dialogic model

for research is important. It holds "claim[ing] a space for lost voices" (Deetz, 2001) as its key hope, something that is critical when voices have been silenced or ignored. As Frank (2005) explains, Bakhtin argued that "each voice is formed in an ongoing process of anticipation and response to other voices. Each voice always contains the voices of others" (p. 966) and thus dialogic research involves the interweaving of the voices of the participants, the researcher, and any others involved to create the research report. In this project I also adopt a critical feminist perspective that also seeks "reformation of [the] social order" (Deetz, 2001, p. 17) as a hope as well. Gilligan's groundbreaking work, along with many of the other "voice" scholars opened up space to talk about girls in youth studies. Getting the dialogue started was key, however, many scholars and activists have tended forget that it is important to do something with girls' voices rather than just "allow" them to be heard. Harris (2004a) writes about girls:

> Different modes of resistance have developed in response to […] new strategies of governmentality. I have deemed this *future-girl politics*, and suggest it works by creating alternative spaces and global networks for public deliberation and that it evades surveillance and appropriation […]. In short, new times both regulate and constrain young women in unprecedented ways, which unleashes unforeseen techniques of critique and resistance by them. (p. 183)

The terrain of girls' lives is both changing and has historically been understudied, making it doubly important to attend to the ways in which girls are engaging with power and resistance and conceptualizing and using voice.

I conducted this study through in-depth online interviews with 18 teenage girls. I describe the methods and participants more in later chapters. For now, it is important to note

that, consistent with the dialogical, feminist approach to this study, it is based not only on my writing and thinking but also the words and insights of the 18 girls who participated in it. I chose to conduct online interviews since instant messenger and social networking sites have exploded in popularity and are a preferred medium of communication among teenagers (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, Smith, 2007). I sought to meet girls where they were and where they feel comfortable talking about themselves and their lives.

As critical feminist scholars, I think it is our job to take seriously these future-girl politics, to recognize the terrain under which girls engage in self-making and with the world, and to take their actions and beliefs seriously. In my study, I sought to do this work.

Value of the Study

This study is important for both theoretical and practical reasons. First, the concepts of voice and resistance are ones that have been theorized from a variety of perspectives. This study gives insight into girls' voices and resistance from a perspective that often goes unexplored: the girls' perspectives. It offers suggestions for how to expand and reconceptualize both resistance and voice. It also suggests that there are important relationships among voice, resistance, self, and subjectivity. In this study, I examine the ways in which voice and resistance grow out of girls' self-concepts as well as the impact they have on their senses of self.

Reconceptualizing resistance and voice is not only of theoretical interest. This study also has practical implications for girls' lives. When we reconsider and expand what counts as voice and resistance, we also expand the possibilities for girls and their lives. Not all girls struggle with the loss of voice that some scholars cite (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Pipher, 1994), but adolescence is often a seen as a time for children to discover their own interests

and desires and selves. Learning more about voice helps adults and adolescents to better understand this time and to, when appropriate, provide better resources and support. This is not to suggest that adults need to teach girls how to have a voice or that all of them need help; rather, I am suggesting that when we—scholars, parents, teachers, adolescents—all have a better understanding of voice, we can all be more supportive of one another during the process and increase possibilities for being and doing in the world. Similarly, when we understand resistance better, we (adults *and* girls) can improve the way it is used. Foucault (1977) notes that society disciplines people into docile bodies and, while resistance may emerge from the same discourse as discipline, it may also create new possibilities for that discourse. This may seem like a theoretical implication, but it has practical impact. Girls (and people in general) learn how to resist when they engage in resistance. When adults and girls can better recognize girls' resistance, there is an increased potential to begin to work against a culture that teaches girls to dismiss their voices, thoughts, and actions. This process has implications for individual girls, encouraging and empowering them, and culture at large, breaking down discourses that constrain and silence girls.

This study does not answer all of the questions about resistance and voice. In fact, it opens up more than it pins down. However, this study provides a critical step in the process of expanding our understanding of both voice and resistance.

Limitations of the Study

Like all research projects, there were limitations to this study. The timing of this study, the method chosen, and my own commitments and interests likely shaped this study. First, I conducted these interviews in the few months before and after the 2008 presidential election in which the candidates were John McCain (R) and Barack Obama (D), a race that

gained much more interest that any previous election. This timing could have played a role in what girls were focused upon during their interviews.

Next, the method I used—like any method—constrained my research in some ways. Institutional Review Board guidelines for consent required me to obtain parental consent from any participant under 18. The minor potential participants I encountered did not want to engage in this process, noting that they were hesitant to share their online lives with their parents. Thus, I only interviewed girls who were legally adults, ages 18 and 19. Online interviews allowed me access to girls from all over the United States and provided a medium through which they often communicate; however, it also presented unique limitations. I chose this medium knowing that participants might misrepresent themselves. They could easily lie about their age, sex, race, other demographic markers, and any personal experiences, and, unlike in face-to-face communication, I would not have access to nonverbal or vocal cues to increase the chance that I would recognize these misrepresentations. I accepted this limitation because I believed (and believe) that the potential benefits of online recruiting and interviewing outweighed this potential issue. Additionally, online interviewing meant that the conversations with these girls took much longer than they would have face-to-face. I likely would have been able to ask more questions and hear more responses if we had spoken rather than typed.

Another limitation to this study is the snapshot nature of the data. That is, I only interacted with most of the girls in this study only once. I learned a great deal about what they were thinking, feeling, and doing in that moment, but I gained very little information about how those thoughts, feelings, and actions had changed over time. Unless the girls spontaneously offered an example from earlier in their lives, I only learned about their

current experiences. Even the past experiences upon which they did reflect were seen through the lens of their current social location. Thus, I could only analyze and interpret their words for a moment in time and could make no conclusions about the way age and experiences affect girls' perspectives on voice and resistance. A longitudinal study would have allowed me to gain insight into how girls' perspectives may change over time.

Finally, like all researchers, my theoretical, methodological, and intellectual convictions shaped this project. My commitment to third wave feminist politics and to girls sparked and drove my interest in this project. Although this passion kept me dedicated to and enthusiastic about the project, as with all perspectives, it also inevitably limited me. As an interpretive researcher, the questions I asked, themes I saw, and analyses I made were shaped by my political, methodological, and intellectual commitments. Another researcher with other commitments would likely have seen things I did not see. As with all perspectives, mine allowed me to see some things and obscured others.

Outline of the Dissertation

In this chapter I provided an introduction to the dissertation project. The following chapters expand on what I have included here. In chapter two, I provide background information to help the reader frame this study. I discuss the concepts of voice and resistance as they relate to girls' studies. In chapter three, I outline the methodology of this project. I describe the study and the reasoning behind the strategic choices I made to collect data for this project. Chapters four and five are the analyses of the data. In chapter four, I explore the concept of voice through these girls' words. I describe how they defined and understood voice and note the implications for this framing as well as how their ideas about voice connect and disconnect with the existing literature on voice. In chapter five, I explore these

girls' perspectives on resistance. In that chapter I present the girls' definitions of resistance, note some of the targets of these girls' resistance, and explore how they engage in resistance. In both chapter four and five, I propose that voice and resistance should be considered as processes, not simply things to possess and acts. I explore the implications of these more comprehensive definitions in chapter six, the conclusion. In the conclusion I also note future directions for my research agenda and this subject in general.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"Girls' studies" is a growing, interdisciplinary area of research. Examining girls' lives is certainly not new. However, until the 1970s, when Angela McRobbie began to publish work on youth culture in England, girls were largely absent from studies of adolescence (Pecora & Mazzarella, 1999). Shortly thereafter, Carol Gilligan (1982) noted that not only were girls missing from youth culture studies, but they were also overlooked in most theories of moral development in children (also see Pecora & Mazzarella, 1999). Moreover, girls were often left out of women's studies in favor of attending to adult women as subjects of research (Driscoll, 2002; Harris, 2004a, 2004b). Thus, early work on girls' lives sought to address the lack of attention that had been paid to girls by exploring their identities, needs, goals, ideas, and behaviors. Later work in girls' studies would build upon and sometimes struggle with the legacy of these early projects.

In this chapter I outline a brief history of girls' studies, including the controversies and arguments within that lineage. I then summarize some of the current foci of girls' studies. Finally, I discuss how girls' resistance has been theorized, pointing to unanswered questions that need further exploration.

A Brief Genealogy of Girls' Studies

Youth studies was an increasingly popular field of study during the 1970s, but as McRobbie and Garber (1976/2000) noted, girls were rarely the subject of serious consideration:

> They are absent from the classic subcultural ethnographic studies, the pop histories, the personal accounts, and the journalistic surveys of the field. When girls do appear, it is either in ways which uncritically reinforce the stereotypical image of women with which we are so familiar […] or they are fleetingly and marginally presented. (p. 12)

They argue that the lack of girls in subcultures is often the result of subcultures being presented as masculine, thus decreasing the likelihood that girls will identify with and want to be part of them, which, in turn, further decreases the likelihood that they will be written about as integral to subcultures. Further, as McRobbie and Garber astutely noted, girls' subcultures may be organized in non-traditional ways, and researchers who assume distinctly masculine modes of organizing as constitutive of a group or subculture could easily overlook them and their significance.

The Riot Grrrls of the 1990s in both the U.S. and Britain are an example of this oversight. Riot Grrrl was a grassroots movement that largely originated on the floors of girls' living rooms with scissors, paper, and a copying machine, and in the bedrooms of girls who had gotten their hands on guitars (Monem, 2007). For a long time, Riot Grrrl received little public attention other than criticism of the girls involved for being fat and ugly; when it was mentioned in the press, internal tension within the movement was fabricated and exaggerated, taking attention off of the movement itself (Monem).

Around the same time that McRobbie and Garber (1976/2000) pointed to the invisibility of girls in youth studies, other scholars began noting the implications of such neglect. Michelle Fine's (1988) landmark essay on the lack of comprehensive sex education and resources argued that an unwillingness to confront adolescents' beliefs and actions

regarding sex leads to a lack of sufficient discourse and education about sexual activity among teens. She added that teenage girls, especially working-class girls (as well as queer males), suffer the most from the "missing discourse of desire" (Fine, 1988).

Likewise, Carol Gilligan spearheaded a project that examined the lack of attention to girls in studies of psychological and moral development, suggesting that girls' ways of learning, knowing, and interacting were devalued in favor of more masculine modes. Gilligan's project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development began intensively focusing on girls' lives in the late-1970s, producing scholarship for over a decade that contributed to and strongly shaped early girls' studies. In her first book, *In a Different Voice,* Gilligan (1982) suggested that girls' and women's moral development was distinct from that of boys and men. She emphasized caring, relationships, and connections as central to female development and psychology. This perspective was echoed by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1984) when they suggested that women had unique ways of conceptualizing truth, knowledge, and authority that should be acknowledged and valued.

Gilligan continued her work on female development with Brown in their book *Meeting at the Crossroads* (1992) and with Taylor and Sullivan (1995) in *Between Voice and Silence*, both of which further highlighted the ways in which they felt that adolescent girls were losing their resistant, authentic voices in puberty as they buckled under social pressure to conform to a subservient, passive femininity. In *Meeting at the Crossroads*, Brown and Gilligan sought to listen to girls and to discover ways for girls to reclaim their lost voices, which often involved adult women as guides. They wrote:

> Meeting at this crossroad [between childhood and adolescence, between girl and woman] creates an opportunity for women to join girls and by doing so reclaim lost

> voices and lost strengths, to strengthen girls' voices and girls' courage as they enter adolescence by offering girls resonate relationships, and in this way move with girls towards creating a psychologically healthier world and a more caring and just society. (Brown & Gilligan, p. 6)

While this book grew out of a project focused primarily on girls, the message of *Meeting at the Crossroads* seems equally if not more focused on women and how they might reclaim their own voices through empowering the girls they mentor. While mentoring relationships can be effective ways for women and girls to learn from one another, this model presumes that girls could not develop their voices independently of older female guides. Further, it assumes that adult women, like girls, have lost their voices and, even as adults, have yet to find them. The only way, it seems, to reclaim them is to symbolically return to adolescence through their relationships with girls. It seems ironic that in mentoring girls, adult women's voices and search for their voices threaten to overpower nurturing and supporting the mentees, potentially playing a role in suppressing the voices that Gilligan claims girls are destined to lose.

Supporting this perspective, Harris (2004a) argues that this line of thinking prizes adults "as the authorities and mediators of young women's voices" since they are the ones who are positioned as being equipped to remedy girls' problems by showing girls how to find their voices (even though, as Gilligan and her colleagues imply, the women too have lost their voices). Even more, she claims that the adults are the real subjects of these studies:

> This emphasis on speaking and hearing the voices of young women is often merely a lead-up to hearing the voices of the adult women experts who are quick to offer their own

> stories or discourses as solutions or even as descriptions of the problems of girls. (Harris, p. 140-141)

Citing Pipher (1994, see below) and Taylor, et al. (1995) as key proponents of this covert turn to women's rather than girls' lives, Harris notes that sometimes the girls' voices get lost altogether in favor of helping the women in the study "reconnect with their youth" (Harris, p. 141).

Gilligan and her colleagues' work was influential in academe. In the mid-1990s, however, another book made girls and their lives a topic of conversation outside of the academy. Pipher's *Reviving Ophelia* (1994) was a *New York Time's* Best Seller, and it led scholars, teachers, and parents to worry about the dangers of being young and female. Attempting to understand why so many girls become timid and depressed during their teenage years, Pipher suggested:

> One way to think about all the pain and pathology of adolescence is to say that the culture is just too hard for most girls to understand and master at this point in their development. They become overwhelmed and symptomatic. (p. 13)

This perspective casts girls as without agency, as passive victims of culture's pressure. Pipher's book was not grounded in scholarly research, and her assertions were based on her analysis of the experiences of a limited number of white, upper-middle class psychiatric patients who were not representative of the larger population of adolescent girls to which she generalized. Despite the book's limits, Piper's claims spread like wildfire.

Not Little Women

While these and other books that emphasized girls' and women's unique ways of knowing and relating addressed women as subjects in a field that had historically made them

invisible, they also essentialized girls and assumed that adult women, including relatives, teachers, and psychologists, should be the ones empowering girls to raise their voices in a way that took the focus off of girls and denied them individuality and agency. Though Pipher and Gilligan's samples did not span a wide range of races, ages, sexualities and socioeconomic statuses, their generalizations did. As Wood (1992) aptly noted, "While some scholars laud Gilligan for valuing the ways women think and act […], a growing number of critics argue she assumes and implies a trans-historical, quintessential nature of women that is both inaccurate and regressive" (p. 5). Thus, while women and girls were beginning to be included in the conversation about adolescent development, the ways they were included were problematic.

Ward and Benjamin (2004) noted that early girls' studies "identified connections between women and girls as a key means for promoting girls' healthy and safe adolescent development" (p. 17). Though Ward and Benjamin revere this effort, Driscoll (2002), like Harris (2004a) has critiqued it for being too adult-focused, attending to girls only when they are relevant to adult women's lives. Driscoll admonished women's studies for leaving the girls, in their own right, out of the picture:

> Feminist discussions of girls rarely engage with feminine adolescence without constructing girls as opposed to, or otherwise defining, the mature, independent woman as feminist subject. The lack of feminist interest in girls on their own terms (and without presuming their necessary redundancy for feminist politics) helps shape a dominant feminine address to a woman-subject defined in relation to norms of independence, agency, and originality that while liberatory for some also works to restrict and homogenize the category of woman. (p. 9)

Driscoll insisted that girls are not "little women." She urged scholars to consider them as subjects independent of women and as being and doing more than being on a trajectory towards womanhood.

Further problematizing the panic-inducing effect of writers such as Gilligan and Pipher is the concern that their work gives rise to "an industry [in which] parents, teachers, doctors, counselors, and young women themselves are enlisted in the surveillance of girls who may be at risk of crises of identity and self-esteem" (Harris, 2004a, p. 33). According to critics, books, programs, and policies to address this issue often constrain girls more than they help them. Baumgardner and Richards (2000) asserted that, "a veritable cottage industry has been forced out of the fertile soil of girls' failing self-esteem" (p. 179). It is important to note that this "failing self-esteem" is something that many girls claim not to be experiencing or not experiencing in the extreme form that Pipher and others have suggested is typical of girls. Among the strong challenges to the claim that girls are suffering crises of self-esteem is *Ophelia Speaks* (Shandler, 1999), an anthology of girls' refutations of Pipher's (1994) *Reviving Ophelia.*

Gilligan and her colleagues and Pipher wanted to find ways to help girls raise their voices, to speak up and confidently say who and what they were. While I share their concern about the silencing of girls in our culture, I do not fully agree with their assessments, remedies, and key assumptions. These scholars insisted that girls are at risk for losing their voices as they traverse adolescence, but their claims are, in many ways, essentializing and simplistic, and they reinscribe the very paradigm they attempt to subvert. In attempting to open up the conversations about youth to include girls, Gilligan, her colleagues, and Pipher closed down the category of girl. They assumed that girls were all the same, and that pursing

relationships and caring were part of their fundamental natures. Pipher goes further to suggest that girls are passive victims of culture, unable to help themselves.

Despite these issues, Gilligan and Pipher brought attention to an entire population of people who had been largely absent from academic work. In so doing, they raised important questions about what it means to be a girl. A conversation was started that has continued into the present and laid groundwork for present-day girls' studies.

Girls' Studies in the Present

Joan Jacobs Brumberg's (1997) *The Body Project* presents a history of the female body, examining how the importance attributed to the body has changed over time. She argues that currently the female body is seen as an ongoing project, always in need of modification and work. In addition, girls are bombarded daily with messages that insist they need to improve other aspects of themselves, and fashion magazines and advertising give "advice" on how to improve confidence, social skills, and other aspects of one's personality, always already assuming that the girl is engaged in an ongoing and unending project of self-improvement (Mazarrella, 1999; McRobbie, 1991). Frequently, this improvement is represented as attainable through the purchase and consumption of products (Quart, 2003). Girls are taught to become "docile bodies" in a never-ending project of perfecting the self that can never, under the power of the dominant discourse, fully be achieved (Bartky, 1997).

Some people argue that girls are no longer constrained as they used to be. They are legally and socially allowed to play sports, have jobs, and do other activities that were traditionally allowed only for boys and adults. However, although girls now have more mobility into a variety of spaces than ever before, their movements are also more highly monitored than before as well; regulated spaces have extended

> to include the space of interior life—that is, emotions, sexual desire, the private parts of the body, and in particular, the voice of the "true self." […] There is a new understanding that young women ought to make their private selves and "authentic voices" highly visible in public. (Harris, 2004b, p. 125)

While they may have more activities and opportunities available to them, the imperative to perfect oneself remains. This ongoing self-improvement project is not only of theoretical interest. It has material consequences for girls' lives, affecting how they view themselves, their self-worth, and the possibilities for their actions and interactions in the world.

As Harris (2004b) notes, girls' studies exists in a terrain that was created by the early work of girls' studies and is continuously reshaped by newer work that identifies and attends to emergent issues and awareness on the part of researchers. Girls' studies now exists in the aftermath (and with still-existing instantiations) of the original work as it "tackles the legacy of its own interventions" (Harris, 2004b, p. xx). Programs and lines of research that were borne in the early stages of girls' studies still abound. Additionally, many current researchers in the field of girls' studies were the girls who were the focus (either direct or indirect subjects of study) of the "first wave" (Harris, 2004b) of intensive research on adolescent girls, which inevitably changes the stakes as well as the directions of research in girls' studies.

In addition to working with the legacy of early girls' studies, scholars have also begun to (re)consider what it means to be a girl. This reconsideration has led to recognition that many adolescent females have been left out of most analyses of girls' lives due to a limited and limiting inclusion of an unrepresentative sample of girls, which in turn produces a narrow definition of the concept of "girl." Specifically, researchers have focused on white,

middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied biologically female subjects. This final question, what it means to be a girl, is something that I will address briefly here; chapter four of this dissertation presents in an in-depth interrogation of the social category and its politics. Harris (2004a) summarizes the problematic nature of the term "girl," when she writes, "Although there is tremendous fluidity in the application of the title 'girl,' normative ideas about appropriate female adolescence [… are] imposed on young women in an homogenizing fashion" (p. 192). Addressing what it means to be a girl has important implications for girls' studies: About whom are scholars speaking? Whose voices count? And perhaps more importantly, who is left out?

Another more recent inclination of girls' studies is a focus on girls as creators (not just consumers) of media. This aspect of girls' studies has not eliminated viewing girls as consumers of culture; rather, it has augmented the view of the passive, purchasing girl with the view of the active, creating girl. For instance, Mary Celeste Kearney's (2006) book *Girls Make Media* notes that because girls are socialized to be more passive than boys and increasingly docile as they become pre-teens and teenagers, their active creation of media represents "a notable transformation in gender and generational politics" (p. 5). She goes on to note that "in order to fully understand the radical nature of girl media producers, it is necessary to consider the larger systems of power their identities and practices subvert" (2006, p. 5). Kearny and others are certainly not suggesting that girls have historically always *been* passive—Riot Grrrls of the 1990s are a prime example of girls and women taking an active role in popular culture, attempting to redefine the then predominantly white, male punk scene (see Monem, 2007). However, in youth studies and sometimes even within

girls' studies, girls have primarily been seen and represented as passive because activity has been traditionally defined in a masculine way.

A masculine ruler has been used to define activity, passivity, power, and resistance. When this ruler is employed, feminine forms of agency are impossible to detect. Research and society have tended to associate boys with activity and the exterior and girls with passivity and the interior. As Harris (2004a) noted, this increased attention to girls' voices has played a key role in the increased surveillance of girls. Harris' argument points to an important question: what counts as having voice? This "incitement to discourse" (Harris, 2004a, p. 126, using Foucault's term from *The History of Sexuality* (1980) about the self sets up a standard of subjectivity in which "successful subjectivity [is] produced and regulated through this scrutiny of young women's interior lives" (Harris, 2004a, p. 126). A voice, then, only seems to count when it is spoken assertively, publicly, and in the presence of those presumed to already have voices. This limiting definition of voice makes adults the authority on what counts as having a voice, something that is then used to determine if one is being her "authentic self." To be powerful, girls have to conform to this specific mode of having and raising one's voice, making any kind of resistance or other type of "speaking" of one's voice nearly impossible for girls who do not fit this model.

Girls and Resistance

A driving interest for me in this project is what resistance means to adolescent females. As a feminist who identifies with third-wave feminist politics, everyday acts of resistance are important to me. I believe that change can happen on a systemic level through shifts in day-to-day interactions.

Whether one argues that girls have or must regain their voices, girls' studies scholars agree that girls' voices matter and should be heard. As stated previously, voice is a concept that is bound up with the ideas of power and resistance. On the one hand, having a voice is seen as a powerful tool that allows girls to resist social and interpersonal messages. However, because definitions of voice have been fairly limited and limiting, any deviation from the traditional masculine model of voice has ironically been seen as being powerless and thus incapable of resistance. This logic suggests that only masculine voices are powerful and only powerful voices can resist. Thus, non-masculine voices lack power and therefore the potential to resist anything. Feminine voices, according to this logic, cannot resist anything.

It is impossible to separate resistance and power. Foucault (1980) wrote, "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (p. 95). In other words, resistance must function within the system it is attempting to subvert. However, this does not mean that resistance is an inevitable straw (wo)man, set up to be easily quashed by power. Rather, resistance and power affect and change one another. Resistance functions by:

> producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds. (Foucault, 1980, p. 96)

Resistance shapes power and shapes discourse. Resistance may be bold acts that noticeably transform the discourse such that others are forced to recognize and respond to the change or

may be less dramatic acts which alter discourse ever-so-slightly, creating just a tiny bit of space for different possibilities while going largely or fully unnoticed at a conscious level.

Fixmer and Wood (2005) note in their analysis of third-wave feminists' essays that these latter types of resistance are primary ways that many contemporary feminists engage in resistance. Certainly not all, or even many, girls define themselves as feminists of any type; however, the everyday acts of resistance that Fixmer and Wood (2005) note to be so prevalent among third-wave feminists are similar in form to the everyday acts of resistance that many people—feminist or not—enact in their daily lives. Most people do not belong to a social justice organization, spend weekends at protests, and make active, traditionally organized, collective efforts to challenge what they regard as forces of evil. Many people, though, insist on wearing comfortable shoes rather than dangerous stilettos, refuse to buy a brand that is known to rely on unethical labor practices, and recycle in an attempt to help the environment.

These on-the-ground types of resistance are rarely studied or noticed as legitimate acts of resistance and agency. However, they are important for many reasons. Everyday acts of resistance empower individuals in a general way. For example, in 2007 I shaved my head as an act of resistance against ideals of feminine beauty. Shaving my head was exhilarating and motivating. Doing something I thought I could never do made me feel strong and capable of resisting other pressures and expectations I did not like.

Everyday acts of resistance can empower others and create community. For instance, shaving my head, one of my students said that it empowered her to consider wearing her hair natural, something that is often frowned upon in African-American communities. Once while my head was shaved, a woman I had never met stopped me to tell me I was "an honorary

black woman" because I had chosen to defy the expectation that women should have long, flowing hair.

Continuing this example, this kind of embodied resistance can change how people think and act related to the target of that resistance. My grandmother espouses and encourages traditional gender roles, especially for women. When I cut my mid-back length hair to chin-length she said, "Well, thank God you didn't cut it too short. At least it's still feminine. It still looks pretty." However, when I came home with my head shaved, she commented more than once on how nice I looked; it was not an issue. My grandmother is outspoken, and I feel certain that if she were harboring a negative opinion, the family gossip-mill would have reported it to me by now. Shaving my head challenged, if only slightly, my grandmother's beliefs about what it means to be pretty and feminine..

This act of embodied resistance did not change larger social expectations for how women ought to look. Models still tend to have long hair, and women with long hair are still perceived by most as being more feminine than women with short hair. However, shaving my head made a difference for how some people think about and act towards expectations of feminine beauty. Some might argue that shaving my head is not political. However, these examples demonstrate the potential change that can emanate from such a personal act. Everyday acts of resistance do not challenge power structures from the top down. They infiltrate the systems in which they function, creating fissures in the smooth façade, working together to make larger breaks and create new possibilities.

Like power, resistance is not something a person owns or has. Instead, it is something that exists among "apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them" (Foucault, 1980, p. 96). People engage of acts of resistance just as we engage in acts

of power. Definitions of resistance are also subject to power. What counts as resistance and what does not count depends on power, valuing some acts over others. As I have noted, girls have not been and are not currently often seen as agents of resistance. Often, they are not viewed as sufficiently valuable and capable to enact resistance that has any important impact. In these cases, their resistance is seen as having minimal impact and, thus, not counting. Other times, girls' modes of engagement are not recognized as resistance because they do not meet an androcentric definition of resistance.

Of course, not all girls resist in the same way; some may, in fact, enact resistance in ways that conform to masculine models of resistance. However, the definition of resistance has historically privileged masculine modes and ends and, thus, is not equipped to identify modes and ends that do not conform to the masculine model. As McRobbie and Garber (1976/2000) keenly noted, "Girls negotiate a different leisure space and different personal spaces from those inhabited by boys. These in turn offer them different possibilities for 'resistance,' if indeed that is the right word to use" (p. 24). That is, girls' lives generally include discursive structures to resist and manners of resistance that are unique to their particular social locations (for instance, as in the case of Riot Grrls, living rooms and bedrooms), neither of which are valued by the larger culture.

The study I conducted in the fall of 2007 provides an example of non-traditionally recognized resistance. One girl I interviewed said that maintaining her weight—healthy but not thin—was a way of resisting problematic messages about the feminine body. She did not talk to many people about her weight or openly critique messages that emphasize thinness; instead, she simply maintained her weight without bending to pressure to eat less and exercise more in order to reach the ideal those messages communicate. This point is

important for at least two reasons. First, it provides an example of resistance that is active (this girl consciously engaged with media and social pressure to be thin and chose to maintain her fuller size) but not explicit or confrontational. Second, it points to the different pressures and issues that girls face compared to boys their age. While many boys feel constrained by size expectations, pressures on girls are distinctly different and more pervasive. The ideal female body is more narrowly defined and the consequences for not having in are, in most areas of the U.S., much greater than they are for boys who do not have an "ideal" figure. Thus, it makes sense that if girls' resistance is aimed at different issues and pressures that it would take different forms. Historically, though, resistance such as that in the example described have not been recognized. In order to attend to this lack, we must broaden the definition of resistance to acknowledge and understand alternative methods of resistance.

Just as not all girls resist in the same way, not all girls resist the same things. However, because identifiably-female people in our culture are disciplined, at least in some ways, to be feminine, we realize that nearly all girls share some similar pressures, assumptions, and expectations, discursive constraints that cross race and class lines, even if they manifest differently among diverse groups of girls and women. Durham (1999) noted, "adolescence is traditionally viewed as a time of rebellion against authority—but not for girls. Adolescence is marked in gendered terms: for girls, it is a time of learning to conform to norms of femininity rather than a time of limit-testing" (Durham, p. 220). Durham called for the recognition of alternative types of resistance, an opening up of what is considered resistance to include for example, collective alternative readings of media images, as acts of resistance.

As I noted previously, even girls' resistance that is enacted in more traditionally recognized ways is often ignored or trivialized. The 1990s radical punk feminist movement Riot Grrl that I mentioned earlier in this chapter provides an example of girls' resistance being devalued. Despite their revolutionary effect on the punk music scene and in girls' and women's lives, Riot Grrl was rarely covered by media (Monem, 2007). When media did report on the movement, they tended to ignore the grrls' politics in favor of covering catty arguments (many of which were completely fabricated, or at least significantly over-dramatized) among riot grrls. When Kathleen Hanna (one of the key figures in the movement) ripped off her shirt and wrote "SLUT" across her stomach in a radical act of reclaimation of the word (a word that had been slung degradingly at many riot grrls by men who thought women had no place in a punk music scene), the politics of the act were largely ignored by the media, and it was quickly taken up and reinscribed in patriarchal oppression through baby-tees with words like "bitch" and "hottie" printed on the chest.

What and How Do Girls Resist?

Not all girls would characterize themselves as resisters. Some girls tirelessly seek to embody the expectations of both general and particular others. However, many girls *do* resist, often in ways that go unnoticed or unrecognized by others (and sometimes even themselves), particularly adult women, in their lives. For instance, my seventeen-year-old sister and her friends have MySpace pages that include pictures, song lyrics, and blogs that often subtly critique the world around them. My sister's choice of song on her page, for instance, is often a song that covertly responds to a frustration in her life. Though the object of her frustration will likely never hear the song, and she doesn't make the connection explicit through explanation, she is resisting in a way that matters to her. To suggest that girls

do not resist would imply that girls have no agency to make any choice other than to conform, because it is impossible to imagine, in cultures in which resistance is at least possible as a concept and possible for some that no one would resist anything. What girls resist certainly varies across race, class, sexuality, ability, age, other identity markers and contextual factors. However, broadly, girls, like most people, tend to resist positionings of themselves and/or others that they find undesirable.

Collections of essays such as *Ophelia Speaks: Adolescent Girls Write about their Search for Self* (Shandler, 1999), *Odd Girl Speaks Out* (Simmons, 2004), and *My Sisters' Voices: Teenage Girls of Color Speak Out* (Jacob, 2002) give an indication of what girls resist when their voices are spoken in official, public ways. Girls in these essays write about resisting racism, poverty, unwanted sexual activity, and media messages about femininity and all of the ways they (and people they care about) are mistakenly, incorrectly, or inaccurately positioned around and inside of these issues. They write about family, sex, friendship, bullying, and their role in these arenas of their lives. Studies like Durham's (1999) examination of the ways in which girls resist media messages suggest that some girls use collective sense-making strategies to develop alternative readings. This kind of resistance, and the resistance that goes on in more private spaces—notes passed slyly in the hall, instant messenger conversations written by only the light of the computer screen, secret encoded messages in diaries behind locked doors—is rarely considered resistance at all. Brown, Dykers, Steele, and White (1994) take girls' rooms—teenage room culture—seriously, as spaces in which teenagers engage in important identity work. However, studies like these are few.

Studies of girls' resistance point to two important components of the concept of resistance: content and strategy. Content, in this case, refers to what girls are resisting. Strategy refers to how they enact that resistance. There is neither a single common target of girls' resistance nor a single common form.

While all girls' resistance is certainly not the same in content or form, one thing many girls, regardless of race, class, and sexuality, are forced to confront are messages about femininity. One way that they often do this is through the shaping and presenting of their own identities. Because "girl" is a social category, all people in that group face a set of pressures that, while diverse in their specificity, influence their lives. Girls are disciplined to be feminine. Bartky (1990) aptly notes that while girls and women have more mobility than ever before, they are constrained in ways that are often more suffocating:

> The disciplinary power that is increasingly charged with the production of a properly embodied femininity is dispersed and anonymous; there are no individuals formally empowered to wield it; it is, as we have seen, invested in everyone and in no one in particular. […] The disciplinary techniques through which the "docile bodies" of women are constructed aim at a regulation which is perpetual and exhaustive—a regulation of the body's size and contours, it's appetite, posture, gestures and general comportment in space and the appearance of each of its visible parts. (pp. 70-80)

As noted previously, Harris (2004b) claims that not only are girls' bodies highly regulated and watched but so too are their internal thoughts and beliefs through an incitement to discourse that asks them to speak their voices to prove that they have them.

It is these messages, the ones that so rigidly discipline girls' lives, bodies, and selves, that many girls resist. The specific messages to which girls responded and the strategies of

resistance they used are diverse. For instance, in their year-long study of African-American teenage girls, Lalik and Oliver (2005) found that some girls were troubled by and resisted beauty messages that privileged white standards of beauty. While many girls embraced the pageant, some of the girls in the study resisted a beauty pageant conducted at their school that they felt was racist and objectifying. Though the authors guided them in their choice of resistant strategies (surveying classmates' opinions, writing a letter to the editor), the girls' resistant opinions were developed on their own. The girls in Prettyman's (2005) study resist negative stereotypes of teenage mothers by emphasizing their responsible parenting and focusing on their own unique identities rather than the homogenizing picture the media present. Petrovic and Ballard (2005) examine how queer girls seek and create safe, open spaces outside of school to resist the heternormativity and heterosexism in their high school. For these girls, refusing to give in to pressure to be a "normal" (i.e., straight, or at least closeted) girl is itself a type of resistance. Girls on gURL.com resist traditional narratives about menstruation (Polack, 2006). Instead of accepting old messages that menstruating is a private, somewhat shameful menace, they embrace it as a natural part of being female that should be discussed (even with boys) and accommodated (in ways such as extending restroom pass time limits during class) (Polack, 2006).

Dissertation Project

"Messages about femininity" are, of course, quite a broad target of resistance. The specific content of girls' resistance even within this category varies widely. Additionally, embodied resistance can be enacted in a variety of ways. In my dissertation, I seek to examine what girls themselves count as resistance and if and how girls understand resistance as influencing the way they see and enact their selves as well as if and how they see their

presentation of selves is itself a type of resistance. Anita Harris (2001) writes of contemporary girls' studies, "some of the most useful youth research agendas today force attention away from the analysis of youth purely as a problem, and instead contend with young people as reflective, creative and productive, with agendas of their own" (p. 108). Following Harris, my project seeks to learn from girls about the work in which they engage to shape, maintain, and assert their selves personally and socially, and the motivations and implications of that self-work. Specifically, I am interested in the intersections of resistance and self-work. At this intersection, I am interested in learning *how* girls resist and *what* they resist. The major questions I address in this study are:

RQ1: How do girls talk about their self and self-work?

RQ2: Do girls understand their self-work as motivated by or performed by engaging in some kind of resistance and, if so, how do they understand their resistance?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I describe the methodology I used in this study. I begin by describing a pilot study. I then describe the current study, my dissertation project. In that section of the chapter, I describe my participants and outline the procedures used to collect and analyze data. I also briefly discuss some of the challenges and merits of online interviewing.

Pilot Study

In the fall of 2007 I conducted a pilot study to begin exploring girls and their lives. The research questions guiding the pilot study were: (1) What issues do girls consider to be central to their lives? and (2) how do girls think about their "selves"? I knew I wanted to do a larger study (or set of studies) that focused on teenage girls, and I wanted girls' voices, concerns, and ideas to inform my work. Through online interviews, I gathered data from four high school girls about what they worried and thought most about (for demographic information about the pilot study, see Appendix A: Pilot Study Participant Demographics).

I used a grounded theory approach as I collected and analyzed the data for the pilot study. Grounded theory is "a set of flexible analytic guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build inductive middle-range theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 507). More specifically, I relied on the logic of thematic analysis—identifying themes based on criteria—even though the data were too limited to allow full thematic analysis. In line with Charmaz's call to resist positivist pressures to reach certainty, closure, and control, I used a

constructivist grounded theory approach. I did not seek to define exhaustively anything about girls (general or specific) or girl culture; instead, I analyzed these interviews in an effort to draw out important threads of our conversations and make explicit connections between these girls' words and ideas about femininity and to present implications of these connections. It is in this last step that I accomplished the aim of grounded theory, developing theory.

Even though I chose not to use thematic analysis strictly, I still used a process of identifying themes in my data. As themes emerged, I engaged in constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1994), checking my previous interviews as new themes emerged. I compared "data with data, data with categories, and category with category" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 517).

The concerns of the girls in this study were not surprising considering their social locations: boys, appearance, and grades were the most common stressors they cited. What was surprising was that each girl volunteered information about how she dealt with those pressures, and the four girls cited some of the same means of coping: finding, knowing, and being herself. I had not originally anticipated girls' discussing what it meant to find, know, or be themselves—self-work—so I briefly explored their ideas about their selves with them. For these girls, finding and maintaining a sense of a consistent core or goal motivated them to stay on track academically, pursue educational opportunities and careers that they found interesting and exciting (rather than acquiesce to parental, peer, or cultural pressure), and engage in socializing that was desirable to them. For each of these girls, cultural and social pressures tempted them to veer off their preferred track, and having a clear sense of self was

key to giving them a sense of security in the destabilizing terrain of late adolescence and the confidence to resist those pressures.

Dissertation Study

My dissertation research built upon the pilot study by exploring what it means to girls to find, know, and be themselves, and what they see as possibilities for self-work to enable resistance or to be, itself, a type of resistance. As standpoint theorists (Collins, 1986; Harding, 2004) have noted, our social location affects our perspective on the world. Moreover, as Mead (1934) taught, humans are social, and the self emerges out of relationships and interactions with others. Thus, in order to talk to girls about whether and how they engaged in acts of resistance, it was imperative to also speak to them about how they see themselves. This project is distinctly communicative in nature because it examined the ways in which girls incorporate popular discourses into their thoughts and beliefs about their selves, as well as the work they do on their selves. Moreover, it asked how through communicative acts—both verbal and nonverbal—girls engage with relevant discourses in their lives.

My Research Perspective

While academic experts have useful knowledge to bring to the study of girls, if we truly want to know what girls are doing, thinking and feeling, we should start by asking the girls themselves. My methodological perspective can be categorized as dialogic and feminist. Specifically, I am heavily influenced by standpoint theory both as a tool of theoretical analysis and a methodology that encourages taking into account the locations from which people know and act. As Deetz (2001) notes, the "hope" of dialogic work is to "claim a space for lost voices" (p. 17), an ideal that is clearly in line with the goal of this

project. Additionally, dialogic work seeks not to fix meaning but to avoid discursive closure (Deetz, 2001). That is, dialogic work recognizes that the self and relationships are processes. Our selves, worlds, and relationships are always changing. Dialogic work seeks to allow voices and ideas to be heard without suggesting that there are unchanging Truths. In this project, I sought to examine how girls build, fortify, experiment with and express their identities and selves, but I was not seeking to and am not claiming to define girls in an exhaustive way that encourages an end to exploration and conversation, nor am I claiming that the views of girls I advance are fixed and cannot change.

As the researcher, I designed the study and the questions that I asked. I made decisions about which statements to include and exclude, and I interpreted girls' commentaries. However, these choices should not suggest that my participants have not shaped this study in critical ways. While I did not conduct research that was co-created in the sense of participatory action research (see Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), this project is dialogic because it provided girls with an opportunity to contribute to the ongoing discussion about girls. The goal was not only for their voices to be heard but also to allow those voices to shape the way we as scholars, parents, and teachers think about and act towards girls.

In keeping with my methodological stance, I must situate myself in this project. I have identified my academic investment, but I am not only a scholar. I am also a woman, a woman who not long ago (and sometimes still) thought of herself as a girl. I have a 16-year-old sister and constantly think of her and her friends while I am doing my work. I struggled as a girl with being expected to act like an adult while not always having my opinions and choices honored as those of an adult. Though I do not think that my parents and teachers should have always allowed me to do what I wanted, I thought it was unfair that I should

have most of the responsibilities of adulthood but few of the privileges. Certainly, parents, teachers, and scholars see things girls do not see and have insights that can only be gained through a retrospective and outsider lenses. However, girls also see things that adults do not and have insights that those not in their position cannot have. They are having a lived, embodied experience of their lives, affording them a view no one else has. Their voices are important, and we must listen to them.

Methodology

Participants

Demographics. The participants in this study were 18 self-identified girls. All of the participants stated they were 18 or 19 years of age at the time of the interview. Fourteen girls identified as heterosexual with the remaining six identifying as queer (lesbian, open to dating transmen[1]) lesbian, bisexual and bicurious.[2] Ten girls identified as being middle class, four as working class ("lower than middle," "low low class" and "lower class" were their specific responses), and two as upper-middle class. One defined her economic class as "student," and another preferred not to respond. Twelve of the 18 girls were white. One girl identified as "Latina/Hispanic," one as "Ukrainian/white," and the four remaining girls identified as being bi- or multi-racial ("Vietnamese and black," "Hispanic and white," "black and Jamaican," "caucasian, African-American, and [American] Indian"). The girls hailed from 16 different states, with only Texas and Florida being represented more than once in the study. All interviewees were either in high school (2) or recent high school graduates (16). Of the high

[1] Transmen is a term that refers to transsexual and transgendered people who were born female and transition (medically, socially, or both) to being women.

[2] Bicurious is a term that describes people who are exploring the possibility that they may be bisexual. This exploration may be physical, mental, emotional, or a combination of these. Bicurious people have not yet decided if they are bisexual, heterosexual, or any other orientation.

school graduates, 10 were attending a four- or two-year college. For a more detailed description of participants' demographics, see Appendix B: Dissertation Study Participant Demographics.

Challenges. The recruitment strategy I used in this project—contacting girls through MySpace—was new to me and I was unaware of any existing research that specifically used this mode of recruitment. Additionally, I had only used online interviewing once, in the small pilot study with only five participants. As I expected, my procedures needed to be adjusted as the project developed. Through this work, I not only learned valuable information about girls and their lives, but also gained experience using and improving a method that was new to me. As noted, participants in this study were 18- and 19-year-old girls. I chose to study 18- and 19-year olds for two reasons: interest and access. First, I am interested in girls in this age group. The late teenage years are a unique time for many people because privileges and responsibilities given to this group, along with a growing sense of maturity and self-actualization, often leave older teenagers feeling they possess greater agency about their lives than they did at younger ages. As young people age and move toward their twenties, they are more likely to resist some of the messages they have previously accepted as fact or truth or as inarguable (Steinberg & Monahan, 2007). They may have jobs and classes that ask them to make their own decisions, and they are often in a position to have some autonomy in making choices about their daily lives (e.g. their activities, food, clothing) as well as their futures. By the age of 18, young people are legal adults in the United States and are technically afforded most of the full privileges of

citizenship.[3] However, they concurrently experience the limitations and stereotypes of being a young adult in our culture. Many 18- and 19-year-olds still live at home and may be subject to their guardians' rules despite their legal adult status. Older teens who live away from home may still be financially and emotionally dependent upon their guardians in a way that limits their independence. Moreover, many young adults, whether dependent upon guardians or not, are often considering for the first time that they do not need to make the same choices their families have made or would have them make. In this middle ground, teenagers experience both freedoms and limitations in their efforts to discover their own interests, desires, and beliefs and to make their own choices, rendering their experience distinct from both younger people who do not have as much autonomy and older people who do not have as much constraint. This time of discovery is particularly interesting to me.

In addition to my interest in this age group, I chose to study 18- and 19-year-old girls because contacting them and obtaining their consent to participate was possible. Initially, I wanted to interview high school sophomores. I recruited my participants through MySpace, a process described later in this section. Social networks like MySpace, and MySpace specifically, have been under a great deal of scrutiny lately as potential breeding grounds for dangerous activity. Parents, teachers, and others worry about teenagers' personal information being easily accessible online. Even if a girl chooses not to disclose her city and state (a default option on MySpace and information that is prominently displayed at the top of the page near her picture as well as in the heading description at the top of the web browser), her location can be easily ascertained through other details she provides on her

[3] Of course, the notable exception is the right to legally purchase and consume alcohol. Additionally, queer young adults, like all adults, do not yet have the legal rights in all states afforded to heterosexual people in our culture.

page.[4] Some personal information is available even if the user sets her page to private. Unless she meticulously reads each box and declines default options carefully, her picture, name, page headline, and status are all available, even if one must be her friend to see her entire page. For instance, one can search for users by the school they attend, their name, or their interests, and matches will appear in a list. Even if her page is private, she (as well as her picture, location, status, and page headline) will appear on this list and the seeker can send her a message or request to add her as a friend.

MySpace attempts to protect the privacy and safety of minor users because of concerns about Internet predators who could potentially access this information. As a result of recent changes, users under the age of 18 have the option to have a private page (only their friends can view it). Additionally, the school search function (by which a user searches for other users by typing in the name of a high school) allows users to search only for current students who are seniors. When one searches for current seniors, only those who state that they are already 18 should appear in the list.[5]

Concerns about Internet predators have made these restrictions necessary for MySpace to convince parents that the website is safe for teenagers. Other social networking sites protect users in similar ways. One implication for my study was that accessing 15- and 16-year old girls was nearly impossible. Contacting the few girls who may post personal

[4] Pictures with town or school-related clothing, friends' pages, comments, and personal information sections often give clues to where a girl lives and works. The option to include a status (a box on the profile asks the user to complete the sentence, "[Username] is …") often gives information about a girl's every move. A quick glance at my friends' statuses on Facebook, for instance, indicates that one of them is at work, one is going to the mall and then to see a movie (the name is provided), and another is home sick.

[5] This process is not perfect. Sometimes 17-year-old users are returned as a search result. I do not know why this happens, but clearly MySpace's procedures are not completely accurate. Additionally, any girl who is under the age of 18 but lies and says she is older will be included in the search results. All ages on MySpace are *reported* ages.

information on message boards or other public sites would have resulted in sample that was already self-selected in ways I could not have determined and thus could not have effectively considered as influences on my work.

In addition to difficulty finding younger teenagers online, I also had difficulty with the consent process. The IRB (Institutional Review Board) requires that a parent or other guardian give consent for a minor child to participate in a research study. The IRB did not waive my request for parental consent, and thus I had to ask minor participants if I could contact their parents to obtain permission for them to be part of the study. I was able to contact a few minor teenagers through the online message boards at gURL.com, and they all told me the same thing: they did not feel comfortable asking their parents to grant permission for them to be part of the study. "They just wouldn't understand," one girl told me. I was not surprised. I expected that this would be the case. Some scholars in girls' studies lament the lack of research on tweens and young teens (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2005), and I propose that a factor contributing to this dearth may be the difficulty of obtaining parental consent in addition to child assent. Teens often do not want to talk to their parents about their personal lives, and asking permission may expose them to scrutiny they do not wish to experience. In the case of this study, I imagine that a researcher contacting a parent might remind that parent of how accessible their child is on the Internet, and rather than allow her to disclose *more* personal information online, the parent might respond by making her remove content from the web.

Because of these difficulties, I decided to recruit 18- and 19-year-old girls. As I noted, I am quite interested in this age group, and my pilot study was made up of older teenage girls.

Internet Recruiting and Interviewing

While I was not searching for *Truth*, I did want to learn from my participants what was *true for them*, and I wanted to engage in recruitment and interviewing that enhanced my ability to learn that from my participants. Because I wanted to talk to a diverse sample of girls, I needed a recruitment method that gave me access to the widest possible range of girls. Because I wanted girls to feel comfortable disclosing to me, I needed an interviewing process that made them feel comfortable, protected, and affirmed. I chose to use online recruitment and interviewing to accomplish these goals.

Research suggests that girls have an extensive online web presence, making the Internet an ideal place to recruit participants. Ninety-three percent of teenagers report having some kind of Internet access, and most of them use the Internet daily (Lenhart et al., 2007).[6] Social networking websites, such as MySpace and Facebook, have exploded in popularity, and over 55 percent of teenagers say that they are members of at least one of these sites (Lenhart et al.). Girls are more likely than boys to use social networking, and older teenagers are even more likely than younger teenagers to have an online profile on social networking sites (Lenhart et al.). Sixty-three percent of girls aged 15-17 who were surveyed by the Pew Foundation report regularly visiting a social networking site (Lenhart et al.).

There is no doubt: girls are online. Because the Internet is a space in which girls have an overwhelming presence and many feel comfortable communicating, I recruited participants for this study through MySpace, a free online social networking site that hosts over 20 million pre-teen and teen web profiles (Kelsey, 2007).

[6] These data were self-reported by high schoolers. Their Internet access may have been at home, at school, in a public space (such as the library), or at a friend or family member's house.

By recruiting online, I had access to a diverse and large group of girls, comprising a wide range of ages, socioeconomic statuses, races, ethnicities, sexualities, abilities, and perspectives. In 1995, Julia Wood reminded us of the importance of studying diverse relationships in order to broaden our understanding of interpersonal communication. Harris (2004) critiques early girls' studies for focusing on a narrow sample of girls, namely white, middle-class, heterosexual, and able-bodied. Social networking sites provide access to a broad spectrum of girls, which helps to address the problematic lack of diversity in girls studies by giving me access to a much more diverse sample than I could ever access in face-to-face recruitment.

In addition to using the Internet to recruit participants, I also interviewed them online. Girls use the Internet as a primary means of communicating with both people they know face-to-face and people they meet online (Kelsey, 2007; Lenhart et al., 2007; Mazzarella, 2005). For teens who use social networking sites, instant messaging is a mode of communication that is used more frequently than face-to-face interactions to communicate with friends (whom they know in their face-to-face lives), second only to the telephone (Lenhart et al., 2007). In short, instant messenger conversations are common way that girls communicate, and I interviewed them using this tool.

Online recruitment and interviewing also provided a unique environment in which many people, especially young people, feel more comfortable and open than in face-to-face situations. Many girls feel more comfortable disclosing personal information while operating under more anonymity than they would have in their face-to-face lives. On gURL.com[7], many girls explicitly note that they can tell their online friends things that they would never

[7] I am using gURL.com as an example here because I have the most extensive knowledge of that website.

think of disclosing in their face-to-face lives. For instance, many of the queer girls on gURL.com are not out about their sexuality in their face-to-face lives but discuss it openly online. The tendency to want to give socially acceptable answers or the perception that I was judging participants may have been reduced by the limited information we shared about ourselves. In face-to-face interviews, my race is evident just by looking at me, and, while others may not know my lived socioeconomic status, they could (consciously or unconsciously) assume my class. Similarly, face-to-face interviews would have allowed participants to make inferences about my age and sexual orientation. When communicating online, participants have access to fewer visible markers from which to draw inferences.

Although interviewing online is effective for many reasons, it has limitations as well. For instance, I could not know for sure that my participants were who they said they were. While people can lie in face-to-face situations, a 30-year-old man could pretend to be a girl online more credibly than he could if I were interviewing him in person. Because I only emailed girls who had an affiliation with a known existing high school and had an active profile online, I had more certainty that they were who they said they were—at least in terms of approximate age and sex—than if I had selected participants from an online forum without these criteria. However, anecdotally, I know that many young people lie about their age on MySpace to obtain a profile, to gain access to features that have an age restriction,[8] or to appear as older than they are to MySpace users. Further, some people feel less obligated to avoid embellishment, exaggeration, or outright lies online than in face-to-face conversations

[8] A user must claim to be at least 14 years of age to create a MySpace account. Users under the age of 18 are protected (or restricted, depending on one's perspective) by more stringent privacy settings than those under the age of 18.

(Whittey & Joinson, 2009). Thus, the likelihood of presenting knowingly inaccurate information may be greater online.

Despite the possibility of deception, I had no reason to believe that any of the girls in this study were not who they claimed to be. They all had extensive MySpace pages, complete with pictures, descriptions, and an affiliation with a high school. No participant communicated in a manner that remarkably distinguished her from the others, which, had someone done, might have been an indicator of lying. Because the study offered no incentive to participants, there was no financial or material reward that might encourage someone to pose as an eligible participant. Thus, although it is possible that some of them lied, I believe it is not probable. Ultimately, I could not avoid the possibility that my participants misrepresented aspects of their identity—either demographic markers or experiences and beliefs. However, because girls are so accustomed to chatting online and because using the Internet allowed me to have access to such a broad population, I accepted these challenges as delimitations to my study.

Both my pilot study and this study demonstrated that online recruitment and interviews were reasonable methodological choices for projects such as this. I obtained a diverse set of participants (see Appendices A and B for demographic information for both studies), and while I was not seeking a random sample, I did want to talk to a variety of girls, not only girls who are considered either at-risk or highly privileged. With all of the girls, we interacted in a conversational way, despite the fact that we were communicating online and did not know one another before our conversation.

Procedures

I recruited my participants by sending messages to girls with MySpace pages from one randomly selected high school in each of the 50 United States. In order to efficiently and effectively manage the responses to my email, these requests were sent in waves. I initially sent messages to five girls from each school, for a total 250 requests. I then repeated this process until I had enough participants, sending a total of 1,000 emails. Twenty-eight girls responded to my emails and I interviewed 20 of them. Eight of these girls were not interviewed because we were never online at the same time. Two of the 20 interviews were not completed because the girls needed to end the interview unexpectedly (due to other unexpected engagements).

In my initial email message, I described the project briefly and pointed them to a MySpace page that I created for this project (www.myspace.com/girlculture). (See Appendix C: Recruitment Email for a copy of the email script used for this message and Appendix D: MySpace Page for screenshots of the webpage.) Because MySpace is a website that many girls—and all of the girls I recruited—use regularly, using this interface to convey information about the study and myself allowed me to present what could have been overwhelming amount of formal documentation in a clear and easy-to-understand format. After reading about the study, girls were asked to either add me as a MySpace friend or to send me a message indicating their interest in participating. We then exchanged instant messenger screen names for further communication. Before asking the participants any study-related questions, I asked them to view my online fact sheet located on my MySpace page. After reading it, each girl consented to be part of the study. No girls declined participation after reading this online fact sheet.

I used MSN Messenger, and AOL Instant Messenger to conduct interviews. Both programs are free instant messaging programs that can be downloaded from any computer with Internet access. Instant messenger programs are desirable for an interview because they allow for synchronistic chatting, which allows for a fairly fast-paced conversation and opportunity to respond quickly to one another. I did not conduct any interviews with people who did not have one of these instant messenger programs. However, I did not encounter any potential participants who did not have access to an instant messenger program, and therefore did not have to eliminate any potential participants for this reason.

The data for this study were collected through in-depth interviews with the participants. I chatted (online) with them about how they describe themselves, the work they do on their selves, and the implications they see of that self-work. I asked some specific questions to guide the interviews, but they were semi-structured, meaning that most of our time was spent following the girls' statements, probing their initial responses and asking them to tell me more. (For a list of guiding interview questions, see Appendix E: Guiding Interview Questions.) During the interviews I checked my understanding of participants' statements by saying things like, "So it sounds like you're saying _____. Is that right?" and other clarifying questions. These efforts sought to include participants' voices in the process of analysis and to provide an element of verification.

As I have noted previously, this work is dialogic in nature. I performed the analysis, but I was guided by the girls' voices and perspectives. Frank (2005) explains this process in the following way:

> [T]he dialogical research report offers an account of how researcher and participant came together in some shared time and space and had diverse effects on each other.

> The mutual effects that each has on the other continue to reverberate to readers of research reports, who become part of the dialogue; readers' participation causes further reverberations. (p. 968)

Although my reading, insights, and interests shaped my analysis, I was transformed through the interviews with these girls, and those conversations affected how I see the questions, responses, and implications of our chats.

I interviewed most girls only once. A few girls had to go before the interview was complete, and I contacted these girls again later to complete the interview. In addition, when reviewing the transcripts of the interviews, a few follow-up questions for specific participants arose, and I contacted those girls to ask the questions. The average interview length was 80 minutes, with individual interviews ranging from 30-180 minutes. The written records of the interview ranged from 2 to 12 single-spaced pages, with a mean of 5.4.

To protect participants, I promised them confidentiality. Some of the girls added me as a friend on MySpace, and I adjusted my page so that other viewers could not see my list of "friends." This allowed girls full access to the other portions of my website, allowed me to see their pages, and kept others from seeing the names and pictures of girls who were part of the study. Because I interacted with the girls through instant messaging programs, I did not know many of their given names. Some included their first names in our email exchanges and as part of their MySpace display name, and others did not. Thus, I never knew and could not access the given names of many girls. Regardless, their first names are not included in the transcripts of our conversations unless they said them during our chat. (This only happened one time.) Nonetheless, I wanted to protect their identities as they were connected to their screen names as well. After completing all of the interviews, I changed their screen

names to pseudonyms on all transcripts (only pseudonyms will appear in any public and published documents about the study). Only I have the records list their screen names and MySpace accounts, and these files are password protected. All procedures described above were approved by the IRB (see Appendix F: IRB Approval Letter).

Interview Process

Interviewing participants online presented possibilities and constraints. I was surprised by how slow the process was. I initially thought that I would chat with participants for 30-45 minutes. I learned in my pilot study that online interviews take longer than in-person interviews. Typing is slower than speaking. Additionally, girls often waited longer to reply than in face-to-face conversation and sometimes typed a response, deleted it, and typed another before sending it (something users can tell via the status bar on instant messaging programs that indicates "[username] is typing," "[username] has entered text," etc.). The longer response time could indicate that girls are thinking about their responses since they have the time to do so, that they are multitasking on the computer, or that they have left the computer. Regardless, these interviews moved much more slowly than I had anticipated. Sixty minutes into the first interview, I did not feel finished, but felt pressure to end the conversation and not monopolize the participant's entire day. It took me several interviews to keep from feeling nervous that I would not get enough of the important questions asked in time. Most of the interviews felt laborious at times as I typed and re-typed questions and responses to get my wording just right and then waited for responses.

Sometimes the interviews felt like administering a survey. Even when I would ask for examples, details, and clarifications, I often thought that some of the girls viewed the interview as a survey rather than a conversation, and it made chatting challenging. As I

waited for replies from girls who seemed to be multitasking or when I received two- and three-word answers despite my probing, I realized that the convenience of interviewing online also meant that, at least at times, it felt less personal and I felt less in control of the process.

I struggled to communicate my content meaning without implying judgment that I did not intend. For example, "What do you mean?" can seem much more accusatory online than it often does in person. Sometimes I finished an interview wondering if the participant and I had ever understood one another. At times I felt that we were talking and thinking in two different directions, and it took awhile to hone the skills to help me determine if this was the case. Asking for specific examples and more follow-up questions helped me to do this. Even when I thought I was certain of a girl's meaning, I would ask for specific details in order to clarify. As I did this, I was able to improve my list of initial questions and get better at knowing when to ask for more detail.

Despite the constraints of online interviewing, my third interview convinced me I had made the right choice of medium. My first two interviews were with white, heterosexual, middle-class girls from the Midwest and the South. These girls had interesting perspectives to share, and I think their voices are important to include in this project. I knew that they also matched the demographics of the kind of girls I could most likely have access to face-to-face since I am from the Midwest and live in the South, am white, and appear middle class. Linh (a pseudonym[9]), on the other hand, was the kind of girl I was not sure I would have access to (literally or socially) through face-to-face interviews. Linh is a working-class,

[9] All participants are named with a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Their demographic information is included as it was reported. The girls may be able to identify themselves in the report. However, because I recruited participants online, it is unlikely that others would know who participated and thus, be able to ascertain their real names.

Vietnemese and black, bicurious girl from Texas. Linh told me about how she switched from public high school to being homeschooled in order to help care for and support her younger siblings and to assist her single mother with household duties. I would not have found Linh through any face-to-face channel I am aware of and to which I have access.

Linh's lengthy, detailed responses helped break up the monotony of instant messaging. Callie and A.J. also responded with thoughtful, in-depth responses. Callie is an upper-middle class, white, straight, high school graduate. She is not currently in college but is anxiously awaiting leaving Las Vegas—a city she was born and raised in and despises for its "fakeness"—to attend school to be an x-ray technician. Currently, she does not work, but instead lives off of a trust fund she was left when her mother died. A.J. is a middle class, white, community college student from Florida. She identifies as queer, specifying that she has previously considered herself a lesbian but has recently realized she is also open to partnering with transmen. Callie and A.J. poured their thoughts and feelings into the lines of our conversations, and were examples of the kinds of interviews I wanted to be having all along.

Despite the challenges that online interviewing presented, I believe that instant messaging was a successful way to reach and interact with the participants in this study. Many of the girls I chatted with told me that they enjoyed the interview. Several of them noted that it allowed them an opportunity to think and write about things that they do not get a chance to often discuss. These responses were gratifying because I hope that my research not only provides me with insights to share with others, but also has a positive impact on the people I am studying.

Analysis

I analyzed my conversations with the girls using grounded theory, specifically employing thematic analysis to draw themes out of the data. As I noted previously with respect to the pilot study, grounded theory is an inductive process of data analysis. With grounded theory, data are collected and analyzed simultaneously. In this project, I began analyzing at the same time I began interviewing. As I conducted my first interview, I began to see patterns within that interview, and I looked for responses that spoke to my research questions and connections to the reading I did before embarking on this project. I had the first interview in mind when I conducted the second interview. I adapted my questions as I continued to interview participants to ask more about the concepts and ideas that were emerging as important during the earlier interviews. Because of this, no two interviews were the same, but all interviews were in some ways informed by previous conversations. When I began to think I was reaching a point of saturation—when I did not think I was hearing much that was "new" in the interviews—I stopped interviewing, stepped back, and looked at the entire set of data I had collected, reviewing it for ideas I had already identified as well as combing it for new patterns I had not yet identified. I stopped interviewing after 20 interviews (18 completed and 2 incompleted) because I believed I had reached saturation.

The specific technique I employed was a version of thematic analysis that relied on three criteria—repetition, recurrence, and forcefulness—to identify themes (Owen, 1984). This type of analysis allows participants' voices to guide the analysis and honors their perspective (Krusiewicz & Wood, 2001; Owen, 1984). Repetition refers to the multiple presence of a single word or phrase, recurrence occurs when a common idea is presented using different language, and forcefulness can be seen, in this study, by capitalizing or using

italicized or bold typefaces to emphasize an idea or word (Owen, 1984). As themes emerged, I coded them and then determined which themes were actually subcategories of larger ideas.

This project was a collaboration between the participants and myself. They shared information with me, and I analyzed their data to draw out what I thought were important themes. After I reviewed the data multiple times, I began to organize the themes that seemed most important to me. I integrated these themes that emerged from data with the existing literature and my own ideas about teenage girls. In this way, I did the work that grounded theory seeks to do by creating "mid-range theories" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 507). The themes I saw were not the only important ideas in the data. If another researcher were to examine the data, she or he would likely see other themes in addition to the ones I noted. My background research and expertise along with my research questions guided me towards the themes I identified. They are not the only themes in the data, but they are important insights into what these girls said about self, self-work, and resistance. After completing the analysis, I offered to share my results with the participants. However, none have responded at this time.

Summary

In this project I sought to explore what girls think and do about self, self-work, and resistance, extending work I had done in a pilot study in 2007. In keeping with my feminist, dialogic perspective, I wanted girls' voices to be heard and to examine the ways in which power functions within these concepts. Online recruitment and interviewing was an effective process to accomplish these goals. Conducting research online allowed me to meet girls where they often are and to communicate with them in a way in which many of them feel very comfortable. The 20 interviews I conducted give insight into the work girls do on their selves, how they think about those selves, and how resistance is a part of self-work. Though

online recruitment and interviewing present challenges, these difficulties are worth navigating in order to make use of a medium of communication that has the potential to increase our understanding of human nature and provide insight not available through face-to-face channels.

CHAPTER 4: VOICE

In this chapter and the one that follows, I discuss the results of the interviews I conducted. As with all qualitative work, the themes and ideas I will identify and discuss have emerged from the voices of the participants. As I noted in chapter 2, my analysis of the interviews was guided by grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). That is, I did not approach these interviews with *a priori* themes or categories in mind. Rather, the common themes or patterns that I identify arose from what my participants wrote. I was looking not only for what seemed important to participants, but also for the way those ideas interrelated with one another both within one individual's interview as well as across the interviews of all the girls included in the study.

In this chapter, I will concentrate on one of the two major foci of the project: voice. In chapter five, I will discuss the second major focus of my study: resistance. The present chapter presents participants' views of voice. I describe the major findings related to the concept of voice. As I noted in the review of literature, voice is an important and contested concept within girls' and women's studies, and these girls offer insights into what it means to them. In this section, I delineate these girls' opinions on whether or not girls have a voice. I also note an important distinction in the girls' definition of voice: whether it is something fully internal, something that exists only if externally manifested, or some combination of the two.

This chapter offers arguments about voice, and, appropriately, along with those arguments, the girls' voices are prominently featured. Often, their words convey an idea far

better than paraphrasing, and I believe it is important to see and read their words as they typed them. Presenting large portions of the interview transcripts also allows readers to make their own judgments of both what the girls say and how I interpret their words. I be present and analyze their words and behaviors, but I do not judge their thoughts or actions. I am simply reporting them and noting how they relate to the concept of voice. The table on the next page provides demographic information about all of the participants. These factors do not fully describe each participant—their unique personalities and opinions cannot be reduced to a table—but I have included them to help the reader better distinguish between the girls and to learn a little more about each girl's social location. All responses are presented as written by the participants.

Do Girls Have a Voice?

In the United States, many people view girls as fragile and frivolous. Their concerns are often not taken seriously (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Driscoll, 2002; Harris, 2004b; Pecora & Mazzarella, 1999). As noted previously, Carol Gilligan (1982) suggested that during adolescence, girls lose their resistant voices. Likewise, Mary Pipher (1994) wrote:

> Something dramatic happens to girls in early adolescence. Just as planes and ships disappear mysteriously into the Bermuda Triangle, so do the selves of girls go down in droves. They crash and burn in a social and developmental Bermuda Triangle. (p. 19)

According to Pipher, many girls in late adolescence have not recovered from the crash they experienced in early adolescence. Neither Gilligan nor Pipher was suggesting that girls do not have interesting and important things to say; in fact, they thought they did and those ideas

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Socioeconomic Status	Race	Sexual Orientation	State	Age	Education
A.J.	middle	white	queer[1]	Florida	18	in community college
Alisha	working	black & Jamaican	straight	Connecticut	18	high school grad
Ashlyn	student	white	bisexual	New Jersey	18	in community college
Brittany	middle	white	straight	Ohio	18	high school grad
Callie	upper-middle	white	straight	Nevada	19	high school grad
Drew	middle	white	straight	Texas	20	in community college
Jordana	no response	white &Ukrainian	straight	Illinois	18	in community college
Kayleigh	middle	white	straight	Louisiana	19	high school grad
Laurel	upper-middle	white	lesbian	Mississippi	19	high school grad
Lindsay	middle	white	straight	Tennessee	18	college
Linh	working	Vietnamese & black	bicurious	Texas	18	in high school (homeschooled)
Lucinda	middle	Latina/Hispanic	straight	Connecticut	18	high school grad
Marika	middle	Hispanic & white	straight	Florida	18	in community college
Megan	middle	white	straight	Alabama	19	in four-year college
Nikki	low, low	white	bisexual	New York	18	in four-year college
Olivia	middle	Caucasian, African-American, American Indian	straight	California	18	in community college
Rachael	lower class	white	bisexual	North Carolina	18	in community college
Taylor	middle	white	straight	Delaware	18	in high school

[1] Lesbian, open to dating transmen

were being suppressed. However, they represented girls as in constant need of help to find their voices rather than as having useful insights and questions that they can and do express.

Distinct from the question of whether girls have a voice is the question of whether *they* think they do. To find out whether they think they do, I asked girls precisely this. The girls in this study had mixed thoughts about whether or not girls have a voice. I asked most of them one of the following questions:

> Some people who study girls say that girls today are not very passionate about things. that they are apolitical/apathetic (that they are not political or aware of important issues, they don't care about social and political issues). What do you think of that?
>
> *or*
>
> Some people who study teenage girls say that they don't have a voice (either that they don't know what they stand for or that when they speak their mind, no one listens). What do you think about that?

Several girls were resistant to being generalized about in such a manner. Olivia was offended at the question. She said, "who are they to judge...i mean growing up is a part of life right and im sure at their age they werent worried about politics and issues either."[2] She added, "and there are girls out there that care, i care i just dont let my politics get into conversation." Rachael was also annoyed by the broad statement that girls do not have a

[2] I have included large portions of the interviews in this dissertation. The interviews were conducted using instant messenger programs, so the words and characters included here appear exactly as the girls typed them; there was no transcribing. For the most part, I have chosen not to correct unconventional grammar, syntax, and spelling. While some of these may be accidental, many of them are simply a result of more relaxed rules about writing that are employed by teenagers (and many adults) online. It is important to me to preserve the girls' statements as they were given, and frequently including brackets and "sic" would interrupt their voices. Thus, I have only edited their statements when doing so was necessary to clarify meaning. I know some things may seem clear to me and not to others, so I asked others to review this manuscript and added further clarification if they indicated they did not understand something one or more of the girls wrote.

voice. She said, "some girls maybe, but not every girl. you cant just generalize a group by a couple people.[…] im opposite. im passionate about things and i actually DO care about politics." Whether they were offended or not, the girls offered their perspectives on girls and voice. Of the 17 girls I asked, 6 agreed with the statement that girls don't have much of a voice. Four girls said that girls can have a voice if they choose to have one. Five girls said that girls do have a voice. The remaining three girls neither confirmed nor denied the statement.

"Those People Have a Point": Girls Do Not Have a Voice

Six girls[3]—A.J., Ashlyn, Brittany, Lindsay, Lucinda, and Taylor—agreed that girls do not have a voice in today's culture. Lucinda and Taylor (discussed more fully below) thought that girls *could* have a voice if they chose to, but that most girls do not choose to. Brittany, a white, heterosexual, middle-class, high school graduate from Ohio, seemed the most hopeless about the possibility of having a voice. When I asked her the question, she said, "i agree .. not alot of people listen to me." She said that when she talks, people often ignore her. In addition, she indicated throughout her interview that she feels misunderstood. When I asked Brittany if there were any issues that she felt passionate about, she could not think of any.

Ashlyn, a white, bisexual, community college student from New Jersey, did not think today's girls have much of a voice, and she provided a hypothesis about what restricts girls from being able to speak their minds. She believed that girls do not have a voice because they hold in their opinions to avoid being judged:

Ashlyn: i agree with that... i think that because of the pressures they have in todays

[3] Not all of the girls' responded to the question, "Do girls have a voice?" Thus, the numbers in this section total 15, not 18.

world they don't speak up out of fear of being judged

kb: do you mean the same pressures we were talking about before? like appearance?

Ashlyn: yeah from the media and things on tv... everyones pressured to be someone theyre not.. and its hard to find your own voice in a world full of opinions judgement

kb: do you think it's important for people to try to speak up and resist others' opinions or judgments when they don't agree with them?

Ashlyn: yeah its extremely important for people to speak up and resist opinions and judgements but its hard to do

kb: yeah. what do you think empowers girls, specifically, to do that?

Ashlyn: self confidence

From Ashlyn's perspective, speaking up is challenging for some girls because they know that doing so violates cultural norms of femininity.

Some might argue that Ashlyn confirms the claims of people like Pipher (1994), who claims that culture is just too hard for girls and they buckle under its pressure. I would disagree. I think that Ashlyn indicates is that many girls absolutely understand the pressures on them, and because of that, they conform to a version of femininity that will be accepted within that system. Rather than failing in the system, they are actually succeeding in it quite well, performing competent femininity by seeming incompetent. Both Bartky (1990, 1997) and Brumberg (1997) argue that women and girls in Western society are set up to engage in a constant project of self-improvement. They also both add that no matter how many improvements a female makes, according to society, she will always have more to do. Further, although many of the restrictions on girls and women are less now than in previous decades (e.g. they can go to college, wear pants, play sports, be C.E.O.s), femininity is still

marked by many traditional characteristics; though there is not a single definition of femininity, girls and women should: focus on appearance, be sensitive and caring, expect to be treated negatively by others, and be a superwoman (Wood, 2009). Brumberg (1997) claims that pressures on today's girls are worse than in the past, that they "suffer from body problems more pervasive and more dangerous than the constraints implied by the corset" (p. xviii) and other expectations. Media messages consistently confirm this version of femininity (Lamb & Brown, 2006). From these messages, girls learn that they must perfect themselves in order to have power to speak up and until then, the power they can have is by fulfilling society's expectations. It is not surprising then, that rather than speaking out against these norms, Ashlyn's critique points to what our culture might change about girls and voice. Rather that fixing girls with problems navigating culture, it might be more productive and helpful to girls for those who create messages to change the messages and ideals that culture (and people in that culture) create.

Callie went a step further to offer a solution to help girls who feel that they are unheard or that their voices are unwelcome. She believed that girls would have more of a voice if they were more generously nurtured and empowered. She thought that if girls were listened to and allowed to express opinions in their families and have those ideas taken seriously, they would develop the confidence and skills to use their voices elsewhere as well. Callie wrote:

> i think teenagers are still very much on the verge of blossoming into who they are/want to become, and often times feel intimidated that they may not "measure up" to certan expecatations. what they don't realize is, part of growing up, sharing their opinions and having a voice, is a way of realizing who they are and where their focus

> might be on certain issues in the coming years. i think teenagers have a shitload to say, but.. and here's the thing. not enough women and young girls are empowered, even with feminism. a lot of the things girls do, its because parents.. the 'older people' in their lives.. wont communicate with them. at all. its their way, their opinions, and thats that. so they stop looking to them, or older people in general, for advice. i think it stems from the fact that they don't feel like they have a voice there, and they wont listen.. what makes them think anyone else will? we see this kind of stuff all the time on forums, teens coming to ask for advice, and how they cant talk to their parents. and if you watch them, they are on a downward spiral. no matter how much a teenager "hates" her parents, she wants guidance and understanding. above all else. and guidance takes paitence and a willingness to LISTEN and shepard them in a way that creates awareness and empowerment.

Callie's statement gives insight into what she believes underlies some girls' lack of voice. First, Callie makes the important point that the self is a process, not a fixed thing. A postmodern perspective on the self suggests that it is always changing, across time and situations, influenced by and influencing the world around it. Often, though, adults treat the self as if it is stable and fixed and expect girls' minds to be fully developed and settled. As college becomes more of an expectation than an option, with thousands of extracurricular activities available to fill children's schedules, and the growing pressure on girls not only to succeed but to surpass all competition, the pressure increases to figure out who one "is" and what one wants to "be" in life.

Scholars and other adults must also realize that this pressure is being put on children at increasingly early ages. In her book *The Overachievers*, Robbins (2006) notes, "the high

school environment is no longer about a student's pre-adult exploration" (p. 14), but instead is about doing any and everything one can to get into a good college and, thus, be successful. As she notes, this pressure to overachieve affects not only high-performing students, but all students as well as the education and college admission system. Robbins claims that a culture of overachievement "contributes directly to young adults' paralyzing fear of failure," leaves children with no down time, and is a "major factor" in increasing teenage suicide rates (p. 15). By recognizing what Callie notes, that adolescents are still growing and developing mentally and emotionally, instead of seeing "loss of voice" as a tragic and permanent problem, scholars could instead look more closely and see that, in some cases, girls may be thoughtfully negotiating and navigating possibilities and laying foundations for developing their voices. Rather than expecting teenagers (and even younger adolescents) to be absolutely sure and fixed about who they are and who they want to be, scholars, parents, and other adults could recall that adolescent years are a time of growth and development, a time of trying things out while the stakes are not quite as high as they become in adulthood.

Callie's statement also points out an important contradiction. While our culture places a great deal of pressure on teenagers to have a clear plan for the future and firm personal convictions, our culture often treats them as if their opinions and ideas are not as valid and important as those of adults. They cannot vote, they are generally expected to unquestioningly submit to their parents' and schools' rules, and the media constructs them as caring primarily about trivial things. I am not suggesting that teenagers should have the full legal rights of adults or that they should have no rules. Rather, I am noting that giving them little legal or social power is inconsistent with expecting them to think and communicate like adults (whose selves, I should note, *also* continue to develop and change over time and in

their relationships with others).

"If Someone Won't Listen to Them, They Need to Scream": Girls Have a Voice if They Choose

Some girls thought that girls *can* have voices if they choose to have them. Laurel, Kayleigh, Lucinda, and Taylor specifically noted that girls have a choice regarding their voices. Laurel is a white, upper-middle class, lesbian girl from Mississippi. Laurel said, "i would say that they have a voice and people listen. I jsut dont see many girls make the attempt to stand up." When I asked her what she thought kept girls from using their voices, she said that they have so much on their minds. (She cautioned, though, "then again, despite being female, i know little about them.") Kayleigh, a white, middle-class, heterosexual girl from southern Louisiana, wrote, "i think that girls can have as much of a voice as they allow themselves to [have].. young women need to learn that if someone wont listen to them speak they need to scream." Lucinda is a Hispanic/Latina, middle-class, heterosexual high-school graduate from South Carolina. She first said that girls are not taken seriously but added that they can be if they make an effort.

Lucinda: yeah people dont really take them seriously due to the behavior that most teenage girls have. people underestimate us and stereotype us

Lucinda: but we do have a voice if we choose to

kb: how do you think girls can choose to have a voice?

Lucinda: if they stand up for what they believe in

Taylor, a white, middle-class, heterosexual high school student from Texas, was also adamant that girls could have a voice if they chose to. She said, "id say its mostly true [that girls don't have a voice]. but i know that if girls wanted to be heard they would. they just have to learn the confidence to speak up against everyone else." When I asked Taylor how

she thought girls could learn that confidence, she wrote:

> ummm its hard to explain. they just have to realize that they are who they are. some people may hate them for who they are and some people may love them but its much better to please the people who love you than the people who dont. the people who wont give you the time of day is not someone to worry about or waste time on. they need to love themselves too.

Kayleigh, Laurel, Lucinda and Taylor's responses give important insight into the concept of voice and the power some girls perceive themselves to have.

This perspective is very different from the one that suggests that girls cannot speak their minds or that others will not listen. Instead, these girls believe that if a girl is not heard, it is her fault. On one hand, this perspective is empowering. It suggests that girls have something to say and can say it and it puts power in the hands of girls. On the other hand, it fails to recognize what many power feminists such as Naomi Wolf (1993) and Katie Roiphe (1994) also fail to see in their "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" advice: social location. Kayleigh, Laurel, Lucinda, and Taylor are all middle- or upper-middle-class girls. Kayleigh, Laurel, and Taylor are all white. Kayleigh, Lucinda, and Taylor are straight and Laurel's friends and most of her family are fairly accepting of her (lesbian) sexuality. These girls have been nurtured by educational systems that cater to their socioeconomic status and a culture in which being white and at least financially comfortable are two key components for success, two factors most of these girls possess. It is significant that no girls of lower socioeconomic statuses shared this perspective. Nonetheless, this perspective represents a significant one that, when manifested effectively, could result in girls being more persistent and better able to resist dissatisfying messages, experiences, and people in their lives.

"That's BS": Girls Do Have a Voice

Five of the eighteen girls in this study vehemently disagreed with the idea that girls do not have a voice, and they strongly asserted that girls *do* have and use their voices. When I asked Alisha the question, she said, "i think thats bs [bullshit]." Alisha moved from Jamaica to Florida when she was young. Earlier, her mother had come to the United States in order to get a job and make enough money to bring Alisha to the United States, which she eventually did. Alisha is a black (Jamaican), working class, heterosexual girl who now lives in Connecticut where she is working for a year to save money for college. She had already mentioned voice before I even asked about it. When I asked Alisha how she would describe herself, we had this conversation:

> **Alisha:** im outspoken inna way where i WILL defend myself or ppl i care about and i also giv out my opionion on sumthing if its needed and i speak truthfully on how i feel...i think things cud get solved in that way instead of keeping your feelings in and making things worse for yourself
>
> **Alisha:** or the other person
>
> **kb:** what motivates or gives you the confidence to speak up like that?
>
> **Alisha:** well when i was younger (like in elementary) i was the weird, awkward-looking 1 in class (puberty stage i guess lol) so i was usually shy and i didnt rele have a voice until i grew out of it and realize that i am my own person and it RELE dnt matter what people think of me becus as long as im happy wit me i dont care
>
> **kb:** can you tell me a little more about how you kind of came into your own voice. did anything or anyone help you grow out of that stage in which you kept to yourself?
>
> **Alisha:** i think my mother gave me confidence too

Alisha: she was ju alwasy there to talk to me and tell me how special i am and i believed her (still do lol)

Alisha: and once i grew out my "ugly-duckling stage" and saw how fake sum ppl were it jus kinda sorta came to i gess

Unlike the girls Gilligan and Pipher describe, Alisha *found* her voice in adolescence. She was offended at the suggestion that girls do not have a voice. Alisha used the current election as an example of how girls are involved. She said that there was a candidate who finally spoke to young people, and the girls around her did care about the election and the issues.

Jordana is a white and Ukrainian, heterosexual community college student from Illinois. She said of those who do not think girls are involved or political, "i think they r wrong. i am very passionate about everything, i speak my mind. and even if idont know about policitcs that much, i get in to it [a]nd try to express [my] feelings." I am not suggesting that steadfastly committing to one's perspective when uninformed is the most productive or laudable way to engage in political or other conversation. However, participating in discussions even when one is uninformed can be an important first step in entering into a dialogue and becoming more informed. Additionally, speaking up helps girls to become comfortable doing so, perhaps making it easier for them to speak up in the future when they wish to. When I asked Jordana what she is passionate about, she wrote:

Jordana: mostly everything. i was very very passionate bout color guard which is a team of girls who perform with flags aand rifles. i let my heart pour out in that

kb: what made you so passionate about it?

Jordana: it was something that i really liked doing and it make me became my self

and a different person

kb: can you tell me more about that last part?

kb: how did it help you become yourself?

Jordana: i started doing that my freshma year and when u perform you need to smile and make experssion on ur face and i never did that and now i love to smile and [be] wildish around my friends.

I had expected Jordana to tell me about how she was interested in the election since we had just been talking about it. Instead, she shared a very personal example of something that she is passionate about. It would be easy to dismiss Jordana's passion as either unimportant, but a closer glance reveals something important. Color Guard was important to Jordana because it helped her to discover part of herself. It helped her emerge from her shell and be more outgoing, something she liked about her current personality. Jordana's example challenges the definition of what counts as having or raising one's voice. Jordana's involvement in color guard is not political in a conventional sense, but as she said, she let her "heart pour out in that." She perceived it to be related to her voice because it shaped her self-concept in a major way. Here, having a voice is about knowing one's self and being passionate about one's actions. This perception is very different from making assertive public statements.

Like Alisha and Jordana, Marika, Megan, and Nikki all felt strongly that girls have and use their voices. They were quick to disagree with those who suggested that girls do not have anything to say or that they do not speak up. To the question about voice, Megan, a white, middle-class, heterosexual college student from Alabama, replied:

i disagree. every one has a voice and has the right to be heard. some people do not want to listen. but if the girl speaks up then she is heard. someone may not want to

> hear it. but speaking up gives the person the chance to open their mind.

Nikki described herself as a white, "low, low class," bisexual girl from New York state. She is currently in four-year college. Nikki responded by saying, "i disagree 'cause that'd me[an] neither me nor any of my friends have a voice and that's untrue." Marika, who is Hispanic and white, middle-class, and heterosexual, living in Miami, Florida, wrote:

> well girls ARE passionate about things,, and i think that ppl do listen to them. because girls (of course) have more problems than guys, being a girl is not that easy, because we have worries, thoughts, dreams, and its just is different, and well i do have my friends & family who listen to everything i have to say..i dont really know about others cuz everyone has a different life.

These five girls believed that girls have the power to raise their voices. They felt strongly that girls do have something to say and that they say it. Alisha, Jordana, Marika, Megan, and Nikki were very different from each other in terms of demographics. They ranged from being working- to upper-middle class. Some were white, some multiracial, and one black. Some are heterosexual and some bisexual. Nonetheless, all of these girls were taught and believed that they do have important things to say and that they should say them.

What Is Voice, Then?

In addition to sharing their opinions on whether or not girls have voices, the girls in this study also provided insight into how they define, or understand, voice. As I have noted previously, voice is a heavily contested concept. Despite some of Gilligan's missteps of overgeneralizing and essentializing (Wood, 1992), Gillian raised an important point when she noted the lack of attention to girls' and women's voices. Although some researchers have begun to turn their attention to the concept of voice and girls' voices specifically, the

contestation over what voice, including girls' voice, is has transpired largely among adults who are researchers and girls themselves have not been invited to contribute to the conversation.

The girls in this study suggested three definitions of voice: (a) I have ideas, (b) I have ideas, and I share them with others, and (c) I have ideas, I share them with others, and others take those ideas seriously. I will present these three perspectives in detail below; however, I want to first note that these definitions should not be seen as three distinct conceptions of voice. While they may be relatively stable forms of voice for some people, they may also be points in a progression, each building upon the previous conception of voice. Having ideas is a sufficient definition to some. For other girls, having ideas must be accompanied by making those ideas public. In a next step, other girls noted that even making the ideas public is not enough: others must seriously acknowledge the presence of those ideas for girls to feel they have a voice. Traditionally, voice has tended to be equated with this final definition: having ideas, stating them, and having others take them seriously. However, the other girls' definitions point out that public declaration and acknowledgement is only one step in the process of having and using voice. Rather than being something that one has or exercises at a fixed moment in time, voice is a process in which one engages, one that includes internal and external components.

"I Just Don't Let My Politics Get into Conversation": Voice as Internal

Some girls in this study defined voice as having opinions, ideas, and thoughts of one's own. For example, as I noted previously, Olivia said to me, "i care i just dont let my politics get into conversation." Olivia presents a conception of voice that challenges the idea that having a voice means speaking up and being heard. Her perspective on voice suggests

that having a voice means knowing what one believes and thinks. Other girls shared this perspective.

Rachael, Alisha, Marika, and Nikki—all girls who believed girls do have a voice—also seemed to suggest that voice is something internal. For example, despite the fact that her family and community are more conservative than she is, Rachael believes she has a voice. She said, "im passionate about things and i actually DO care about politics." Having a voice, to these girls, means having ideas and thoughts of one's own. They may express those opinions, but making them public is not necessary to have a voice. It is significant to note that most of the girls who defined voice as solely internal were the girls who responded affirmatively to the question, "Do girls have a voice?" These girls may live in a culture that historically and structurally disadvantages women and sometimes does not take girls seriously, but those perspectives are irrelevant for their own definition of voice. Of course, their senses of self are constructed through interactions with others (Mead, 1934), but they have developed an internal set of ideas and opinions about which they feel certain despite any external challenges, including indifference.

This definition of voice would not count by traditional measures. Gilligan and Brown (1992) and McRobbie and Garber (1976/2000), and others have noted that girls' voices have been left out of analyses of youth culture. In most analyses, voice is defined as assertive, loud, public statements. These scholars and these girls suggest an alternative definition: voice as one's internal ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and opinions.

"If the Girl Speaks Up, then She Is Heard": Voice as Internal and Public

Despite challenges to the traditional definition of voice, it still exists and is taken up as the standard for measuring voice, and although the girls in the previous section conceived

it differently, other girls in the study accepted the prevailing definition. Adding to the first definition, five girls said that having a voice means having ideas and sharing them. Here, speaking up is a key part of having a voice. The girls who defined voice this way did not see having one's own opinions and ideas as sufficient to claim a voice. Rather, they thought one also had to express those ideas publicly in order to have a voice. Megan's comments on voice also suggest that she believes that speaking up is a key component of having a voice. She wrote, "every one has a voice and has the right to be heard. some people do not want to listen. but if the girl speaks up then she is heard." Jordana said that she believes she has a voice because she "speak[s her] mind." She tells other people what she thinks, and it does not matter if they accept her opinions or not.

Being able to share one's perspective is a fairly conventional way to think about voice. It privileges speaking up and public spaces and deemphasizes private thought. Harris (2004a) writes that there is increasing assumption "that young women ought to make their private selves and 'authentic voices' highly visible in public" (p. 123). As she notes, this pressure creates three problems: first, this kind of surveillance creates and regulates very narrow "models of successful subjectivity […] Second, opportunities for critique are shut down" (Harris, 2004a, p. 124) and finally, opportunities for public engagement are limited. If having a voice means a girl has to speak up and share her ideas, it devalues ideas she decides to keep private, and the ideas that she does share are open to judgment by others. As these girls note, they do not need the approval of others in order to feels as if they have a voice, but adding a public component to voice opens it up to this kind of approval. As some girls noted, they have learned that, for them and the girls they know, there is a right and a wrong way to speak up.

"If They Don't Listen, I Usually Give Up": Voice as External Validation

Within society as a whole, the most prevalent definition of voice is having ideas, stating them, and having those ideas heard and accepted, or at least taken seriously, by others. Lindsay, a white, heterosexual, middle-class girl from Texas, offered an insight that sums up how many of the girls who said girls don't have voice felt when she wrote, "they listen, but they don't take us very seriously." Lindsay did think she had ideas and could share them, but she found that they fell upon deaf ears. Lindsay and five of the other girls in this study[4] believed that others sometimes pretended interest in their voices, but no one really cared what they had to say. For many girls, this is more painful than not being listened to at all.

In our interview, A.J. was articulate and interesting. A.J. is a white, middle-class, queer (a lesbian who is open to dating transmen) phlebotomy student from Florida. When I asked her what she thought of those who say girls do not have a voice, she said:

> i think that to an extent females are taught that their ideas are based around fairy tales, [the happy] ending. if people listen to them, they tend to see their ideas as unrealistic, something that only a dreamer could come up with. when a female expresses her opinion and gets put down, over and over again (whether it be someone such as their parents, pastor, whatever) they tend to lose that voice. at least, that's what i think.

When I asked A.J. if she had a voice, she simply said, "no." I then asked if she meant she did not have anything to say or that she did not feel that she could speak up, and she replied, "i don't feel like i can express them in a manner that people will listen." A.J.'s comment provides insight into how some girls believe their voices get silenced or how they fail to find

[4] One girl's response could not be classified according to these distinctions. When I asked Drew about her opinion about girls' voices she said, "I'm not very sure." Thus, the numbers in this section total 17, not 18.

them. Despite her many interests and opinions, A.J. believed there was a right way to say something in order for it to be heard by others. For A.J., voice goes beyond having ideas and expressing them. To have a voice, others must accept or seriously engage one's ideas, something A.J. had little success finding in her own life. Despite her interesting insights and ideas, A.J. did not think she had a voice.

A.J. seems to be alluding to *procedural knowledge* in her reasoning about voice. Procedural knowledge "requires formal instruction or at least the presence of knowledgeable people who can serve as informal tutors" in how to participate in particular kinds of interactions (Belenky et al., 1997/1986, p. 93). According to Belenky et al., procedural knowledge is "more complex" (p. 97) and "more objective than subjective knowledge" (p. 98). This is because procedural knowledge is defined by consensus of a social group, for example, the generalized other or established members of professions. Procedural knowledge is the knowledge of the form, norms, and conventions of a particular language game. In this study, the girls who restrict the sharing of their voices to ways that they think will be perceived as correct and acceptable are relying on procedural knowledge to tell them how to use their voices. They have internalized the proper way to be a citizen that Harris (2004a) discusses. In some respects, procedural knowledge may seem positive because individuals who employ it draw upon more experienced individuals' knowledge and a variety of perspectives in order to arrive at a decision. However, procedural knowledge discounts or disallows the knowledge that some individuals have because it does not conform to established means of expression. A.J. is astutely aware of the expectations society has for her, and she navigates them well. In this, respect, she is very successful. However, she discounts her own ideas and ways of knowing because she judges them to be less powerful

than those around her. Moreover, when girls internalize only what others teach them about the proper way to share one's voice, they reinscribe the existing language game, including its constraints. However, if they are allowed to develop their own modes of expression in addition to conventional ones, they may be able to create ways of using and thinking about their voices that are not possible in the dominant language game.

When I asked Brittany about her voice, she said, "i feel like i dont even matter […] i usually repeat myself, usually once, and if they still dont listen, i usually give up." Brittany has something to say and she says it, but she often finds that no one listens to her. They literally ignore her, and she feels as if she is figuratively unheard when others do not seem to understand her. For Brittany, she does not have a voice if others do not respond to it.

As Lindsay, A.J., and Brittany's comments highlight, a key component of this definition is external recognition. In order for voice to count in this definition, others must acknowledge it as a reasonable perspective. This perspective can be empowering if others recognize and potentially confirm girls' ideas. This may make them feel heard and accepted and able to continue to share ideas. However, if having a voice is always contingent upon others' acceptance; the possibility of losing one's voice is always imminent. If girls are not acknowledged, they may quit sharing their ideas for fear that they will be rejected. This rejection has the potential to also discourage girls from forming opinions at all. Instead, it may be easier to think and believe what others will value in order to be accepted, making it hard for them to continue to develop their self-concept and worldview and

This definition of voice confirms what Harris (2004a) supposes when she says that girls are taught that there is a single, right way to be a public citizen, a legitimate procedural knowledge that they must learn to be successful. Many girls believe there is a right way, and

that if they do not conform to this ideal, their voices are often not counted. Foucault would say that these girls are engaging in technologies of the self, a process that allows (or coerces):

> individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity wisdom, perfection, or immorality. (p. 18)

As Driscoll (2002) astutely adds, these technologies of the self always take place "within a preexisting set of discourses on the self" (p. 40). In other words, these technologies of the self are taught by and reinforce cultural norms and expectations. Although they may seem like practices that help people become ideal citizens, these are the same practices that reinforce the dominant paradigm and create docile bodies by working on the very bodies as selves of girls. In this case, girls learn to express their thoughts in very specific ways so that they will be heard and affirmed. This pressure has the potential to shape what girls allow themselves to think about in the first place, restricting not just how they talk about what they think but restricting what they actually think about as well.

(Re)Conceptualizing Voice

In our culture, there is an immense amount of pressure upon girls to conform to gender roles, racial stereotypes, and familial expectations. Further, as Mead (1934) taught, society plays a large role in shaping the selves of human beings. This can sometimes leave people wondering who we "really" are. As noted previously, many scholars do not believe in a single, stable self; instead, they see the self as something that is always in process. It is shaped by the context in which we exist and the others with whom we interact. I want to note that I do not think that the distinction of the *private self* and *public world* is an accurate

one. As Mead argued, our selves are social. Thus, although we cannot draw a clear distinction between the self and the world, we should acknowledge that there are some portions of who we are that are (or at least seem to be) more individual and private, separate from the rest of the world, even though they are shaped in some ways by it and also have impact on that world.

Nonetheless, especially in a world that is constantly shifting and changing, human beings often seek to find stability within ourselves. Western culture places a great deal of emphasis on girls' and women's self-discovery and self-improvement, both of which are narrowly defined in terms of what is acceptable (Bartky, 1990; Brumberg, 1997; Harris, 2004a; Driscoll, 2002; Mazzarella, 1999; Bodey & Wood, in press). Anita Harris (2004a) writes that Western culture place a great deal of pressure on "young women to express themselves personally and politically" (p. 125). The message our culture sends to girls is that "living outside the public gaze is for those who do not try hard enough" (p. 127). Girls are expected to figure out who they are and then make that private self available for others to see and judge.

As girls develop their senses of self and who they want to be, they do so under this pressure. It is no surprise, then, that sometimes girls will feel constrained by this pressure, even when they cannot consciously and explicitly recognize and name it. Sometimes selves are formed as a response to this pressure. One develops a self that rejects the cultural, social, and familial expectations put upon her. Further, maintaining privacy and keeping parts of the self a secret can also be an act of resistance. With so much pressure to figure out who one is and then display that self for others to view, avoiding the gaze removes the power from the one gazing.

As girls age, they face mounting pressure to become increasingly competent at femininity and, in Western culture, many of these pressures, in some ways, affect all girls. As Bartky (1990) notes, "The larger disciplines that construct a 'feminine' body out of a female one are by no means race- or class-specific" (p. 72). It is clear from Gilligan's and Pipher's data that some girls *do* feel that they lost their voice in adolescence. Because femininity is still defined as relatively passive (relative to masculinity) in our culture, many girls feel that they cannot be as outspoken during their teenage and adult years as they may have been during childhood. Durham (1999) noted, "adolescence is traditionally viewed as a time of rebellion against authority—but not for girls. Adolescence is marked in gendered terms: for girls, it is a time of learning to conform to norms of femininity rather than a time of limit-testing" (p. 220).

Despite these constraints, girls are not helpless victims with no choice other than to bend to traditional notions of femininity. Yes, they certainly face pressures. However, contrary to what Pipher (1994) and others argue, culture is not simply unbearable for them. They can—and do—respond. To insist that *all* girls lose their voices in adolescence hyperfeminizes girls in ways that reproduce problematic stereotypes that all girls are feminine and feminine people are meek and timid. Not only does this perspective assume that all girls experience this loss, but also it ignores the ways in which girls who do experience (or more importantly, appear to experience) it may be "raising their voices" in nontraditional (i.e., non-masculine) ways, for instance, writing in their diaries or chatting online. When making loud, public claims to a fixed identity (or position) is what counts as having a voice, only a masculine form of communication and self is being valued. To say that all girls lose their voices assumes that working out aspects of their identity without making assertive, definitive statements is a problematic process rather

than a postmodern experience of working through multiple identities and gaining freedom by not having to choose a single one.

These three very different opinions of whether or not girls have a voice, and the three definitions of what a voice, is provide a perspective that the existing research and theory do not: one based on *girls'* opinions. Clearly, some of their opinions and definitions are consistent with claims of scholars who believe that girls lose their voices in adolescence. Some of these girls felt pressured by culture to keep their opinions to themselves. However, as I have noted, this silent response does not necessarily reflect an inability to manage cultural messages. Instead, it may represent a mastery of the feminine ideal as communicated through general and particular others. Other girls' opinions challenge the notion that teens do not have a voice and show that some girls do feel empowered and heard. Another set of girls' perspectives confirm a common message in our culture: girls can be and do all they want to, if only they are willing to do so. While it is encouraging that girls feel that they can choose to have a voice and while that perspective is optimistic for the potential of girls' voices, it also ignores important cultural and personal factors that may constrain girls' ability to raise their voices.

These girls' statements go beyond just noting whether (or not) girls think they have a voice. They highlight important questions and implications for how adults and girls define and count voice. Perhaps most importantly, their ideas raise the question of what counts as voice. Does a voice have to be expressed out loud? Do others have to engage what is expressed, or can voice be one's own private convictions? Does a voice have to be about a current political or social issue, or can it be about a more personal passion? These questions do not have a definitive answer, but they do have some important implications. As Wood

and I argue (in press), what we (scholars, parents, adults, and adolescents) count as voice shapes what we believe is true and possible for girls. It affects how we view the self and the potential for action, reaction, and resistance in the world. Thus, it makes sense now to turn to the topic of resistance to examine how girls' perspectives on resistance give further insight into these questions and concepts.

CHAPTER 5: RESISTANCE

In this chapter, I discuss the findings concerning girls' resistance. These findings are related to and informed by those in the previous chapter on voice. Here I present the definitions of resistance that my participants offered, and I identify the key themes in girls' accounts of what they resist and how they resist.

Some scholars claim that girls do not have the tools or the power to resist cultural messages (Lamb & Brown, 2006; Pipher, 1994; Quart, 2003; Taylor et al, 1995), but girls who define resistance as fighting back against peer and media pressures indicate that they do have the tools and the ability to resist. Scholars such as Pecora and Mazzarella (1999) and Kearny (2006) note that not all girls have lost their voices; many, they argue, find and often share their voices through the creation of media and other "cultural artifacts" (Pecora & Mazzarella, 1999, p. 6). Many of the girls who do this also indicate that they are finding and/or sharing their voices through resistance to cultural norms. As I note later, sometimes this resistance takes the form of creating art (in the case of some of these girls, writing stories), but for others, resistance is enacted in interpersonal relationships and in intrapsychic processing.

With the exception of "at risk" girls or girls who are engaged in very organized activist projects, there has been little research on how girls engage in resistance. As Driscoll (2002) notes:

> Girls are excluded from youth culture defined as a public spectacle of resistance, disenfranchisement, and threat by narratives about girls' developmental psychology and by discourses on girl as public victim, but also by popular models of girl culture. […] As central participants in activities that are not spectacular, […] girls thus do not conform to many of the defining characteristics of youth culture. (p. 258)

Driscoll's observation echoes the claim made by McRobbie and Garber (1976/2000) in the late 1970s. Excluding girls from youth culture also excludes them from conceptions of how youth enact resistance. Driscoll continues:

> [the majority of] studies of resistance presuppose a model of agency that is problematized by naming the subject as a girl. A dominant presumption that valid subjectivity requires an agency understood as independent choice continues to prioritize cultural forms viewed as maintaining individualist authenticity. (2002, p. 269)

The girls in the present investigation give insight into what resistance means to them as well as how and what they resist. They help to broaden the definition of resistance and challenge prevailing conceptions of who girls are and what they do.

Defining Resistance

All but 3 of the 18 girls in this study said that they engage in resistance in their lives. The girls in this study defined resistance in a variety of ways. Although each girl's definition was unique, there were some common themes across the girls' responses. One way to categorize their definitions is by whether the girls describe the impetus or motivation for resistance as primarily external or primarily internal.

People can perceive resistance as a response to something external, but it can also be understood as a response to or as motivated by things internal, phenomena such as values, goals, and self definition. Although what is "inside of us" is affected by our socialization, we can isolate what is "inside us" enough that we perceive it to be to be our own and separate them from the world. If a parent tells a child she cannot wear a short skirt, the child may resist her parent's attempt to restrict her clothing choices. By choosing to wear a short skirt anyway. She might describe this as resistance to external phenomena—either the mother's directive or not wearing the skirt. Resistance can also be perceived as prompted by internal phenomena. If a girl decides she wants to be the kind of person who relentlessly pursues her own goals, she may construct an image of herself around that idea. When she chooses to focus on studying instead of going out drinking with friends, for example, she might perceive her goals as motivating her to resist friends' invitations to go out.

Both of these examples demonstrate that the line between internal and external motivation of resistance is not clear. In the case of the skirt, the girl is making the decision to resist based on the kind of image she wants to convey, her past experiences with her parent's rules about how she looks, and likely other ideas as well. In the second example, the girl may resist drinking because she thinks it will impede her goals. She is resisting something external, but it is motivated by her internal desire to be a certain kind of person. Thus, these categories, while helpful, should not be seen as completely discrete. Their analytic value lies in the fact that they describe how girls themselves understand the genesis of their resistance.

Resistance as Primarily Externally Motivated

Some girls defined resistance as something one does against an external target. Ashlyn gave a clearly external definition when she said, "resistance i think is like saying no

to something or being against an issue." Here, resistance is about pushing back against something one does not like or agree with in one's life. Similarly, when I first asked Lihn what she thought resistance was, she said, "i think of pushing people."

Callie suggested that resistance means not giving in to the status quo simply because others are doing it. She wrote:

> well.. politically speaking, i think to define resistance means to really do your own research and "resist" the slander and the shit 30-second ads the other canidate puts out. to have a mind of your own and know that, in this day and age, there is such a vast amount of information at your fingertips, it's much different than it was before computers.

Here, Callie frames resistance as against external messages and beliefs. She thinks resistance is not buying messages that are sold through media simply on face value.

Lindsay shared this perspective. Using an example, she said, "I resist social norms, I guess. I don't listen to 'popular' music, or wear trendy clothes...I resist being a clone, I guess." Lindsay was in her first semester of college when we spoke, and she recalled how she had successfully convinced her mother to allow her to switch high schools in order to find an environment in which she could be herself. For these girls, resistance means making one's own, informed choices and pushing back against external efforts to conform.

A.J. gave a similar example when she noted that she wanted to be able to be more fluid in her gender presentation but knew that others would not accept her if she did so. A.J.'s desires note that even external resistance includes important internal processing, but in this case, her struggle was around the expectations of others and the responses they would have to her if she performed a more fluid gender identity. Although these girls constructed

resistance as against something outside of themselves, internal motivations were also present and operating.

Not doing something one is against is a fairly common definition of resistance. In part, these descriptions of resistant are consistent with the messages that tell girls to be "good girls" and follow the rules. "Can-do" girls are those who focus on their studies and obey their parents and in turn, adults invest in these girls (Harris, 2004a). In one sense, when girls say "no" to things they have been taught are bad (such as doing drugs, drinking alcohol, and having sex), they are engaged in a kind of conforming (to parental expectations) through their resistance (to peer pressure). However, girls like Lindsay, Callie, and Taylor noted that they were specifically doing the opposite: they were resisting the pressure to be like everyone else. Later I discuss the specific targets of girls' resistance, but here it is important to note that they framed resistance as something one does against something outside of them. In other words, the girls perceived themselves as pushing back against the pervasive media, peer, and familial pressures to conform to a specific version of femininity.

Resistance as Primarily Internally Motivated

Other girls defined resistance as being motivated by something internal. I noted in the previous section that A.J. provided one definition of resistance as responding to external phenomena. However, she also noted that resistance could be prompted by internal phenomena. A.J. described herself as a "self-injurer" and wrote:

> i'd always percieved myself as stable, but when i started cutting, i realized that [even before cutting,] i always did hurt myself when things got rough. like, i'd bite my cuticles 'til they would bleed or i'd hit my wrists with hard objects. it just caused me to wonder how much of the person i had been for fourteen years was fake.

A.J. said this realization left her "confused" because she "didn't know where to go from there." She did not want to be a weak or "unstable" person, but she believed that she was. She felt internal motivation to resist being and continuing to be someone who could be described using those words. No one called A.J. weak or unstable, but she did not want to be thought of or to think of herself that way. She made active choices to change friends and find activities that she enjoyed so that her life would be happier. There were external components of her means of resistance—friends and activities—but she perceived her resistance as internally motivated.

As I noted before, Lihn first described resistance as physical fighting, and she noted that she does see and experience that kind of resistance in her life. However, in our discussion, she quickly moved to discussing resistance as being related to the idea of justice and finding one's self. Resistance, for Lihn, meant deciding what to say to friends when, choosing how to intervene in their lives and choosing when to let them make their own choices. Both resistance and justice, for Lihn, were related to making choices about what was right for one's self, something she called "self-fight." Resistance was highly internal for Lihn. One important note here is that Lihn is from a traditional Vietnamese family in which she plays a large caretaker role for her younger siblings. Fighting back openly against this role is not allowed in her family, which could possibly explain why her resistance was framed first as physical fighting and then as internal struggle.

Internal resistance highlights the struggle many girls experience as they try to figure out "who they are." Sometimes the internal resistance is about the process of discovering one's self and sometimes it is about asserting that self to others. Harris (2004a) noted the increasing tendency to put girls' inner selves under surveillance, and, following this claim, it

makes sense that resistance would also play out and be experienced internally. Mead's (1934) major work was to explore how society enters and influences the self, and this work points us to the realization that resistance cannot be fully external. If the relationship one has with the world influences and is influenced by the self (and vice versa), it would be impossible for resistance to take place only outside of one's self.

Blurring the Lines and Resistance as Part of Self-Making

As these girls' statements show, resistance is not only about external targets of resistance. Sometimes they portray resistance as also and primarily about how one's self will be changed by opposing something perceived as external. For example, Nikki said, "I think resistance develops from personal confidence and the ability to reject anything that's not right for you." Nikki's statement does not specify what that "anything" may be. It could be drugs, a career path, an outfit, or other external target. It could also be a religious belief, an attitude towards gay rights, or something else internal. The important thing for Nikki is that resistance is something that is motivated and carried out internally in order to produce a subjectivity that resonates for her.

Kayleigh shared Nikki's view and her perspective also demonstrates the blurry line between internal and external facets of resistance. She wrote:

> i think that resistance is like persistance, you have to keep trying not to become like others, not to do things that will harm you as a person. you have to resist all the urges that society puts on you and you have to be comfortable in your own skin

The things Kayleigh resists may be external, but the goal of her resistance seems to be to create a sense of self that feels authentic and secure.

Drew provides another clear example of how resistance can include internal and external components. Drew engaged in resistance against things she was tempted to do: doing drugs, drinking alcohol, and being sexually active. Drew was about to turn 20 at the time of the interview. She is a white, heterosexual, middle-class girl who lives with her parents in Texas. She was addicted to cocaine at the age of 15; at the time of our interview, she had been sober for a year and a half, after several stints in rehabilitation. Nonetheless, she still sometimes felt tempted to do drugs because she enjoyed their effects. However, it is important to note that while, on the one hand, she did want to do those things, she also felt a strong desire *not* to do them because she did not like her life as an addict and did not want to be an untrustworthy girlfriend. Drew also suffers from Crohn's Disease, a severe digestive disorder that makes her very sick on a regular basis. Drew's life is not easy, and she fights every day to be healthy and drug- and alcohol-free. Drew's resistance involved not doing things that she wanted to do (drugs) in order to be the person she wanted to be. Drew was resisting external pressures, especially from peers, to do drugs at one point in her life. However, her resistance has now been transformed into something more internal. She is resisting drugs, but even more, she is resisting a life and a self-concept in which she is a drug addict. She is resisting her own tendencies to be self-destructive now much more than she is resisting peer pressure.

Rachael's definition of resistance also blurs the lines between internal and external. She said that resistance is, "having the strength to not give in to something that you dont agree with. [not] giving into pressure." Rachael used drugs as her example. She resists something external (drugs) for highly personal reasons: her father was a drug addict and she perceives him to have ruined his life with drugs.

Resistance as a Process

Harris (2004a) notes that "there has now emerged a preferred way of being politically engaged and expressing social critique. Participating means displaying oneself and speaking out in particular ways in particular places, places that are on view to the authorities who grant this empowerment at virtually all times" (p. 138). This narrow definition of being politically active is similar to the constricted definition McRobbie and Garber (1976/2000) critiqued over three decades ago. This continued insistence that resistance, voice, and action be defined in ways that exclude private, internal, unobservable, or unconventional acts ignores the other possibilities for a girl's perception of her engagement with the world.

As these girls illustrate, resistance is not the same for everyone. The girls in this study gave definitions and examples that show resistance as multidimensional. Some of the definitions provided even opposed one another. Perhaps most importantly, what these girls highlight is that resistance is not a single thing. It is not the same for everyone, and it is not necessarily limited to a solitary act. Understanding resistance as something that can happen over time and something that is influenced by and influences self-concept broadens scholars', parents', other adults', and adolescents' conception of what resistance is and what it can be.

In addition to seeing resistance as both internal and external, scholars and activists must also examine how resistance functions. Sometimes resistance is a direct response to a direction, object, concept, or other target. In the example on page 83, the parent says, "You cannot wear that short skirt." The daughter may resist by wearing it anyway. This is a very direct kind of resistance: the parent says, "do not do x" and she replies, "I will do x" or simply does x.

Resistance can happen in other ways as well. Sometimes girls resist by doing things other than simply responding to a specific demand and doing what it says not to do or not doing what it says to do . In the example of the skirt, the girl may choose to take the skirt off but don an equally revealing skirt, shorts, or pair of pants. In this case, she is taking a slightly less straightforward route to resistance. In an even more complex move, the girl may adjust her clothing to conform to her parent's rules but make her behavior even more outrageous in order to communicate the message her clothing cannot. These options point out that resistance is not restricted to reverse action or direct, literal opposition. In fact, the girls in this study seldom cited reverse action as how they engaged in resistance. They fashioned new paths by creating images of themselves and goals towards which they worked, creating ways to escape, and serving as mentors for others to help reduce the power of cultural messages. By examining what girls resist and how they resist, scholars and others can learn more about the process and concept of resistance.

What Do Girls Resist?

In general, girls tended to resist doing things they thought were "bad," such as taking drugs, drinking alcohol, and having sex. In addition, they tended to resist expectations and pressures to be someone they felt that they were not or did not want to be. Some girls noted social and political issues about which they feel passionate. For the most part, however, the girls focused on more personal, less public, acts of resistance. That is, for the most part, they were not at protests, they were not signing petitions, and they were not creating activist groups at their schools. Instead, many of their acts of resistance played out through the careful ways they (re)constructed their identities and the presentation of those identities and through their interpersonal relationships. For example, Callie, the Las Vegas native, said:

> i've learned to kind of.. living here in vegas, people are so shady and untrustworthy. this city changes you, most people grovel at the temptation and they go from a small town girl to someone closed off and mean. because that's how you have to be to survive here, as fucked up as that sounds. but you do. it's like it eats you alive, and i hate it. i hate the people, and i hate how they act. but when i go out, i find myself mimicing things people i have such distaste for, their mannerisms and it pisses me off.

She said that she thought living in Las Vegas had robbed her of a normal childhood, and she was counting the days until she moves to Pennsylvania where she will be attending college. Callie used the "cold" personality she attributed to the city to construct her own, quite different self-concept and personality. Jordana said that she resisted being seen as a "goody girl" by dying her hair and planning to get a tattoo. Brittany tried to resist her family's attempts to ignore her own interests (e.g., animals, music) and their pressure for her to pursue their interests.

As Driscoll (2002) writes, "Dedication to self-improvement and the right to self-articulation could fantastically transcend as well as underscore class identities in a sweeping conception of 'the girl'" (p. 41). In other words, what girls resist may have a common overarching theme, even if their specific resistance varies. It is likely that many girls are focused on self-improvement. Exactly how that project is manifested may vary according to class lines and other markers such as geographic location and sexual orientation. Driscoll's assertion is confirmed by my data. Nearly all of girls in this study spoke of resisting people, ideas, and expectations that asked them to be someone they felt they were not or did not want to be(come), and they were involved in an ongoing search to discover or create themselves.

The specific targets of their resistance give insight into how this the political and the social connect to self-making for these girls.

The most prominent targets of resistance cited by girls were messages about drugs, alcohol, sex, and physical ideals. Each of these targets is described in detail below.

Drugs and Alcohol

Many teenagers encounter pressure to take drugs or drink alcohol, so it is not surprising that this was a common theme. Rachael, a working class, white, bisexual girl from North Carolina, said that she resisted drugs and alcohol because she did not like the effect they had on her. Rachael said, "i dont like the fact that i cant control myself." She said she may drink once a month and never does other drugs. She also mentioned that she saw the toll drugs and alcohol took on her father, and she avoided them because she did not want to suffer the same fate. Instead, Rachael is intensely focused on her schoolwork, describing herself as "determined, i have my mind right unlike other people my age..who party and thats it." When I asked her what she was determined to do or be, she replied:

> to get my associates and get a job. i wanna be able to support my future family and give them what i never had. im determined to do so..like nothing will stop me […] i just want to make something of myself. and i grew up not having much so i guess i can make that change.

Rachael's goals motivated her to resist things in her life that would keep her from being successful, and drugs and alcohol were substances she viewed as barriers to success. Rachael also provides a clear example of someone who identifies an external target of resistance (drugs and alcohol), yet is clear that her self-concept is the motivator of her resistance.

Drew also said that resisting drugs and alcohol was a major way that she engaged in

daily resistance. As noted previously, Drew had been a drug addict for two years before going through a rehabilitation program. In addition to resisting the social pressure on teens to do drugs and drink alcohol, Drew had to battle her addiction. She knew she needed help when she needed cocaine just to function. Giving it up was hard because she liked the effect and the ritual of taking it: "whenever i would start setting up the drug, i would get this feeling of comfort, maybe even better then the high itself." She also gave up drinking because she perceived that as part of her self-destructive, addictive lifestyle. Now, she not only resists drugs but works hard to see and project an image of herself as a sober person. For example, she said, "when people ask if i want a drink, instead of just saying no i have to say *no i dont drink*, because i have to keep on reinforcing it in my head, because one day i might really want to." Resisting drugs and alcohol is something Drew does every single day. As with Rachael, on first glance, this seems to be resistance to external phenomena (drugs). However, upon closer inspection, the internal factors motivating her resistance are obvious and important.

Ashlyn, Megan, Lucinda, Taylor, and Callie all also noted that they resist doing drugs and/or drinking alcohol. For instance, Taylor wrote, "i dont need drugs and things to make me have a good time. […] i see the way it makes these people become, really skinny, they stop takin care of themselves and they never have any money cuz they spend it all on their next fix." Taylor's older brothers did drugs, and one of them developed psychological problems and went to jail because of his addiction. After seeing what happened to her brothers, Taylor made a conscious choice to avoid drugs. Ashlyn, Megan, Lucinda, and Callie agreed that doing drugs and drinking can have negative effects. Though some of them drink occasionally in moderation or would be open to trying marijuana, they generally

wanted to avoid alcohol and other drugs, especially in excess, because they saw the negative effects they had on others.

These girls resist drugs and alcohol for different reasons and in different ways. Rachael avoids drugs and only drinks alcohol in moderation because she wants to succeed in her education and career, an internal motivation. Drew completely abstains from drugs and alcohol because she is a former addict and does not want to go back to that lifestyle, also an internal motivation. Taylor tried to intervene in her brothers' drug use because of the harmful effects on them. Although their method of resistance and reasons may vary, their target of resistance is the same. Because over a third of the girls mentioned drugs or alcohol as something they resisted, readers can see that many girls are pressured to try these substances. This news may not be surprising, but it is certainly important.

Sexual Activity

Many girls said they felt pressure to have and not to have sex. Some girls resisted sex messages by resisting messages from their peers, partners, and the media that encouraged them to be sexually active. Other girls resisted messages from their family and church that encouraged them to be abstinent. It is not surprising that girls receive pressure to engage in sexual activity and pressure to practice abstinence; however, it is important to note that girls are aware of these pressures and work to integrate the messages to make choices that seem right for them.

Both Taylor and Ashlyn fell into the first category, resisting the pressure she felt to have casual sex. Instead, they said they thought sex was okay as long as it was in a committed relationship with one person. Lucinda's family taught her that she should not date before the age of 18 and should not have sex before marriage. She was tempted to have sex

and even dated some on her own before turning 18, despite her family's rules, but she reaffirmed her commitment to those rules when she became more religious. Lucinda is now a devout Christian, which helps her to resist cultural messages that she believes are wrong. Although she is tempted "every weekend" to engage in sex and other behaviors that she says "God doesn't like," she prays to God's for strength to resist them, which she says helps her.

Both Kayleigh and Drew resisted sex, but rather than doing so because of a moral position, they resisted it because of negative past experiences. Drew regretted hurting past romantic partners by cheating on them with other people. Kayleigh regretted having unsafe sex at a young age, which resulted in her contracting genital herpes. She attributed what she considered to be a poor decision to have sex in her mid-teens to pressure from guys, lack of accurate sexual information, and the sexualizing of girls and women in the media. These girls resisted having sex because of the negative consequences they had already suffered. Kayleigh took her resistance a step further by trying to intervene and keep the messages that encouraged her to have sex from impacting her younger sisters in the same way.

Not all teens resisted sexual messages by avoiding sex. Some resisted pressures to save sex for marriage because they disagreed with that message. Callie thought it was unreasonable to think that teens would wait until marriage to have sex. She said that she would raise her children to be as safe as possible about sex, but she would understand that she would rather they make an informed decision to have sex than make an uninformed one. Unlike her friends' parents, Callie said she would never kick a child out of her home for having sex. Although Jordana did believe one should set sexual limitations (e.g. not having multiple sexual partners at once), she too thought that abstaining from sex before marriage—something her parents taught her—was unrealistic. She said, "i just think its too long of a

wait and if you find the right person that u want to loose it to then you should." She said making the decision to disobey her parents was hard, but she was ultimately happy with her choice and had no regrets.

Adolescents routinely receive conflicting messages about sex. Many media messages sexualize girls at young ages, and shows and books such as *Gossip Girls* assume teenagers are sexually active and, many would argue, even encourage girls to be so. Many teenagers are pressured by their partners to have sex, and peer pressure not to be the only one who has not "done it" often encourages teens to be sexually active (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005, p. 2; Norton, 2006). Many parents, abstinence-only education, and religious groups tend to teach another message: save sex for marriage, for premarital sex is risky and wrong. As Michelle Fine noted in her landmark essay in 1988, teenage voices are largely absent from the discourse about teenage sexual activity. Nearly 20 years later, Fine and McClelland (2006) noted that the problem still persisted. The discourse about adolescent sexuality and sexual activity is largely controlled by adults and ignores teens' questions, desires, and needs. Racial and sexual minorities are most hurt by this lack (Fine 1988; Fine & McClelland, 2006), but all teenagers suffer when the way sex is talked about fails to address their own experiences. By internally constructing their own perspectives on sex—either for or against it—girls are reclaiming the discourse of sexuality and attempting to take a position amidst the conflicting, confusing, and often incorrect messages about sex that they receive daily.

Physical Ideals

Girls also said that they resist social pressures to conform to particular physical ideals. Brumberg (1997) wrote that for girls in the United States:

> The body is regarded as something to be managed and maintained, usually through expenditures on clothes and personal grooming items, with special attention to exterior surfaces—skin, hair, and contours. In adolescent girls' private diaries and journals [Brumberg's data], the body is a consistent preoccupation, second only to peer relationships. (p. xxi-xxii)

A.J., Laurel, Ashlyn, Nikki, and Lindsay all specifically mentioned feeling pressure to appear in particular ways. Ashlyn told me that after moving in with some friends who were highly appearance-focused, she became much more critical of how she looked. When I asked her if she ever tries to resist the messages that encourage her to focus so strongly on her appearance, she said, "no i wouldn't know what to do." She knew she did not like the messages, but she had no idea how to resist them.

A.J. also struggled with believing she could not resist appearance messages. Before I even asked A.J. about resistance specifically, I asked her to describe herself. When I asked how she was like other girls her age, she said she was very focused on her appearance, and added, "acceptance as a lesbian is kind of weird, even in the lgbt [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trangendered/transsexual] community. you're either super butch, tom boyish, or super femme. there really isn't any in between, and i'm seeking acceptance as a super femme." Even though A.J. is seeking to fulfill the "super femme" (extremely feminine) stereotype, she still feels constrained by it. For instance, she said, "friends have said that i don't look good boyish, so i just go along with their opinions and try to stay femme […]. i'd dig it if i could gender bend sometimes." When I asked her for an example of what kind of gender bending she would like to do, she said that she wishes she could bind her chest, something many more masculine-identified women do to conceal their breasts. She noted:

> i enjoy my femininity at times but at other times i'd like to "pass" as a guy...there seems to be a lot less pressure on them to be perfect. if their shirts buttoned the wrong way, it's okay. if they make a mistake it's because they opened their mouth without thinking about their response. as a female most people see my mistakes as nothing but ignorance.

A.J. does not bind, though, and she rarely leaves her house without being in full high-femme gear. Her desired resistance is something she does not feel she can actually enact, at least not yet.

A.J. seeks to rebel against two things. First, she wants to resist the pressure she feels from the queer community to conform to a rigid gender stereotype. She desires to try out different gender presentations without her authenticity or acceptance being questioned. In many queer communities, conforming to these stereotypes counts as a type of authenticating (Holt & Griffin, 2003; Wirthlin, 2009; Zipkin, 1999). Especially because lesbianism has been commodified by the media for heterosexual males' pleasure, many people within the queer community try to determine if a self-identified LGBTQ person is "really" LGBTQ or simply a "fad" LGBTQ person (Wirthlin, 2009). If a person tries out many different kinds of gender presentations, s/he may be read as also trying out his/her sexuality and, thus, not necessarily "really queer." A.J. is responding to this pressure. Second, A.J. seeks to rebel against expectations of femininity that queer and heterosexual girls face. She perceives boys and men as having more space to try things out and test the waters, while girls and women are expected to be perfect all of the time.

While A.J. does not actually engage in this kind of resistance—she only wishes she could—her desires give insight into how she sees herself as a being shaped by those around

her. A.J. told me that her public high-femme persona is an exaggeration of her feminine attributes. She said that while she does enjoy her feminine side, she must embellish it in public if she wants to be accepted by her community. She cannot be who she feels she is because the cost of resistance is too high.

If all girls were like Ashlyn and A.J., that might bolster Pipher's (1994) hypothesis that culture's messages are simply too difficult for girls to manage. However, other girls responded differently, in ways that suggest that, even if they do not always have success, they have the ability to negotiate cultural messages that they find undesirable.

Nikki said she actively engages in resistance on "a personal level." She said, "I know what's right for me, and can reject any voices in my head saying I need to be a certain weight or type of person if I don't think it's right for me." Having loving, supportive peers and family around her is what Nikki said gives her the strength to resist these social messages to conform to ideals with which she does not identify. Lindsay transferred schools to get away from the appearance-centeredness of her classmates. Although she did not try to change or believe she could change the social standards about beauty and appearance in the school she left, resisting those messages and "being herself" had a large impact on Lindsay's quality of life. "I am myself because it's when I'm happiest. I do it for me and me alone." Because she did not think she could change an entire school, Lindsay decided to take what power she did have—over herself and her own body—and use that to resist the messages she did not like.

Laurel, also noted that resisting gender norms and expectations was a major way that she engaged in resistance. Gender is a particularly salient topic for Laurel, much as it is for A.J., since she is also queer. Like A.J., sometimes she gave in to the pressures. Laurel's

parents know that she is gay, but her mother teases her about it and often tries to force her to look more feminine. For instance, her mother sometimes insists that Laurel must dress a certain way if she wants to go out to dinner with the family. However, Laurel rebels against her mother too. I asked her to tell me about an example of resistance against her mother's feminizing:

> **Laurel:** i used to buy boxers just to irritate her. i would wear them out of the house to tell her i did what i wanted. but then i took them off in the car and put on regular stuff
>
> **kb:** so you didn't even really want to wear the boxers, you just did it to bother her? (haha)
>
> **Laurel:** hehe pretty much. she insisted i was an uber dyke and tried to change me so i wanted to show her that i did what i wanted and if i wanted to wear boxers (if only to my car) than i would
>
> **Laurel:** i did not want to wear the boxers, they were too... boyish

As she noted, Laurel did not really want to wear boxers, but she engaged in this hyperbolic gender performance in order to make a statement to her mother. Because her dad would sometimes allow her to go to dinner as long as she compromised (e.g., if she wore a nice outfit, she could forgo wearing makeup), it seems that Laurel wanted a bolder statement to show her mother that she was not conforming. Laurel resisted her mother, and she also resisted larger cultural expectations for how women should act.

These girls had varying degrees of success at resisting social messages about appearance, which is not surprising considering how ubiquitous and high-pressure these messages are. Regardless of their success at resisting or changing these messages, it is important to note that girls like Lindsay and Laurel are consciously trying to combat them.

These girls are not instantly persuaded by the messages on television, in magazines, and in film. They realize that they are being sold a standard of beauty that is problematic for them, and some of them are not buying either the message or the products it pushes. Even those who do purchase products may question the messages, which can be an important first step towards change. Quart (2003) argues in her book *Branded* that many teens have gone beyond preferring brands to internalizing them and using them to determine their and identities and self-worth. By questioning media messages, even the girls who do not actively and obviously resist the messages are beginning to resist the immense power of the media.

Political and Social Issues

Although politics were not necessarily the most frequently cited targets of resistance, many girls did care about and resist political messages.[1] The girls who did mention political and social issues most commonly focused on abortion and gay rights. Ashlyn said she is against abortion because "i just feel as if at the moment of conception there is life.. and killing it is wrong i think everything should has the right to live no matter how small it is." Taylor also thought abortion was immoral and not a fair or ethical solution to an unwanted pregnancy. Both Ashlyn and Taylor speak out against abortion by talking to family and friends about their views. Lucinda also felt passionate about abortion and had recently attended a religious youth conference that focused on abortion as a problem. (The conference also focused on the "problem" of homosexuality, but Lucinda believed "there is nothing we can really do about it. i mean those ppl choose to be like that. well maybe not choose but they sure dont look for help. and thats just who they are.") For 12 hours, the

[1] As noted previously, the data collection for this study took place in the few months before and after the 2008 presidential election in which the candidates were John McCain (R) and Barack Obama (D), a race that gained much more interest that any previous election. This timing could have played a role in the importance of politics to these girls.

attendees fasted and prayed. Lucinda went because she wanted "to make a difference […], to give an example for teenagers and women about the issue of abortion and [be] there to pray for people and nations and issues that are happening in the world." Nikki was also passionate about abortion, but unlike these girls, she was pro-choice. However, she said that her actions had been reduced to a "spectator" role, and she mostly only signed petitions and hoped for a new president.

Although Lucinda was not a proponent of gay rights, some other girls felt strongly about the need for queer rights and fair and equal treatment of gay people. Laurel, a lesbian girl, said gay rights was one of the issues she cared about; however, she also noted that she does not do anything to speak out or advance that issue. Lindsay also said she cares about gay rights, and she wants to be a political aid in the future to help address that issue. She said that she does not currently do anything specific to speak out or act towards gay rights.

It is important to note here that both Laurel and Lindsay both are relying on the prevailing view of resistance as "speaking out." These girls are examples of the many girls who have bought the popular definition that excludes private and interpersonal ways of resisting. Their subscription to and application of this definition demonstrates the pervasive power of naming: resistance has been defined as speaking out publicly and confrontationally, and these girls have accepted that and only that definition. This kind of labeling has the potential to be disempowering to girls. Because the predominant definition leaves out other forms of resisting, girls are taught to dismiss their behavior as not powerful, part of a larger problem in our culture in which girls are taught to see themselves as powerless in general.

A.J., a queer girl, is concerned and active about gay rights. She said:

> i'm voting, in my city there's an ammendment thats trying to be passed, stating that a marriage is between a male and female only. i plan on voting no. i've signed petitions, and purchased shirts that benefit the gay rights movement.

While A.J. believed her vote could make a difference, she also added that she thinks education is key to creating change. Until people are more informed, they will not be more tolerant, she said. She believed she could make a bit of difference, but doubted her ability to make overarching change culture.

The focus of resistance was not restricted to narrowly defined self-interest, for example, resisting homophobia because one is gay or lesbian. Brittany was also passionate about gay rights and recently spoke up at a church youth group meeting when the pastor preached that homosexuality is a sin. She said, "me & my friend were sticking up for the gay people, since her brother is gay. […] we said that gay people are not going to go to hell just because theyre gay." Brittany noted that while the pastor may not have listened to or responded to her, some other kids in the group did take notice of what she said, and she hoped she had changed their minds. When I asked Nikki if she engages in resistance, she said that the only issue she has felt comfortable publicly resisting is homophobia. When some students were harassing two gay students at her school, Nikki told them they were wrong and that they were being hypocritical by saying the gay students were trying to force a "gay agenda." Nikki did not want to get in trouble, though, so she kept her resistance to a minimum, according to her definition of resistance. She added:

> I've gotten more apathetic, to be honest. but [gay rights] still matter to me. I don't get too caught up in the angry protests, though. because I don't think they're affective. but if there were a parade around here I'd march in it, because those seem to make a better

point. but really I think that gay rights will be more plentiful after a new president is elected.

Like several other girls, Nikki was hopeful about a future in which change would happen and believed she would be part of that future, but she did not believe she would play an important role in making that change happen. Her doubts may be strongly influenced by her acceptance of the prevailing definition of resistance that suggests public, confrontational acts are the only thing that can effect change.

As I have noted, several girls felt strongly about political issues like abortion and gay rights. However, few of them actively advanced those issues, even in a personal, one-on-one way. Girls were much more likely to talk about things they resisted in their personal lives: drugs, alcohol, sex, and appearance messages. This does not necessarily mean that girls are apolitical—certainly some of them do care about politics and social issues. Yet it does suggest that they are particularly focused on developing their senses of self and that they may feel bombarded with messages about the self each day that they must resist before they can focus on the world beyond themselves.

Certainly, the self is not formed and identities are not (re)created in isolation from society. Interaction with others plays a major role in the creation of the self (Mead, 1934). Because of this, teenagers (and all people) create and understand their selves through relationships with particular others and the generalized other, which includes media messages. It makes sense, then, that girls such as those in this study would have to negotiate the most prominent and immediate messages they receive--those that specifically tell them how to act, look, and feel (e.g. those about drugs, alcohol, sex, and appearance) before

turning to social and political messages that are less intimately connected to their senses of self.

The girls in this study most commonly resisted drugs and alcohol, sex, and appearance messages and held political views about abortion and gay rights. These specific targets of resistance are not particularly surprising considering participants' social locations. Engaging in sex, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, and investing in feminine appearance are common pressures faced by female adolescents, and abortion and gay rights are two of the most charged political issues in the United States. Nonetheless, it is significant to note that girls acknowledge that they recognize and sometimes resist these pressures. They are aware of their interaction with the messages and when those messages are in conflict with something the teens believe, want, or do. What girls resist is only part of the picture, though. It is not enough to note that girls are identifying and often resisting common pressures and are in aware of popular political debates. We must also note *what* they are doing as they resist.

How Do Girls Resist?

Regardless of the target of resistance, girls engaged in a variety of resistance strategies. When (re)considering resistance scholars must not look at it as a monolithic thing. There are at least two components: content and form. Content refers to what girls resist whereas Form refers to how girls are resisting. Traditionally, scholars have tended to recognize only very active, collective, highly political acts of resistance. However, scholars must also consider that less overt, personal/individual, daily acts of resistance are important as well and that recognizing these allows a more complete definition of resistance. When considering both of these facets of resistance, scholars realize that the same thing may be resisted in a variety of ways and that a single form of resistance may work for many targets

of resistance. This is important because if scholars and activists want to make change and we turn only to traditional methods, we miss other possibilities to make change, other ways, and opportunities to recognize what's important to girls and how they express that.

Many feminists suggest that everyday, individual acts and transformation can change cultural structures from the ground up (Fixmer & Wood, 2005). In her essay "Becoming the Third Wave," Rebecca Walker (1992) wrote:

> To be a feminist is to integrate an ideology of equality and female empowerment into the very fiber of my life. It is to search for personal clarity in the midst of systemic destruction, to join in sisterhood with women when of-ten we are divided, to understand power structures with the intention of challenging them. While this may sound simple, it is exactly the kind of stand that many of my peers are unwilling to take. So I write this as a plea to all women, especially the women of my generation: Let [Clarence] Thomas' confirmation serve to re-mind you, as it did me, that the fight is far from over. Let this dismissal of a woman's experience move you to anger. Turn that outrage into political power. Do not vote for them unless they work for us. Do not have sex with them, do not break bread with them, do not nurture them if they don't prioritize our freedom to control our bodies and our lives. I am not a postfeminist feminist. I am the Third Wave. (p. 1)

Walker urged women and allies to refuse to cater to or act in any way that would serve people who supported patriarchy and thought the best way most people could do this was through the choices they made each day.

Some scholars (Blades & Rowe-Finkbeiner, 2006; Epstein, 2001; Henry, 2004); challenge the revolutionary potential of everyday acts, but as Wood and I note (in press),

Walker (1992) is not alone in recognizing the possibilities of everyday acts to foment change. Many other self-identified third-wave feminists also believe in the power of individual action to affect change. For example, in 1993 nine women founded the group Home Alive, a nonprofit anti-violence group that teaches self-defense classes. Home Alive was formed as "an organic response to the rape and murder of local singer Mia Zapata" (Home Alive, 2009a). Home Alive was created as a response to a specific violent crime and it focuses on individual education, but it also sees itself as part of a larger picture. Home Alive seeks to be part of a cultural shift that helps create better conditions for living for all people, of which their work is a key part. The zines created by girls and women in the 1990s, sought to "tackle important issues for girls, like body image, sexuality, and violence" and to challenge "the boundaries of a genre" (Home Alive, 2009b) by using a "grassroots approach to publishing" (Home Alive, 2009b) that exempted their publications from the censorship, misogyny, and high cost of mainstream magazine publishing. These publications were made with basic word-processors, a copying machine, and scissors and glue, often on the floors of girls' bedrooms (Monem, 2007). Feminists still work today to collect and create them so that underground messages with important information for girls can still circulate (e.g., see http://www.myspace.com/genderbentzine; Green & Taormino, 1997). These people believe that everyday acts have power and that they way each person individually interacts with other people and structures can impact larger systems.

Everyday acts of resistance can challenge social norms, others, and the self. Mead (1934) argues that society "gets into the self" through interaction with others. When we change ourselves, we change our interactions with others; in turn, this changes how society acts toward us and others. In addition, we may change what "society" is. I have detailed

previously targets of resistance for girls in this study. Just as what they resisted varied, so too did their methods of resisting. The most common forms of resistance reported by participants were (a) focusing on being one's self and pursuing one's own goals, (b) escaping by creating a fantasy/alternative world or leaving the problem, and (c) mentoring others to create change, all of which were forms of everyday resistance.

Pursuing Goals and Being One's Self

In the pilot study I conducted, all of the girls said that they are very focused on pursuing their own goals and being themselves, so I was not surprised when the girls in this study also talked about setting goals and finding or being themselves as essential to their ability to engage in resistance. For these girls, doing these things is a type of resistance that grows out of their goals and their senses of identity. They construct a self either in opposition to things they do want but know they should not have/do or against things they do not want to be or do. Rachael is a good example of someone who engaged in resistance by focusing on her own goals and desires. Rachael noted that the biggest thing she has to resist in her life is the pressure to do drugs and drink alcohol. Rachael is from a poor family in North Carolina and has had limited educational and social opportunities. She lives in a mobile home with her mother and attends community college. Rachael engaged in resistance by actively pursuing her goal of becoming a medical sonographer. She has a strong anti-drug stance, especially after seeing her father struggle with addiction his whole life. Rather than lecturing her friends and family about drugs and alcohol, she instead made other choices. Rachael believes that by resisting drugs and alcohol and staying focused on school, she will be able to change the path that many thought she would be destined to follow: having at most a high-school education, staying in her hometown, and never having many opportunities for

success and happiness. She said, "i wanna be able to support my future family and give them what i never had." Each day, Rachael combats the stereotypes of a working-class girl from a small, rural southern town and seeks to chart a different future for herself.

Rachael applies this same strategy to resisting racism. Rachael is white, and her fiancé is black. When they go out together, they regularly receive disapproving looks and comments about their interracial relationship. Her father has disowned her for dating a black man. Despite these criticisms, Rachael continues to stay in her interracial relationship because, as she said, "i love him [☺] and he loves me, and makes me the happiest person in the world. and it's my life and not anyone elses." When she received racist comments about a MySpace profile picture of her and her fiancé, she left the picture up anyway. Rachael does not tend to respond directly to these attacks, but she does not let them influence her relationship choices either. Moreover, her choice to leave the photo on her page suggests that she refuses to bow to the disapproving commenter and others who share the commenter's views. Rachael continues to pursue her relationship with her fiancé because she believes it is right for her.

At first, one might not consider what Rachael is doing to be resistance. For instance, in the racism example, she does not say anything to those who berate her, she is not part of any diversity initiatives, and she does not mention even supporting something like affirmative action. However, I argue that Rachael is resisting. By refusing to give into the racist beliefs of her community and continuing to pursue publicly her relationship with her fiancé, Rachael sends the message that she does not agree with that racist perspective. Equally important, she remains true to her own values and sense of identity. Being in an

interracial relationship in a small, rural town in the south is not an easy task, but, as Rachael says, love is more important to her than the prejudice of others.

Alisha uses this same strategy: pursuing what feels right for her in the face of criticism. Her friends want her to stay near home and go to the nearby four-year college, which has accepted her. Instead, she is moving from Connecticut to California to attend a community college there. She said:

> i think i'll be much happier over there and this is an opportunity to get away from [Connecticut] bcus personally i think it's boring here (i luv my friends and family and all) but i dnt want to stay here."

Like many other high school seniors, Alisha feels a great deal of pressure to make the "right" choice after graduation. Some people look down on her choice of a community college rather than a four-year university, and some people find it even more foolish that she would move across the country where she has no friends to attend a two-year school. Additionally, one could look at Alisha's situation and say that choosing a college is hardly an act of resistance, but I argue that it is. Alisha wants to see a different part of the country and live with relatives she seldom sees. Having this new experience is very important to her, and she is determined to do it despite the pressure from her friends, a pressure that is especially strong during teenage years. As an immigrant to the U.S. who has struggled to succeed socially and financially, moving across the country is a hard choice for Alisha. Remaining strong in her convictions in the face of pressure is an example she offers as resisting the pressure to make a safe, easy, conforming choice.

Lucinda, who was raised by her grandparents, resisted some of the rules her family had for her, such as those about dating and drinking alcohol. Like Rachael and Alisha, she

made her own choices despite what others wanted her to do. Lucinda's resistance, because it was against rules laid out by her caregivers, looks like typical teenage rebellion. For example, her grandparents did not want her to date before she turned 18 or have sex before marriage, but she decided to do both anyway. However, upon closer reflection, her actions are more complex. She noted, for example, that she still set boundaries for herself, not dating too much or rushing into sex in her relationships. In this way, Lucinda rejected her grandparents' rules and set her own limits that felt right for her. She evaluated her cultural and familial rules and, rather than accepting or rejecting them in their entirety, she adjusted them to fit her own circumstances.

Kayleigh also engaged in resistance by working hard to be herself. One of the first things I asked Kayleigh was to describe herself. She provided a physical description, said that she has a "crazy" personality and then wrote, "i suffer from borderline personality disorder and refuse to take the medication because it makes me not feel anything.. because of this i have my bad days and struggles, but being myself means more." Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is generally characterized by erratic behavior and "a pervasive pattern of instability of interpersonal relationships, self-image, and affects, and marked impulsivity" (American Psychiatric Association [*DSM-IV-TR*], 2000, p. 706). Kayleigh values this characteristic and sees it in a more positive light, as spontaneous and fun, even while she knows it can cause problems. As she noted, the medication makes her numb to her feelings and experiences, and she hates that.

Kayleigh was diagnosed with BPD during a six-day hospital stay after she had dangerously injured herself by cutting her wrist (not her first time self injuring, she noted). She took her medication for a while, but she hated its side effects:

> when i was on my meds i didnt laugh.. i didnt have the energy to play with my younger siblings or go out with my friends.. i didnt even write anymore which had been a passion of mine. i guess being myself is embracing my 'craziness' sometimes i get to wild and make big mistakes but my friends are there to help me through it. i think that everyone has a struggle to define themselves, reguardless of age and it bothered me that when someone would ask me a question about my favorie poet or band i realized that i didnt know so i began to focous on myself. i know what i like and dislike, and what values i have. to me being myself is living by the quote of jefree star "the only way to find true haPpiness is to risk being completly cut open."

What this quote means to Kayleigh is that sometimes she has to experience the negative parts of her BPD in order to also experience the positive parts of her personality.

At first, her family and friends were strongly opposed to Kayleigh's desire to get off of her medication, and her mother enlisted her friends and other family members to make sure she was taking the pills. Not only did she hate their side effects, but she found this surveillance humiliating. She responded by taking all of the remaining pills at once, which she insists was not a suicide attempt, but an effort to sleep and stop thinking about the medication. After throwing up the pills, she refused to use the medication. Despite her family and friends' disapproval, Kayleigh was committed to staying off the medication. She said, "they all told me it was stupid and a big mistake but i took that as a challenge to prove them wrong and i did." She decided to slowly wean herself off and is happy with the result. She has not self-injured since getting off the medication, and even though she has days during which she feels emotionally and mentally unstable, she feels much more alive and alert.

These girls' stories provide rich examples of girls pursing their dreams and goals and seeking to find and remain true to the selves that they believe they are or that the want to be, whatever that might mean to them. Equally important, the girls in this study give us clear examples of how they engage in resistance. The girls I discussed here did not pursue self-discovery in a social vacuum. They also actively constructed and reconstructed themselves with, through, and against messages that encouraged conformity to ideals they either did not agree with or knew were not right for them. In this way, staying "true" to one's self functions as a type of resistance. Because the self arises through communication with others (Mead, 1934), it is not surprising that girls construct themselves in relation to, including resistance to, messages from particular and generalized others. However, there is insight to be gained both about resistance and the self when we look at this self-construction as a type of resistance. Some of the girls in this study doubted their power to have impact on culture as a whole, but they knew that there were messages that were not right for them. Sometimes in combination with other efforts, sometimes alone, and sometimes as a first step, these girls addressed these messages where they could: in the ways they constructed and maintained their selves. They literally put their bodies on the line to resist pressures to do and be things that they did not want or felt were wrong for them.

Escaping

Some girls with whom I spoke used escapism as a means of resistance. They created alternative worlds in which things that were not possible in real life could exist. Lindsay is a writer. She writes about people in situations that are similar to her life, but she does not like to write about herself. When I asked her why, she replied by saying in her own life she "can't manipulate the situation and know the outcome" but in writing fiction, she can. I asked

Lindsay if her characters in her stories do anything she cannot do in her own life, and she said, “yes, they find love.” Lindsay escapes her “real” life, over which she feels she has little control, and enters a world in which she is the ultimate decider, knowing the ending before she puts pen to paper, and changing it if she chooses. Even the characters in her stories indicate her desire to have more control. A “perfect” man in her writing is one who can be “manipulated and controlled by a woman.” Through her writing, Lindsay creates worlds in which she can exercise power. Brittany described a similar relationship with her writing. It was the sole thing she noted about which she feels passionate.

Lindsay also used escape in a different, more literal way. When she was thirteen, she hated her school. She believed that in order to be popular, one had to eliminate all uniqueness and conform to a very stereotypical image, wearing brand-name clothes and listening only to very specific music. Lindsay said, **“**I hated it there. I hated everyone, I was miserable, my grades were slipping, and I seriously think that if i hadn't left my middle school I would either be dead or in rehab.” She asked to transfer schools, and when her parents and counselors were not sure she should, she spent hours of her own time collecting information and records to make a case to her mother. She begged her mother to allow her to go to a magnet school, a school that offers a full curriculum with a focus on a particular interest, such as art or science. At her new school, Lindsay instantly felt at home. She wrote, “when I got to the magnet school...it was so easy to be myself.” For Lindsay, trying to be “herself” at her first school was impossible. She did not want to be without friends, and she strongly believed that the only way she could be liked was to conform. However, she was unwilling to do that long-term, so she moved to a school in which she felt more comfortable.

It would be easy to dismiss escaping as a cop out, a strategy for those who are not

willing or able to make change to the original system. However, another reading is possible. Lindsay saw a situation that was not working for her, and made an active choice to change it, going behind her parents' back to collect information about transferring. She worked hard to craft a persuasive argument to move schools where she would be with an entire group of people who were rejecting the image-conscious, racist, classist norms of the school she had been attending.

Callie, the Las Vegas native who fights to resist the mean, cold, materialistic persona that she thinks the city promotes, used perhaps the most creative resistance strategy of all the girls. Her strategy was a combination of working to find out who she was and what she wanted (rather than accepting others' opinions at face value) and escapism. When I asked her what she did to try to resist becoming someone she did not want to be, she said:

> [I use] creative visualization, which is what i told you before how i blast something hard and messed up [music such as Radiohead or Prodigy, English alternative rock and electronic bands] and mix it with something light [such as *My Little Pony* or *Barbie Utopia*, cartoons for young children] and innocent. but not just that, you know, i'm always trying to find new ways to identify myself, whatever gets me going and thinking. part of the reason why i don't have a job is because i just don't think i could handle it. i couldn't handle people, not the ones here anyway, because i feel like it'd change me when i'm already so confused as to who i am.. but one thing is for sure, i don't want to become something i'm not and adopt mediocrity into my life.

As she said, Callie does not work, and she has not yet started college. When I asked her what she does with her days, she said that she socializes with friends and family but that she also realized she had a great deal of time on her hands and decided to use it to learn more about

who she is and what she wants in life. For Callie, making an active effort to learn about who she is and wants to be is a form of resistance to the homogenizing, negative pressure she believes Las Vegas puts on people. When I asked her what she wants to do with her life, she said:

> i want to be an x-ray technician because i'm very interested in medicine and want to help in any way possible. i can't stand blood and guts, i can't, so i could never be a nurse. and if i were a bit smarter with science, i'd love to do research (specifically stem cells. i'd move to f'ing amsterdam if i had to.) […] my mom was a quadriplegic, so from a very young.. my sister and i took care of her. that, coupled with the fact that i've always wanted to reach out and help the suffering, made me want to do x-ray tech. i love medicine because it's ever evolving, that field.. you'll learn something new all the time.. and i could NEVER have a boring job, no way in hell.

Engaging in creative visualization is a kind of escapism, but not one that ends in a fantasyland. Instead, Callie's visualizing has led her to realize her strengths and helped her to discover that, unless she wants to continue to see herself become someone she does not feel she is (cold-hearted and closed-off to others), she must leave Las Vegas, both of which are important realizations for her.

Lindsay, Brittany, and Callie represent engagement in a kind of resistance that would never be recognized by traditional models of resistance. As Driscoll (2002) notes, many of girls' activities are "not spectacular" and are often "even invisible" (p. 258). Escaping as a type of resistance represents this latter description. It would never be televised on the news or written about in a newspaper; it might not even be seen or recognized by others, but it does represent a pushing back against a pressure and a move away from that pressure. When

these girls were confronted with situations they did not believe they could change, they altered what they could: themselves or their presence in the situations. They created situations in which they could learn about themselves and continue to grow and thrive, thus keeping open the possibility that later they might be more empowered to resist the situation in more direct ways.

As I have noted previously, the self is, and is in, a process. For some girls, escaping and even identifying targets of resistance that one cannot yet actually resist is a step in the process of gaining and using voice, which in turn is a step in enacting resistance. This interpretation asks us to question resistance as a binary—either one resists or does not resist—and instead to consider it as a process. If resistance is defined only as something one does or does not do, we miss the points in the process that may not be as easily identified. I noted previously (in the section about what girls resist) that sometimes people must resist the most pressing or immediate stressors in their lives before they can choose targets of resistance that are less intimately connected to their identities. By recognizing resistance that is very personal and identity-focused, scholars and activists broaden our perspective on what resistance is and how it works. Likewise, when we understand that one is not either engaging in resistance or conforming and see that there are other possibilities and steps, we can begin to explore further how resistance functions and its relationship to the self.

Mentoring/Making a Difference in Others' Lives

Many of the girls in this study resisted cultural, familial, and social messages that they did not like by trying to make a difference in the lives of others on an individual level. Many of these girls had gone through difficulties that they did not want to see others face. The best way they knew to change the system they disliked was to help empower others to resist it as

well. With the combined power of individual acts of resistance, perhaps the larger structures would crumble. For example, unlike some girls who thought world issues were too large to take on, Alisha said that if she could change something about the world, she would want to see more "peace and less hate." She believes in the power of individuals to make that happen: "show every1 the respect they deserve and b there for one another becus we all can help eachother if we worked together." Alisha's comment may seem general, but she really believed that individual acts of kindness could improve the world.

Olivia also sought to change the lives of others by her interpersonal interactions. A prominent member of her family's church molested Olivia's brother. Because of her brother's experience, child molestation and rape are issues about which she feels passionate. She wrote, "i hope that every victim has the will to become something greater then their perps, and that there are people out there to help them, and that it does get better." Olivia is one of those people who is "out there to help." First, she is part of an important support system for her brother. He started doing drugs and drinking heavily after the abuse was made public. Olivia made the tough decision to turn down attending a prominent college in California in order to live at home with her family in the hope of providing more stability and support for her brother: "to help him out and to make him feel safe." Second, Olivia helps other victims of sexual violence:

> i have helped a lot of kids come out about those issues. […] i work with a lot of kids [through Camp Fire USA], and i have friends, and my brothers friends that always come to me about their problems...especially those kind of problems. i have been able to get them to tell their parents, tell the police.

The most obvious and accessible way that Olivia had to address the issue of child sexual

abuse was through her interactions with the individual people she knew. The fact that several children came to her about being abused demonstrates that Olivia's strategy was effective in helping victims of abuse. Children clearly know that they can trust her with information they have not felt comfortable sharing with others. Olivia believes in the power her relationships have to create change. Olivia also quit smoking in order to be an example to her younger brothers and to the children she works with in her role as a camp counselor.

Kayleigh was concerned about her younger sisters because of how much she believes the media and our culture in general sexualize girls. She wrote:

> i just dont think people realize how much pressure there is on young women to have sex.. i mean i knew what sex was and i thought i knew how to have safe sex but i was wrong.. by the time i was 18 i was in such a hurry to grow up i started dating an older guy and next thing i know i'm in a doctors office being told i had herpes.. i dont want other young girls to go through that.

Learning she had a sexually transmitted disease was a reality check for Kayleigh. She did not want to continue to be pressured by general and specific others to engage in behavior she did not actually enjoy. Even more, she did not want her sisters to experience the pressure to have sex before they were ready, something she believes sexualizing young girls in the media encourages.

Kayleigh worried because her younger sisters want all the toys they see on television commercials, and she tries to restrict what they can buy. For example, she does not let them have Bratz dolls,[2] and her parents support her opinion. Kayleigh does not just restrict what her sisters can purchase, though. She works to educate them and encourage them to seek

[2] Bratz are fashion dolls that are "often outfitted in provocatively cut outfits that resemble those worn by pop stars" (Hains, 2008, p. 201).

other role models. When her sisters ask for toys such as Bratz, she tries to help them understand why she does not think they are good toys for them:

> i ask them why they want it and they say because it's on tv and i explain to them that the clothes the bratz dolls wear are not clothes that girls should be wearing.. it usually helps when i point out that i dont dress like that since they look up to me.. i was in a huge rush to grow up and i think if my older sisters had talked to me more i wouldnt have to deal with life changing mistakes i made

Kayleigh, like Olivia, wanted to empower the young people who looked up to her to make change in their own lives and to make their own decisions.

Serving as a role model to others is the most other-centered strategy in which girls in this study noted that they engage. The girls who sought to mentor others hoped to use the lessons they had learned to empower other people to make better choices that would leave them happier. Kayleigh, for instance, knew that it was unlikely that she alone could not convince MGA Entertainment to discontinue the Bratz line and certainly could not stop the media from sexualizing children. What she could do was teach her little sisters that they had other options for toys, role models, and their own choice of clothing. As they continue to grow, she wants to continue to mentor them, giving them the messages about sex, relationships, femininity and self-confidence that she felt were missing from her life. These girls believed in the power of creating a generation of kids who knew how to resist, respond, and recover from the damaging messages and experiences in our culture.

Having, prioritizing, and reminding one's self (what Mead [1934] called self-indicating) of one's goals and being one's self, escaping, and mentoring are three ways that girls engage in resistance. Certainly they are not the only modes of resistance that are being

enacted and that are possible. However, these three are significant because they represent the kind of resistance that McRobbie and Garber (1976/2000) and Driscoll (2002) note have been left out of studies of youth culture. They show us possibilities of resistance that have been largely unexplored, especially among girls.

(Re)conceptualizing Resistance

As Robbins (2006) noted, girls are faced with a barrage of messages that encourage them to figure out who they are and what their future will be. Robbins interviewed students who were high academic achievers, but, as she noted, this achievement-focused culture affects the lives of all teenagers by placing teenagers in a hypercompetitive atmosphere for success in which getting good grades, having a job, excelling at sports, and participating in a variety of extracurricular activities are requirements. Early application processes, the SAT, Preliminary SAT, a new test called RediStep (unaffectionately termed the pre-pre-SAT), and other college- and career-preparatory services for teenagers ask students to determine sooner and sooner what they will do after graduation, what college they will attend (for all successful people attend college), and what they will be. These pressures, combined with media, peer, and familial messages about how one looks and how one ought to engage in social relationships, place an incredible amount of pressure on girls to figure out who they are and present a consistent self to the world.

Western society teaches people—especially girls—thousands of rules and regulations for living, something Foucault (1977) calls *disciplining* of the self (cf. Bartky, 1990, 1997). Even more, society teaches girls to internalize this disciplining by applying the rules not just to how they look but also to the inner most portions of their selves: their emotions, personality, thoughts, and ideas, what he calls *technologies of the self* (Foucault, 1980).

Because we are taught so rigidly to conform and control ourselves, it makes sense that we must also be taught to resist. When we as activists and scholars better understand resistance and recognize the many facets of it rather than limiting it to a narrow set of actions that one performs or does not, we can better understand how to resist and also encourage girls as they engage in the process of resisting. In the final chapter, I develop the implications of recognizing the processual character of resistance and appreciating the extent to which many girls do assume an active stance in response to messages that barrage them.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Dictionary.com defines[1] resistance as "(1) the act or power of resisting, opposing, or withstanding; (2) the opposition offered by one thing, force, etc., to another." Somewhat similarly, Merriam-Webster defines the term as (1a) an act or instance of resisting: opposition (1b) a means of resisting […] (3) an opposing or retarding force" (merriam-webster.com). The first definition in each dictionary labels resistance as an "act." In all of these definitions other than Merriam-Webster's 1b, resistance is in response to a specific force of opposition.

Many social movement and social justice readers and textbooks and studies of resistance avoid defining resistance. In Stewart, Smith, and Denton's (2007) textbook *Persuasion and Social Movements,* resistance is used pejoratively to describe movements that "see institutions as unwilling or unable to respond to grievous threats to social norms and values. Some … claim that institutions actively compromise norms and values" (p. 18). They add later, "Resistance movements view the present as a paradise achieved and see social movements and institutions as threats to this way of life, a return to a primitive past or journey to a future devoid of all that is sacred" (p. 58). In this text, anti-feminist movements and conservative religious movements are key examples of resistance movements. Resistance is associated with groups that work against progressive politics and ideas. The tone of the text suggests that these movements impede progress. In Stewart et al.'s text, as

[1] I have excluded the definitions that specifically refer to electrical currents or psychological responses to treatment.

well as others that do not explicitly define resistance (e.g. della Porta & Diani, 1999; Kendall, 1998), the term is used to describe movements and acts that oppose another movement, another external force.

These definitions—both the dictionary entries and social movement texts' explicit and implicit definitions—frame resistance as an external act performed as a response to an external force. Yet these definitions give us only part of the picture of resistance. As Garber and McRobbie (1976/2000) noted, youth studies prior to the mid-1970s defined resistance as something only boys could do because public resistance was a necessary act for a subculture, and only boys were described as being able to create and be part of subculture. At the end of their essay, Garber and McRobbie argue that girls may engage in "a different type of resistance," but this new kind of resistance has yet to be extensively theorized or studied.

I argue in this dissertation that scholars, activists, parents, other adults, and adolescents must embrace more comprehensive definitions of both voice and resistance. Doing so has important implications, and I will discuss those implications.

(Re)Conceptualizing Voice and Resistance

Naming is one of the most powerful things human beings can do. When we name something, we indicate that it is important and we shape how we think about it (Spender 1984a, 1984b). The names and definitions we use provide lenses through which to see and attribute meaning to phenomenon. Like all theories and all perspectives, they allow to us to see some things and constrain us from seeing others. In her book *Reflections on Gender and Science*, Evelyn Fox Keller (1985) tells the story of Barbara McClintock, a geneticist who was intimately connected to her study of corn and felt a deep connection with the kernels. McClintock saw the "abnormal" colors of corn and sought to determine why they were

different rather than, as was traditionally done, only focusing on the clearer, more logical patterns. This led McClintock to discover genetic transposition, a monumental breakthrough in genetics. As Keller wrote:

> Seeing something that does not appear to fit is, to [McClintock], a challenge to find the larger multidimensional pattern into which it does fit. Anomalous kernels of corn were evidence not of disorder or lawlessness, but of a larger system of order, one that cannot be reduced to a single law. (p. 163-164)

Because other geneticists relied on models that defined corn as behaving in specific ways, they ignored the anomalies, regarding them as deviations from the model that shaped their understanding of corn. McClintock paid attention to these differences and discovered a larger picture in which they made sense.

Similar to McClintock's colleagues, scholars of youth studies have had a tendency to dismiss as irrelevant actions, people, and other phenomena that do not fit within a given definition of a concept. Girls' voices and resistance have traditionally been left out of studies of youth culture because their actions and thoughts did not fit the prevailing definitions (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; McRobbie & Garber, 1976/2000). Thus, existing definitions of voice and resistance have, like much of our language, prized men's perspectives and experiences (Spender, 2004a). Rather than dismissing them, scholars and other adults must explore girls' voices and resistance to see what they can teach us about those concepts and about girls themselves.

Definitions of voice and resistance are part of the discourse about youth culture. Foucault (1977) taught that discourses are written on bodies and power is enacted through those bodies. He wrote:

> Discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, "docile" bodies. […] In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an "aptitude," a "capacity," which seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection. (p. 138)

As Bartky (1990, 1997), Bordo (1997), and Harris (2004a) noted, female bodies are highly disciplined in Western culture as ideal citizenship and subjectivity are taught to and forced upon girls and women. This disciplining shapes how girls and women think about voice and resistance. They are taught that there is a single correct way to think, correct way to speak, correct way to act for girls and women. The prevailing definitions of voice and resistance emerge out of and reinscribe this same discourse. As Spender (1984a) noted, the accepted norms and meanings we give to language "have a habit of becoming self-validating and self-perpetuating" (p. 3). The predominant, androcentric, limited definitions of voice and resistance frame certain kinds of speaking and doing as powerful and others as not, generally placing girls' thoughts, words, and actions in the latter category.

When girls internalize a definition of voice that is limited to having ideas approved by others and sharing them in ways that will be accepted by others, it is likely that they will shape their comments to fit that perspective. Moreover, continuing to dismiss their own ideas in favor of socially acceptable ones teaches them that their own perspectives are not valid or valuable. This kind of constraint has the potential to affect not only what they share but what they think. Just as Foucault insisted, power and control play out on the body until the individual has become docile, functioning only for the system's interests. The process he describes is a distinct possibility when voice is restricted to a limited set of acts. However,

when voice is seen as a process, one can begin to see the parts of voice that are often not visible. Voice cannot be reduced to a single fixed act, but rather a process of self-discovery and contemplation that begins before the moment of and may not even include a vocal utterance.

Like voice, resistance must also been seen as a process, not only single acts of reverse action against an external target for external gain. Just as internalizing a limited definition of voice can constrain girls' voices, so too can internalizing a limited definition of resistance limit possibilities of and for resistance. This study challenges limited definitions of resistance and identifies foci and forms of resistance used by girls. First, by examining some of the many targets of girls' resistance, this study shows that resistance is not always motivated by something outside of one's self. Resistance may be externally motivated but it may also emerge from internal factors. Second, by noting the ways girls resist, this study demonstrates that reverse action is only one possible way to engage in resistance. Some girls in this study simply did the opposite of what they were told to do, but other girls forged their own paths. They worked to define new terms and possibilities instead of accepting those offered to them. In Foucault's (1977) terms, they drew upon, combined, and created other discourses that helped them have more possibilities for action. Third, the statements of girls who participated in this study assert that resistance is not only action. It is a process that may include actions but is not limited to them.

Voice and Resistance as Processes: Historical Examples and Current Considerations

As I noted, the girls in this project described both voice and resistance in ways that focus attention on an important point: they are processes. Certainly, one can demonstrate her voice by thinking something, saying it out loud, or having it heard and responded to by

others. A girl can resist with a decisive action. However, this is not where resistance or voice necessarily begins or ends. Both are processes that go beyond the immediate moment of action. This perspective on resistance and voice as processes is not necessarily new; however, it has not been highlighted in scholarship on resistance. Two historical examples demonstrate how resistance is often (if not always) a process, even though its story is told through acts.

Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. is widely respected in the United States as an effective resister of racism. King's nonviolent philosophy resulted in many powerful speeches, mobilized thousands, and was an integral part of the Civil Rights Movement (thekingcenter.org). King did not emerge out of a vacuum. Scholars of King know that he had extensive religious training, studied Gandhi's life and work, and read extensively (King & Carson, 1998). He was deeply influenced by his parents, and he developed his philosophy out of his education and meditation (King & Carson). If one asks for examples of King's engagement in resistance, she or he is likely to highlight events such as the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott or the 1963 March on Washington. Certainly, these are key parts of King's resistance; however, they are not all of it. The nights he spent studying his influences, his speeches, the personal conversations he had with individuals are also part of his resistance. His childhood experiences and his love for his family also play a role in his resistance. If resistance is limited to only focusing on major acts, the context in which those acts occur is obscured.

Susan B. Anthony provides another illustrative case of resistance as a process. Students who learn about Anthony in their textbooks or those who view her entry in

Wikipedia[2] may learn that, with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, she organized the Seneca Falls convention, which produced the Declaration of Sentiments, a document that rewrote portions of the U.S. Constitution using gender-inclusive language and outlined the rights women should have (Wood, 2009). Those researching Anthony may also learn that she played a key role in helping create and pass the New York State Married Women's Property bill, an act that allowed women to own possessions and property while married (susanbanthonyhouse.org). Anthony did do these things, both of which were important in increasing women's rights in the United States. However, what textbooks and online profiles often do not highlight is the influence Anthony's parents and education had upon her and the many conversations she had with others about her views on women's rights. Anthony's father, an abolitionist, he removed her from public school when he did not think she was being sufficiently challenged and believed she was being discriminated against because of her sex. In homeschooling, she learned a great deal about gender and racial inequality. Her friendships and conversations with other women's rights activists like Stanton and Lucretia Coffin Mott also shaped her ideas in important ways. However, this information is often missing, left out in favor of highlighting only her work that directly produced or took the form of organizations, documents, and protests. Anthony did not simply emerge at moments in time as a resister who acted in dramatic ways, but, rather, was constantly engaged in a process of resistance.

Like King and Anthony, so too are girls (and women, men, and boys) engaged in a *process* of resistance and *process* of developing and using their voices. There has been a tendency in scholarship to focus on only the target, only the mode, or only the effect of

[2] I include Wikipedia here not to suggest that is a comprehensive or reliable source, but rather because it is a frequently and widely-used resource.

resistance, and the effect has tended to be viewed only on a macro-scale that looks at how that target of resistance has changed without examining how the resister changes as well. I believe and the girls in this study demonstrate that it is important to look at resistance from a variety of perspectives. If scholars, parents, and adolescents only look at *what* girls are resisting, we miss the possibility to see the many ways that target may be resisted. For example, several of the girls in this study resisted drugs. Some resisted drugs by completely avoiding people who used illegal drugs. Others "just said no" when in the presence of drugs. Still others gave into their temptations at times but set limits for their behavior.

These insights about voice and resistance contribute to the growing body of scholarship in girls' studies. McRobbie and Garber (1976) and Gilligan (1982) turned our attention to voice and resistance in girls' lives, and scholars and activists continue to seek more nuanced understanding of girls' thoughts and behavior. This work is significant because it expands the questions about voice and resistance and helps to counter the homogenizing claims about girls that often leave out the perspectives of girls who are not white, heterosexual, and middle class. This project demonstrates that there are important questions about voice beyond who has it and who does not. This study provides insight into the processes girls use to gain and use voice. These girls noted that voice can be something fully internal. Olivia represented this perspective well when she said she does not have to share her ideas to be someone who has important thoughts and passion. Other girls said that voice means sharing one's thoughts. These girls did not necessarily need to have their ideas embraced by others to count as having a voice because, for them, "speaking their mind" was sufficient. Still other girls, A.J. and Lindsay for example, demonstrated that many girls have internalized the prevailing definition of voice that requires one's ideas to be made public and

taken seriously by others to count. These three definitions teach us that voice cannot be only defined as a single act of acceptable vocalization of thought.

This study also provides insight into girls' definitions and enactments of resistance. Girls in this study noted that resistance may be internally or externally motivated. They pointed out many common targets for their resistance: messages about drugs and alcohol, sexual activity, and physical appearance. They also indicated many ways in which they perform resistance: setting goals and being themselves, escaping, and mentoring others. These motivations, targets, and modes of resistance are not an exhaustive list of the possibilities for resistance; however, they demonstrate that resistance is multidimensional, not only restricted to reverse action towards an external force for external gain.

Some scholars critique girls for being apolitical and uninterested in national and international issues. This study suggests that before girls can resist problematic messages on a larger scale they may first need to manage the intense and ubiquitous messages they face each day that tell them who they should be, how they should look and act, and what they should think. The targets of these girls' resistance were personal. By seeing these personal acts of resistance as important, scholars, parents, and teachers can begin to see they ways in which girls are already critically engaging with the world. Although I do not believe that public, political resistance is the preferred or most idealized mode of resistance, I do think it is valuable, and recognizing the modes and motivations for personal resistance provides insight into how adults and other teenagers can help young people to resist a variety of messages.

Despite the productive research in girls' studies thus far, scholars like Ladner (1991, 2003), Harris (2004a), Steenbergen, Jiwani, and Mitchell (2005), and others note that

analyses have primarily focused on white, middle- and upper-class, heterosexual girls. This study contributes to the research that seeks to be more inclusive about the use of girl while at the same time seeking to avoid assuming that all girls' experiences are the same. This project included girls of various races, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic statuses. The claims I make here about voice and resistance are informed by a diverse set of girls' perspectives. They suggest that the prevailing models of voice and resistance do not fit for all girls, and they provide alternative conceptions that reflect a diverse set of experiences.

Where Do We Go from Here?

As with many studies, this project raises more questions than it answers. These girls' comments provide a rich set of perspectives that give insight into the concepts of voice and resistance. Driscoll (2002) wrote, "The marginalization of girls in relation to Subjectivity, and ethical and political agency, constitutes a productive place from which to consider the contemporary repetition and reformulation of those models for the modern self in the modern world" (p. 305). Through this project I sought and continue to seek to do just that. By examining the possibilities of voice and resistance, we also discover possibilities for the self.

Future Directions for Research

This study lays the groundwork for other potential research. Here I discuss possible modifications of this specific study and possible future research on (a) development of voice, (b) resistance and self-work, and (c) resistance and voice as processes. These are only a selection of the many possible projects that could emerge from this dissertation.

This study provided insight into the concepts of voice and resistance utilizing online recruiting and interviewing. Future research could engage the same research questions from which this project began using different methods. The interviews I conducted were

interesting and informative. However, I found it challenging to get some interviewees to understand my questions and provide lengthy responses. I often felt that they interacted with me as if I was a survey, not an interviewer. Sometimes I had success with breaking through this barrier once I asked them to tell me a story or elaborate on an example. In future research, I might start by asking participants to tell me a story rather than asking simple questions.

Adjusting the communication channel could also potentially evoke more in-depth responses. In this study I used instant messaging to communicate with participants, a synchronous channel in which communicators exchange messages immediately and sometimes concurrently. Synchronous communication channels are useful because they allow for more immediate feedback, providing the opportunity to ask the participant to extend or clarify something she said. The interviewer has more control over the direction the interview takes because s/he can adjust questions to keep the conversation focused in the way s/he chooses. However, asynchronous communication also offers benefits that could help enhance this study. Through an asynchronous channel, such as email, participants would have longer to contemplate responses and could answer at more convenient times. They could revise their statements before sending them. Sometimes this ability to reflect upon responses can produce more thoughtful replies. Of course, it also has the potential for increased censorship since participants can edit themselves more easily, without the interviewer's awareness. In a future study, using asynchronous communication (either in place of or in addition to synchronous communication) might help provide a fuller picture of girls' perspectives.

The final potential methodological adjustment concerns recruitment. As I describe more fully in chapter 3, the challenges I faced in recruitment led me to interview 18- and 19-year-old girls. The younger girls I spoke with were reluctant to ask their parents' for permission to participate. Although speaking with older teenage girls increases our understanding of girls' voices and resistance, younger girls' opinions and experiences are also important. To reach this younger population, researchers (including myself) may want to consider recruiting first through parents rather than daughters. Asking parents for permission for their daughters to participate helps eliminate the hesitance many girls might feel. In order to ensure girls' privacy, it would be especially important to ask parents to sign a confidentiality agreement, noting that they will not ask or force their daughters or the researcher to disclose the content of their interviews.

This study focused on two major concepts: voice and resistance. However, each topic alone is a rich field for investigation. Although many girls' studies scholars have theorized about girls' voices, there is still little research that asks girls to talk about how they develop their voices. In this study I asked what it meant to girls to have a voice. Future research could ask girls, for example, about the influence on their voices, how they perceive their voices to have changed over time, and the potential impact they see of having a voice.

In this project I began to explore with these girls how resistance related to their self-concepts and their ongoing work of self-making. However, there is more to learn about the connection between resistance and self. Most of the girls in this study offered insight into how resistance affected and was affected by their self-concepts. They noted occasions on which they developed new opportunities for action rather than simply engaging in resistance as reverse-action to a directive. What I did not learn from this study is in-depth

understanding of how they developed these alternative paths. For example, Laurel's mother imposed a heterosexual feminine ideal upon Laurel when she insisted that Laurel wear dresses and makeup. Instead of only refusing to wear the specific clothing and beauty items, Laurel also resisted her mother by wearing boxers, something she (Laurel) did not even like. However, Laurel did not discuss in detail how or why she developed this strategy and the meaning she attributed to it. Future work could ask participants to talk about how they create possibilities for resistance that go beyond simple "no" responses.

The girls in this study offered definitions of resistance and voice that indicate that these concepts can be viewed as processes rather than single acts. Before interviewing these girls, I had not anticipated this specific framing of these concepts. The questions I asked elicited commentary on voice and resistance, but it was not until the last several interviews—after this characterization had emerged in previous discussions—that I began to ask specific, pointed questions about voice and resistance as processes. Some girls shared some of the steps in their processes without specific prompting. For example, A.J. discussed her process of voice. She said that at the age of 14, she became a self-injurer, cutting her wrists when she felt upset. Once she began cutting, she realized that she had been self-injuring in less obvious way before by biting her cuticles and intentionally running into things. Her perspective on herself shifted when she realized this pattern, and she was embarrassed. She did not want to be seen (by herself or others) as weak and unstable. She began to worry that she did not know herself and that the parts she did know were unflattering. She decided to eliminate some friends from her life and choose others who helped make her feel more fulfilled and alive. She sought out activities that were interesting to her around which she could define herself. Though she says she is still learning who she is and what image she

wants to project to the world, A.J. has moved through several steps in the process of voice. Even though A.J. shared several of the steps in this process, I did not yet know to ask her to talk more about it because the theme had not yet emerged in the data. Future work could explore the various parts of the voice and resistance processes for girls, asking how they develop a self and how they work out new options for resistance.

The Future of Voice and Resistance

In short, I argue that imposing the dominant definition of voice and resistance upon girls is part of a larger pattern that silences girls' voices, dismisses their actions, and, perhaps even more problematically teaches them to do the same. Discipline functions most effectively when subjects internalize the rules and constraints and govern themselves rather than needing to be surveilled by someone else (Foucault, 1977). As long as these prevailing definitions alone are being internalized, misogynistic and patriarchal beliefs will continue to be taught to and internalized by girls as well.

Recognizing that resistance does not have to be completely (or at all) external points out that resistance does not happen only in the public gaze and for public consumption but also may occur internally, as Harris (2004a) and Foucault (1977) have both mentioned in their work. Just as control and internalization of culture happens on a daily basis, so too does resistance. As observers, when we cannot see something happen, we often assume nothing has happened. Additionally, when we only count voice as public assertions that are taken seriously by others, we miss other important parts of the process that are essential constitutive of and integral to voice. Our culture and the agents of it should not force girls to make these parts of their voices public or dismiss them as unimportant. Instead, adults and adolescents should recognize the power girls have through voice and resistance in ways that

have been traditionally ignored in order to see more possibilities for girls' being and doing in the world.

APPENDIX A: PILOT STUDY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Screenname (pseudonym)	Age	Socieconomic Status	Race	Sexual Orientation
Lila*heretohelp	19	Lower-middle class	White & Pacific Islander	Straight
Lindsay48	18	Middle cass	White	Straight
AllSmiles	20	Upper-middle class	White	Straight
NicZyla	20	Lower-middle class	African-American	Straight

APPENDIX B: DISSERTATION STUDY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Pseudonym	Socioeconomic Status	Race	Sexual Orientation	State	Age	Education
A.J.	middle	white	queer[3]	Florida	18	in community college
Alisha	working	black & Jamaican	straight	Connecticut	18	high school grad
Ashlyn	student	white	bisexual	New Jersey	18	in community college
Brittany	middle	white	straight	Ohio	18	high school grad
Callie	upper-middle	white	straight	Nevada	19	high school grad
Drew	middle	white	straight	Texas	20	in community college
Jordana	no response	white &Ukrainian	straight	Illinois	18	in community college
Kayleigh	middle	white	straight	Louisiana	19	high school grad
Laurel	upper-middle	white	lesbian	Mississippi	19	high school grad
Lindsay	middle	white	straight	Tennessee	18	college
Linh	working	Vietnamese & black	bicurious	Texas	18	in high school (homeschooled)
Lucinda	middle	Latina/Hispanic	straight	Connecticut	18	high school grad
Marika	middle	Hispanic & white	straight	Florida	18	in community college
Megan	middle	white	straight	Alabama	19	in four-year college
Nikki	low, low	white	bisexual	New York	18	in four-year college
Olivia	middle	Caucasian, African-American, American Indian	straight	California	18	in community college
Rachael	lower class	white	bisexual	North Carolina	18	in community college
Taylor	middle	white	straight	Delaware	18	in high school

[3] Lesbian, open to dating transmen

APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Hi!

I know this is kind of random, but I promise I'm not a spammer. :) My name is Katy Bodey and I'm a graduate student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I am doing a research study about teen girls. I am interested in what girls are thinking, feeling, and doing.

I'd love for you to be part of my study. You can view my MySpace page at www.myspace.com/girlculture if you want to learn more about this specific study. You can also leave me a comment or a message.

If you participate, we'll do an online interview using MSN Messenger or AIM. (We'd never meet in person.) I hope you'll think about being part of my study! If you or anyone you know is interested, let me know!

Katy

APPENDIX D: MYSPACE PAGE

Below are screenshots of the MySpace page used for this study. This page can be viewed at www.myspace.com/girlculture.

APPENDIX D, CONTINUED: MYSPACE PAGE

< Back

MySpace.com | rss | sign in

girl culture

Last Updated: 1/7/2009

Send Message
Instant Message
Email to a Friend
Subscribe

Gender: Female
Status: In a Relationship
Age: 26
Sign: Pisces

City: DURHAM
State: North Carolina
Country: US
Signup Date: 9/11/2007

June 23, 2008 - Monday

Fact Sheet for Under 18 (Basic Info about the Study)

Online Fact Sheet: Minor Participants

Title of Study: Girls' Eye View: Girls' Perspectives on Girl Culture

Principal Investigator: Katrina Bodey, UNC-Chapel Hill
Department: Communication Studies UNC-Chapel Hill
Phone number: 919-962-0012
Faculty Advisor: Julia T. Wood
Study Contact telephone number: 919-360-4357
Study Contact email: kbodey@email.unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty. Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this study is to learn more about girls' lives. I am interested in what issues are important to girls and when, where, and with whom they feel they can speak their minds. Specifically, I am interested in if and how girls engage in resistance, large, small, organized, informal, with others, alone, and other possible formats. This resistance may be to anything girls feel constrained by in their lives.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 50 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?
The interview will probably take less than one hour. The specific length of time will be determined by how long your responses are. You can choose to stop the interview at any time.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
When people who are under the age of 18 participate in a research study, their parent (or guardian) must grant permission for them to be in the study. If you decide that you want to take part in this study, I will ask you for the name and email address of one of your parents. I will write him or her for permission for you to participate, and if s/he says yes, we will begin the interview.

I will ask you questions your life and your thoughts about it. We'll talk online through MSN or AIM.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. Your participation is important to help people understand girl culture better, but you may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?
I do not think you will experience any discomfort or risk from the interview. If you do not want to answer a question, simply say so and we'll move right on.

How will your privacy be protected?
I will keep our conversations locked away and by change your username to a pseudonym after our conversation. You never have to tell me your given name, the city you live in, or any other identifying details. When I contact you about the study, I will only do so in the way you ask me to. For example, I will only instant message you if you say it is okay; I will only email you at the address you ask me to. You can help protect your privacy by deciding when and where you want to do the interview and deleting any record of it from your computer if you wish to do so.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
I am not going to pay you for your information, but your information is very important to me.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
There are no costs for being in the study.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact me by email at kbodey@email.unc.edu. You can also contact me or my advisor in the United States at the phone numbers and email addresses listed at the beginning of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu. Thank you for helping me with this study.

5:01 PM 0 Comments (Add Comment) | **0 Kudos** Print SHARE

Previous Post: Fact Sheet for 18+ (Basic Info about the Study) | Back to Blog List

APPENDIX D, CONTINUED: MYSPACE PAGE

< Back

MySpace.com | rss | sign in

girl culture

Last Updated: 1/7/2009

Send Message
Instant Message
Email to a Friend
Subscribe

Gender: Female
Status: In a Relationship
Age: 26
Sign: Pisces

City: DURHAM
State: North Carolina
Country: US
Signup Date: 9/11/2007

June 23, 2008 - Monday

Fact Sheet for 18+ (Basic Info about the Study)

Online Fact Sheet: Adult Participants

Title of Study: Girls' Eye View: Girls' Perspectives on Girl Culture

Principal Investigator: Katrina Bodey, UNC-Chapel Hill
Department: Communication Studies UNC-Chapel Hill
Phone number: 919-962-0012
Faculty Advisor: Julia T. Wood
Study Contact telephone number: 919-360-4357
Study Contact email: kbodey@email.unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?
You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty. Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this study is to learn more about girls' lives. I am interested in what issues are important to girls and when, where, and with whom they feel they can speak their minds. Specifically, I am interested in if and how girls engage in resistance, large, small, organized, informal, with others, alone, and other possible formats. This resistance may be to anything girls feel constrained by in their lives.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 50 people in this research study.

How long will your part in this study last?
The interview will probably take less than one hour. The specific length of time will be determined by how long your responses are. You can choose to stop the interview at any time.

What will happen if you take part in the study?
I will ask you questions your life and your thoughts about it. We'll talk online through MSN or AIM.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?
Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. Your participation is important to help people understand girl culture better, but you may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?
I do not think you will experience any discomfort or risk from the interview. If you do not want to answer a question, simply say so and we'll move right on.

How will your privacy be protected?
I will keep our conversations locked away and by change your username to a pseudonym after our conversation. You never have to tell me your given name, the city you live in, or any other identifying details. When I contact you about the study, I will only do so in the way you ask me to. For example, I will only instant message you if you say it is okay; I will only email you at the address you ask me to. You can help protect your privacy by deciding when and where you want to do the interview and deleting any record of it from your computer if you wish to do so.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?
I am not going to pay you for your information, but your information is very important to me.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?
There are no costs for being in the study.

What if you have questions about this study?
You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact me by email at kbodey@email.unc.edu. You can also contact me or my advisor in the United States at the phone numbers and email addresses listed at the beginning of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?
All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu. Thank you for helping me with this study.

4:58 PM 0 Comments (Add Comment) | 0 Kudos Print SHARE

Back to Blog List | Next Post: Fact Sheet for Under 18 (Basic Info about the Study)

APPENDIX E: GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe yourself?
    a. How do you see yourself as similar to other girls you know?
    b. How do you see yourself as different from other girls you know?
    c. Are you generally the same around your parents, friends, teachers, and others, or do you change from group to group?
2. What do you think girls are expected to be like today? How are they expected to act?
    a. Can you give an example of a way you meet those expectations?
    b. Can you think of a specific time when you didn't meet those expectations?
    c. How do you feel about the expectations for girls today?
3. What do you think are the biggest challenges or frustrations for girls today?
    a. How do you deal with those challenges or frustrations?
4. What does the word "resistance" mean to you?
    a. Do you engage in resistance in your life?
5. Some people who study girls say that today's girls don't really have a voice. Would you agree?
6. A lot of people say it's important for girls to have a voice. What does that mean to you? Would you say you have a voice?

APPENDIX F: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

To: Katrina Bodey
Communication Studies
CB: 3285

From: Behavioral IRB

_____
Authorized signature on behalf of IRB

Approval Date: 8/25/2008
Expiration Date of Approval: 6/09/2009

RE: Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review (under 45 CFR 46.110)
Submission Type: Modification
Expedited Category: Minor Change to Previously Reviewed Research
Study #: 08-0946

Study Title: Exploring the Possibilities of Self-work: Girls "Speak" about Their Lives

This submission has been approved by the above IRB for the period indicated. It has been determined that the risk involved in this modification is no more than minimal. Unless otherwise noted, regulatory and other findings made previously for this study continue to be applicable.

Submission Description:

This amendment, dated 07/07/2008, modifies the study as follows: (1) In response to a low recruitment rate, recruitment efforts will now include posting messages online on popular teen discussion boards. (2) The ages of the participants are being expanded to include 17 through 19 year olds rather than only rising seniors.

Investigator's Responsibilities:

When applicable, enclosed are stamped copies of approved consent documents and other recruitment materials. You must copy the stamped consent forms for use with subjects unless you have approval to do otherwise.

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), and 40 CFR 26 (EPA), where applicable.

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