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Practicing Gender: A Feminist Ethnography of an All Girls' After-School Club

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This dissertation, PRACTICING GENDER: A FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHY OF AN ALL GIRLS' AFTER-SCHOOL CLUB, by ALISON ANNE HAPPEL, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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ABSTRACT

PRACTICING GENDER: A FEMINIST ETHNOGRAPHY OF AN ALL GIRLS' AFTER-SCHOOL CLUB
by
Alison Anne Happel

The institution of schooling is one of the most formative spaces in which young people learn about gender norms and expectations. Rather than being a biological given, gender identity is achieved through gender practices and gender achievements (Butler, 1990/1999; Nayak & Kehily, 2008). This study was a year-long ethnography during which I observed an all girls' after-school club. The club included 15 girls who were in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. The majority of the club's participants were African American girls. This ethnography utilized participant observation and interviews. Club documents were also analyzed during data analysis. My primary research question was: How was girlness conceptualized, perpetuated, and performed in an after-school club for middle school girls? Using critical theory and feminist poststructuralism, I investigated the work that goes into creating and maintaining current binary gender formations, and how this is related to race, class, and sexuality.

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by
Alison Anne Happel

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in
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in
the Department of Educational Policy Studies
in
the College of Education
Georgia State University

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Significance of the Study

This study was a year-long ethnography during which I observed an all girls' after-school club that was comprised of middle school girls from an urban public school. The institution of schooling is one of the most formative spaces in which young people "experience and contribute to the production and reproduction of gender" (Nayak & Kehily, 2008, p. 109). I used participant observation and interviews to investigate the ways in which girlness was conceptualized, perpetuated, and performed within the club. Although girlhood was central to my research focus, it is an unstable category with various meanings and connotations. As Aapola et al. (2005) explain, girlhood is a social construction with changing meanings dependent upon historical and social conditions. "Girlhood is something that is both individually and collectively accomplished through participating in the social, material and discursive practices defining young femininity. Thus, what it means to be a girl is constantly changing" (p. 1). Since girlhood is a social construction that is culturally contextual, it is important to pay close attention to racial, class, and sexual orientation dynamics that contribute to the changing nature and definition of girlhood. According to Harris (2004), particular definitions of girl have been valued based on social identities and categories: "The category of 'girl' itself has proved to be slippery and problematic. It has been shaped by norms about race, class and ability that have prioritized the White, middle class and non-disabled, and pathologized and/or

criminalized the majority outside this category of privilege" (p. xx). Throughout the year, I observed what Nayak and Kehily (2008) refer to as gender practices and gender achievements. Gender practices are the individual and social actions that facilitate and maintain particular gender structures. They assert that these gender structures are not overdetermined; rather, they come into being through particular gender practices that can be observed and theorized. Similarly, gender structures are created and maintained through successive acts of gender achievements. "The production of a seemingly coherent gender identity is then the result of a series of successive, though never fully accomplished, 'gender achievements'. These 'achievements' conceal an extraordinary amount of mental and physical labour that go into making these identities appear normal, 'just so'" (p. 5). I used ethnography to "look in closer detail at the performative dimension of youth practices through an array of gender presentations, displays and exhibitions" (Nayak & Kehily, 2008, p. 30). I was particularly interested in the kind of work that goes into creating and maintaining our current binary gender formations, and how this was related to race, class, and sexuality. By focusing on gender achievements in the club, I investigated how this particular social location perpetuated specific gender ideals and performances. This ethnography focused on the meetings and activities of the after school club in order to observe the ways in which the club encouraged particular kinds of gender achievements, and I consequently theorized the possible implications that these gender achievements had on individual girls' lives, cultural conceptualizations of gender norms, and gender structures.

As Anita Harris (2004) explains in the introduction to her edited collection of foundational essays within Girls' Studies entitled *All about the girl: Culture, power and*

identity, girlhood is experienced very differently based on social location within economic, political, and cultural webs. Thanks to feminism, girls now seem to have more opportunities and choices than ever before. But as this collection of essays shows, only certain performances of girlhood are socially sanctioned, and girls who do not fit into particular gendered, raced, and economic categories continue to face the negative consequences associated with femininity outside of a particular homogenous gendered narrative. These girls are increasingly in danger due to the ever decreasing social safety nets available within the United States. So although girlhood is a central focus of my research, this concept does not just encompass gender. "Girls become girls through their negotiation of raced, classed and sexed femininities" (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 3). Race, class, and sexuality are all central components that inform and influence girlhood, and they intersect with gender and gender identity in complex ways. Therefore, it is important for feminist theorists to investigate social constructions of girlhood, and the ways in which certain gender practices and achievements are rewarded and/or disciplined, and the effects that this has on individual lives and collective gender structures.

Research Question

My research was a feminist ethnography that paid particular attention to dynamics of race, class, gender, and sexuality within the after-school club. My research was focused around one primary question, and four sub-questions.

- How is girlness conceptualized, perpetuated, and performed in an after-school club for middle school girls?
    - What are the experiences of the girls in the club?
    - How do the girls interact with each other, the club sponsors, and the club

activities?

- What kinds of discussions are present and not present within the club?
- What ideas and messages about girlhood is the club facilitating?

Exploration of Terms

Discourse, Subjectivity, Power, and Agency

Feminist poststructuralism was an important part of this project. In what follows, I briefly explore some of the key terms and ideas within poststructuralism. Poststructuralism has been accused of being elitist and therefore irrelevant because of the complexity of some of its main ideas (Collins, 2000; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000), and because of its seeming lack of concern with the material realities of people's lives; consequently, I outline my own understandings of the concepts and how I use them throughout my research. In what follows, I delineate my understandings of the concepts of discourse, subjectivity, power, and agency.

Discourse is a concept that is used frequently within feminist and/or poststructuralist educational research, but it is very rarely explored and/or defined. Sara Mills (2004) takes on this task by examining how Foucault uses the term in his own writings. She isolates "the range of meanings that the term discourse has accrued to itself within Foucault's work" (p. 6). First, and most generally, discourse is all spoken words, statements, or texts which have some sort of effects on the world. Second, Foucault points to the importance of regulation and coherence. Discourse is comprised of "groups of utterances which seem to be regulated in some way and which seem to have a

coherence and a force to them in common" (Mills, 2004, p. 6). Finally, Foucault articulates that he is less concerned with the content of the actual utterances, and more concerned with "the rules and structures which produce particular utterances and texts" (p. 6). These explanations of discourse point to the ways in which discourse operates in the world, and they point to how different Truth regimes are socially and historically produced. There is no one dominant discourse, although there are discourses that are more and less powerful, depending on the social, historical, and political context. The concept of discourse is important in research because it allows researchers to trace different explanations for historical or current theories, ideas, actions, or practices. The focus is on exploring how ideas are formed and propagated, and how these ideas shape different aspects of society. Discourse analysis asks questions such as, What is sayable and unsayable in a particular situation? What is thinkable and unthinkable in a particular situation? What are the possible discourses available, and how does this affect an individual and/or institution? As St. Pierre (2000) explains, "Foucault's theory of discourse illustrates how language gathers itself together according to socially constructed rules and regularities that allow certain statements to be made and not others" (p. 485). Similarly, Britzman (2000) asserts that "discourses authorize what can and cannot be said" (p. 36). Once a particular discourse has become normal, or entered into popular ideas of common sense, it is difficult to act or even think outside of the discourse (St. Pierre, 2000). Discourse analysis encourages theorists to theorize different views and/or representations of history and the present, and this is helpful to feminist researchers who wish to challenge traditional and/or canonized ways of representing and knowing (Britzman, 2000; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000).

Discourses, in direct and indirect ways, influence how individuals exist in the world. The concept of discourse is therefore directly linked to subjectivity. As St. Pierre and Pillow (2000) explain, feminist poststructuralism continues to "trouble the subject of humanism—the rational, conscious, stable, unified, knowing individual" (p. 6). Mills (2004) describes how Foucault refused to use humanism's conceptualization of the individual: "By refusing to refer to the subject as a unitary being, Foucault is very much part of post-structuralist thinking, which questioned the fundamental bases of liberal humanist ideology, rooted as it is in the notion of the individual self with agency and control over itself" (p. 30). Rather than seeing the subject as free, active, rational, and individual, poststructuralism instead points to the construction of the subject, and insists that the subject is constituted in and through discourse. "We are always already constituted within discourse, and discourses operate on and in us simultaneously at the levels of desire and reason" (Gannon & Davies, 2006, p. 82). This shifts discussions of "choice" and "free will." Poststructuralism does not conceptualize the idea of "choice" as meaningless; rather, it points to the constraints around the idea of "choice" by locating ideas and actions within discursive webs. Instead of thinking of the subject as individual and autonomous, poststructuralists attempt to locate how individuals are situated in particular discourses, and how that consequently informs the ways in which they choose to represent themselves, and how they choose to interact (or not) with the world. "The subject of poststructuralism...is certainly not dead; rather, the category of the subject has been opened up to the possibility of continual reconstruction and reconfiguration" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 502). The poststructural understanding of the subject points to the often contradictory ways in which subjects are constituted. This is done by calling attention to

the fragmentary and fluid nature of subjectivity, and by refusing to narrate the subject as linear, rational, whole, or as the “origin” of thought and action.

Closely related to a poststructural interpretation of subjects and subjectivity is Joan Scott's deconstruction of widely understood definitions of experience. In her 1992 article entitled, “Experience,” Scott suggests that taking experiences at face value can be superficial at best, and dangerous at worse. Situated within poststructuralism, Scott urges researchers to resist taking experience as self-evident, because identities themselves are socially produced and therefore constructed:

> When experience is taken as the origin of knowledge, the vision of the individual subject...becomes the bedrock of evidence upon which explanation is built. Questions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one's vision is structured—about language (or discourse) and history—are left aside. The evidence of experience then becomes evidence of the fact of difference, rather than a way of exploring how difference is established, how is operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world. (p. 25)

Scott's commentary has potentially substantial ramifications for feminist ethnography. While feminists have urged researchers to take the lives and experiences of women seriously, Scott is contesting this by interrogating the very meanings and constitutions of experience. She believes that, while experiences of women and other marginalized groups do matter and need to be heard, it is perhaps more fruitful to investigate how their

experiences came to be through various and particular subject formations. Her analysis points to the importance of recognizing how subjectivities are constituted through discourse, and how individual subjectivities are therefore socially, historically, and politically contingent. This directly confronts many tenets of ethnographic research because of ethnography's reliance on story-telling, personal experience, and observation.

Another important concept within feminist poststructuralism is power. Within many theoretical traditions, power is conceptualized as unidimensional and/or top-down. Power flows from the powerful to the powerless, creating oppression and marginalization. Foucault challenges this notion of power and "tries to move the conception of power away from this negative model towards a framework which stresses its productive nature, that it produces as well as represses" (Mills, 2004, p. 33). Rather than something that we/they possess, power is relational and constantly in flux, and it does not belong to an individual (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 489). He argues that power is present in all relationships, and that conceptualizations of power must shift away from power-over/oppression narratives to understanding how power is always and already embedded within relationships. "Power is productive rather than oppressive...subjects are constituted within power relations" (Gannon & Davies, 2006, p. 84). In this view, power is seen as relational, and it has positive, productive potential in that it is necessary for the creation of various subjectivities that can comply, resist, interrupt or disrupt particular discourses. This is not to suggest that all relationships are constituted by equal power relations; rather, this suggests that although subjectivities are constituted in and through discourse, they in turn constitute and shift discourses through these complicated relations of power.

This complicated conceptualization of power points to how and where feminists might locate agency within poststructuralism. Many feminists, wedded to more traditional notions of agency and power, have criticized poststructuralism for undermining women's recent attempts at recuperating power, agency, and resistance (Collins, 2000; DiStefano, 1990). For example, some black feminists and feminists from the Global South express their frustration that, just at the time when they have claimed authorial legitimacy within academia, poststructuralism deconstructs identity and identity categories. “Why is it, just at the moment in Western history when previously silenced populations have begun to speak for themselves and on behalf of the subjectivities, that the concept of the subject and the possibility of discovering/creating a liberating 'truth' become suspect?” (DiStefano, 1990, p. 75). How, then, can feminists conceive of agency within poststructural frameworks, and how should this translate to educational research?

Elizabeth St. Pierre (2000) encourages feminists to reconsider agency by recognizing that there is no “outside” of discourse and power relations; consequently, there is no classic feminist liberation or emancipation. In response to this recognition, she suggests that, “The aim of an oppositional politics is therefore not liberation but resistance” (p. 492). She urges feminists to think about the ways in which particular discourses might be resisted and consequently reconstituted. Acts of resistance against commonsensical ideas of naturalness or normalness inevitably require active, critical engagement with dominating discourses. In order for feminists to resist normative discourses, they must recognize and work within the construction of these various discourses. Poststructural theories “allow us to understand how knowledge, truth, and subjects are produced in language and cultural practice as well as how they might be

reconfigured" (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 486). Poststructuralism points to the socially, historically, and politically constructed nature of reality through discourse analyses, and it unveils the contingent and contested nature of particular regimes of Truth. It consequently points to the constructed nature of subject formation. Feminist poststructuralists suggest that, since subjectivities are constantly being constituted and reconstituted through discourse, often in competing and contradictory ways, there is space between reiterations for different ways of being and acting. Britzman (2000) explains her interpretation of the relationships between agency, discourse, and possibilities of resistance:

> The point is that if discourses construct and incite the subject and produce contradictory investments, pleasures, and knowledge, then they can also be employed to deconstruct the kinds of naturalization that push one to take up the impossible moral imperatives of policing categories, ensuring boundaries, and attempting to live the promises of non-contradictory, transcendental self. (p. 36)

As Butler and others have pointed out, if the subject is in constant formation and is constituted through the reiteration of certain subject positions, there is a possibility for the disruption of those same subject positions. "The agency of this subject lies precisely in its ongoing constitution" (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000 p. 7). Many believe that this "subject-in-process" (p. 8) is in the best interests of women because it opens up spaces of multiplicity and possibility that are not available within other theoretical frameworks. Davies (2000) is worth quoting at length:

> The power feminists have found in poststructuralist theorizing is precisely in its opening up of possibilities for undermining the inevitability of particular oppressive forms of subjection. They have done this by making the constitutive force of discourse visible and thus revisable. By making visible the ways in which power shifts dramatically, depending on how subjects are positioned by and within the multiple and competing discourses they encounter, they can begin to imagine how to reposition themselves, realign themselves, and use the power of discourse they have to disrupt those of its effects they wish to resist. (p. 180)

In this reading, there is no liberation from discourse's oppressive elements; rather, subjects work within competing and contradictory discourses. Subjects are constituted by discourse yet they also constitute discourse by their complicity and resistance. If subjects constitute discourse, this means they can influence discourse through their various actions. When subjects influence discourse through their complicity and resistance, this does not imply an intentional subject; rather, subjects act in ways that are both intentional and unintentional.

Organization of the Paper

In chapter 2, I review the literature within Girls' Studies, third wave feminism, and post-feminism. I outline my methodology in chapter 3, and I explain how I conducted the research. I also explore the two theoretical frameworks that guided my data analysis. In chapter 4 I discuss three themes grounded my data that I created through my use of traditional data analysis. I engage in non-traditional data analysis in chapter 5. I provide alternative interpretations of my data using different, and sometimes

contradictory, theoretical frameworks. I also explore data that was left out of chapter 4. Finally, in chapter 6, I explore the implications of the research, and I offer suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since this feminist ethnography explored the creation and perpetuation of girlness, I begin my literature review with an overview of relevant academic research within the field of Girls' Studies. While reviewing the literature, I located five categorizations of girlhood that feminists theorize: Girl Power, Spice Girls, Reviving Ophelia, Mean Girls, and Neoliberal Girls. Most of the research within Girls' Studies falls into one of these five categories. In order to situate my research within feminism and feminist ideas and theories, I outline the main ideas and texts within third wave feminism and post-feminism. The literature from third wave feminism is important because it contributes to current theorizations of girlhood, femininity, feminism, and agency. Also, I observed third wave feminist ideas and discourses within the club. Third wave feminism influences both how I theorize the club, and the actual activities and discourses within the space of the club. Finally, the last section of my literature review explores current research and theorizations of post-feminism. As I explain, post-feminist ideas permeate our culture, and, according to the research and literature, many young girls espouse post-feminist ideas and conceptualizations of selfhood. In what follows, I explore the key texts within these three areas in order to help situate my ethnographic research and data.

Academic Research Within Girls' Studies

One of the major texts within Girls' Studies is *All about the girl: Culture, power, and identity* (2004), edited by Anita Harris. This edited volume examines a number of issues of concern to those in Girls' Studies, including constructions of girlhood, feminism for girls, girlhood and sexuality, popular culture, education and schooling, and research by young women. This text seeks to examine girlhood by self-consciously investigating how girlhood is conceptualized, how it is performed, and how it is presented by the media. Harris has another important text that takes up similar topics. *Future girl: Young women in the twenty-first century* (2004) discusses the types of categorization that young girls are subjected to within Western cultures. Harris labels two different categories that are available for young girls: the "can-do girl" and the "at-risk girl." "Can-do girls" willingly participate in the neoliberal, globalized economy by being flexible workers and uncritical consumers. They buy into post-feminist ideals, and they delay motherhood in order to ensure professional success. "Can-do girls" are usually middle-class, White, upwardly mobile girls who are optimistic about the future. "At-risk girls" are generally not middle-class, they are often ethnic minorities. They are seen as at-risk because of their engagement in "risky" behaviors, and because they are seen as being "rendered vulnerable by their circumstances" (p. 24). They are often characterized as "likely failures" (p. 25). These two categories help to understand how girls are socialized and produced by various discourses within our society. She also discusses how girls are monitored and regulated by a gender regime, and how this is related to consumerism. Harris also co-authored another Girls' Studies text with Sinikka Aapola and Marnina Gonick called *Young femininity: Girlhood, power and social change* (2005). This text

draws on international work concerning femininity, identity construction, and youth cultures to explore how girlhood is defined and portrayed in contemporary theoretical and popular discourses. It also examines how young women from different social backgrounds and cultural contexts negotiate their gendered identities. This text covers a wide range of issues that affect girls, including family, friendship, sexuality, education, citizenship, work, and popular culture. This text makes an explicit attempt to theorize girlhood from a variety of perspectives, including race, nationality, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

Eline Lipkin (2009) wrote a book on Girls' Studies that is appropriate both inside and outside of the academy. This text covers a wide range of girlhood issues, and it is written in a jargon-free way that makes it accessible for everyone interested in Girls' Studies. This book discusses social constructions of girlhood, body image and sexuality, friendship and girlhood socialization, and girls and the media. This text is a great overview to the subject of Girls' Studies, and Lipkin writes in a way that is inviting and provocative.

A number of Girls' Studies scholars have theorized the relationship between the construction of girlhood and popular culture. Lipkin (2009) has a chapter in her book on Girls' Studies dedicated to providing an overview of girls and the media within the United States. This chapter focuses on the messages that girls receive through advertisements, television, film, and music. She focuses on the harmful and contradictory ways in which girls are portrayed, and also how girls construct their subjectivities through interaction with these various media forms. She ends the chapter by calling for girls to develop critical media literacy skills which will help develop what

she calls “real girl power,” which is in direct opposition to the girl power marketed through post-feminist groups such as the Spice Girls.

Throughout the literature within Girls' Studies, I noticed a number of discourses that the literature worked within and/or against. I identified five main themes or categories that Girls' Studies scholars work with when conducting research on and with girls. Although the following categories are somewhat arbitrarily separated, I think it may be useful to categorize the scholarship in this way. The categories are: Girl Power, Spice Girls, Reviving Ophelia, Mean Girls, and Neoliberal Girls. These categories allow feminists to explore the ways in which popular culture, consumerism, economics, and psychology circulate and normalize conceptualizations and performances of femininity within Western culture. While these categories are not exhaustive, they are nonetheless helpful when conceptualizing the different areas of focus within Girls Studies.

Girl Power, Spice Girls, and Reviving Ophelia

Current day conceptualizations of Girl Power are full of contradictions. To many girls, Girl Power “appeared to endorse and value female friendships, even over and above the pressure to get (and bother about) boyfriends. Girl Power appeared to promise an all female world of fun, sassiness, and dressing up to please your (girl) self” (Griffin, 2004, p. 33). Although many find the discourse of Girl Power to be exciting and empowering, many feminists point to the problematic assumptions within notions of Girl Power.

According to Gonick (2006), common conceptualizations Girl Power can be traced back to the Riot Grrls movement of the 1990s. The Riot Grrls were a loosely formed movement that sought to disrupt traditional notions of gender and gender

performance, and they used Girl Power as a strategy to reappropriate the word and concept of girl. Rooted in the punk rock movement, this mostly White, middle class movement "encouraged young women to see themselves not as the passive consumers of culture, including that of the punk scene, but as producers and creators of knowledge, and as verbal and expressive dissenters" (Gonick, 2006, p. 7). They critiqued sexism in both local and national culture, and they used their bodies in seemingly jarring, dissonant ways to protest sexism, racism, classism, and consumer culture. Ironically, the Riot Grrls' messages were in many ways commodified and commercialized, and have given way to the watered-down, commercialized form of Girl Power that we currently recognize today.

Aapola et al. (2005) critique mainstream conceptualizations of girl power, and they claim that popular culture representations of girlhood either promote this problematic characterization of girl power, or they represent girls as constantly victimized. By tracing the historical and political contexts in which girl power was popularized, they illustrate how the term is caught up in various power relations, and how it functions in girls' lives within the West. They claim that popular conceptualizations of girl power uncritically assume that all girls should and can succeed, regardless of their locations within structures of race, class, nationality, and sexual orientation. Zaslow (2009) also critiques mainstream representations of girl power. She shows how feminism has been commodified and rebranded in order to sell it to young girls within consumer culture. She focuses on music and television in order to show how feminism has become depoliticized and commodified, and how this form of feminism has been sold to young girls.

A number of scholars have done empirical research on girlhood identity constructions in relation to representations of girlhood and girl power within popular culture. Rebecca Hains' qualitative dissertation, “Negotiating girl power: Girlhood on screen and in everyday life” (2007) investigates how pre-adolescent girls negotiate their identities in relation to discourses of girl power. She asserts that feminist potential within discourses of girl power is negated by the ways in which normative femininity is embraced and perpetuated within these discourses. She concludes that girl power has become commodified at the expense of girls' empowerment.

Gonick (2003) and Aapola et al (2005) make the claim that the commodified girl power movement that arose from the Riot Grrl movement of the early 1990s led to the creation and popularity of the Spice Girls. In many ways, the Spice Girls symbolized the commercialization of the original, Riot Grrl meaning of girl power. Girl power for the Spice Girls is about “the power of the girl as consumer” (Griffin, 2004, p. 35). The Spice Girls represented the commodification of feminism; the group upheld mainstream beauty standards while relaying materialistic values and ideals, all the while touting themselves as the purveyors of girl power and a new kind of feminism. Some feminists have a stronger critique of the Spice Girls and what they mean for girls and girl culture. For Taft (2004), the Spice Girls do not merely propagate a problematic version of individualistic feminism, they are anti-feminist. She claims that the Spice Girls “present Girl Power as the nonpolitical and nonthreatening alternative to feminism” (p. 71). She argues that the non-political nature of the group's messages actually harms the feminist movement, and consequently works against improving the lives of girls and women. Alternatively, Fritzsche (2004) argues that the group can be empowering to young girls. In her

empirical research, she found that the fan culture of the group “offers [the girls] the opportunity to take a playful approach toward questions of self-representation, self-confidence, and heterosexuality” (p. 160). Girls in her study claimed to feel more independent and able to play with their gender identity due to the influence of the Spice Girls' lyrics and gender performances. I believe that the different feminist interpretations of the Spice Girls are directly related to the researcher’s own conceptualizations of, and investment in conceptualizations of, power, individuality, agency, and structural oppression. Because feminists are so diverse, there are multiple and sometimes contradictory interpretations of a social phenomenon; this diversity of opinion can be found within many discourses which critically engage with social phenomena.

Within both mainstream media and academic research, often girls are forced into the either/or binary of Girl Power/Reviving Ophelia. The category Reviving Ophelia is based on the book by that same name written by Mary Pipher (1994). *Reviving Ophelia* was written using the experiences of Pipher's clinical casework. In this text, she describes adolescence as a dangerous time for girls, mentally, physically, and emotionally. She claims that girls in the West live in a toxic culture, and that parents and guardians must help girls to not become victims of the media. The Reviving Ophelia discourse often operates alongside the Girl Power discourse, and this construction of girlhood focuses primarily on the ways in which girls are victimized within Western culture. Although this discourse does not acknowledge race as an important category of analysis in relation to femininity, the concerns expressed within this discourse are noticeably White and middle class. As Ward and Benjamin (2004) report, the book “galvanized a powerful public response, particularly from adult women” (2004, p. 17). The book led some feminist

organizations to create programs within their organizations to respond to the perceived needs of adolescent girls, and many feminist scholars began theorizing girls' lives within this particular framework (Ward and Benjamin, 2004). The Reviving Ophelia discourse stresses the ways in which girls are victimized, and there is rarely an acknowledgment of the complicated lives and identities of girls, and how girls are able to create and sustain their own sense of empowerment. It also does not engage with important identity categories such as race and class.

Bad/Mean Girls

Within mainstream media representations of girls, increased attention has been given to girls and violence. Although many feminists (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008; Faludi, 1991) have shown how media representations have been more involved in a moral panic over girls and violence as opposed to a reaction based on actual facts and statistics, it nevertheless remains true that girls are portrayed as increasingly mean/bad. Aapola et al. (2005) discuss the moral panic surrounding mean girls. They claim that "although most...texts depict the Mean Girl as powerful rather than vulnerable, she is still a girl in crisis who requires work and adult intervention to bring her back on to a path for successful development" (p. 49). They show how mainstream media representations of Mean Girls still portray girls as in need of rescue.

Chesney-Lind and Irwin's (2004) essay "From badness to meanness: Popular constructions of contemporary girlhood" explores media representations of girls and claims that these representations have shifted in the last ten years or so. The authors claim that it is important to critique shifting cultural conceptualizations of girls because

of the consequences these labels have on actual girls' lives. They ultimately argue that discourse shapes how girls are treated and what sorts of labels their actions acquire, and that this especially detrimental for lower-class girls of color. The authors argue that crimes that would have been ignored or treated lightly ten years ago are now being subjected to heightened criminalization, and that girls with privilege, namely middle/upper class White girls, are able to get out of juridical trouble while lower class girls of color are not. Chesney-Lind and Irwin (2008) claim that “at its core, the 'bad girl' hypothesis is that the women's movement has a 'dark' side, encouraging girls and women to seek equality in the illicit world of crime as well as the licit labor market” (p. 13). They see this representation of girls as a backlash to earlier feminist gains.

Currie and Kelly (2006) critique the simplistic representations of girls as mean or bad. In their empirical research, they show how girls use agency to “develop their own strategies to navigate the transition from girl to young women” (p. 155). They claim that actions that are read as mean or bad by adults are actually ways that girls use the little economic or political power they have in schools. They call for researchers to “give primacy to girls' (rather than adult researchers') sense of 'who they are' and 'what they can be.'” (p. 155). Their work suggests the importance of challenging simplistic binaries such as nice/mean and good/bad, and they show how to use empirical research to deconstruct popular representations of girls.

Neoliberal Girls

A number of scholars have argued that neoliberalism plays an important role when understanding current representations of girlhood within the United States. The

concept of neoliberalism is used to denote our current economic, political, and social climate. Neoliberalism points to the changes within Western society, including increased privatization, decreased market regulation, a focus on individualism, and a turn away from collective identity and responsibility (Harvey, 2006; Duggan, 2003; Saltman, 2005). Many feminists link neoliberalism to various subjectivity constructions of girlhood within the West. Anoop Nayak and Mary Jane Kehily, in their book *Gender, youth and culture: Young masculinities and femininities* (2008), make the claim that "young women commonly emerge as the ideal neo-liberal subjects for post-industrial times" (p. 52), by being flexible, capable, and independent in the globalized economic order. Anita Harris in her text, *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century* (2004) delineates a similar conceptualization of girlhood. She argues that girls are expected to be 'can-do' girls. These girls are expected to be flexible, productive workers. They are also expected to put off motherhood until they establish their careers. She contrasts this conceptualization with the 'at-risk' girls, who are policed, surveilled, and punished for not fitting into a neoliberal model of girlhood. Walkerdine's (2003) empirical research illustrates how young British women live and experience class. She shows how they experience and embody the neo-liberal pressures to be self-determining, individualistic, and autonomous. Class ideals, as framed by neoliberalism, are narrated by the women in her study, and she shows how ideas of success and failure are defined and determined by neoliberal frameworks. She argues that narratives of upward mobility create neoliberal subjectivities which produce certain actions and desires in young women. Allan (2009), in her empirical research, also illustrates how neoliberal ideology operates within young girls' lives. Using ethnographic research conducted in a single gender, private primary

school, Allan explores how girls embody and express “neo-liberal notions of modern girlhood” (p. 145). Girls in her study felt pressure to fit into neoliberal definitions of success, and that their ability to live up to these standards were directly related to their racial, class, and gendered identities. She concludes that 'girl power' within this particular school “did not mean that the girls could be anything that they wanted to be, but rather that they could be powerful only in ways that enhanced and maintained heteronormative (upper-middle-class) femininity” (p. 155-156).

Third Wave Feminism

When feminism is discussed in terms of a historical perspective, the movement is often simplistically divided into three “waves.” Sheila Tobias (1998) distinguishes first wave feminism as the time period 1850-1919 which culminated in women gaining the right to vote. The second wave is often marked by the publication of Betty Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique* in 1963 and this wave has been deemed in popular culture as the “bra-burning” time of fighting against the objectification of women (1960s and 1970s). The third wave made claims to be a “new” generation of feminists. These women had benefited from their grandmothers’ and mothers’ activism and maintained that because the political and social climate was different in the 1980s and 1990s than what it was during the 1960s and 1970s, their feminism espoused different goals and expectations. As Heywood and Drake explore in their important text *Third wave agenda: Being feminist, doing feminism* (1997), the third wave is “a movement that contains elements of second wave critique of beauty culture, sexual abuse, and power structures while it also

acknowledges and makes use of the pleasure, danger, and defining power of those structures" (p. 3). Third wave feminism seeks to utilize personal narratives and experiences in order to show the complex, contradictory ways in which femininity is experienced and perpetuated within the West. As discussed in *Catching a wave: Reclaiming feminism for the 21st century* (2003), the third wave has consistently insisted upon naming and exploring the paradox and contradiction within gender and feminism, and this idea has been somewhat of a refrain for many texts embedded within third wave feminist discourse.

Although the wave metaphor is widely used when discussing the different eras and kinds of feminism within the twentieth century, Catherine Bailey (1997) makes the argument that the wave metaphor is more harmful than helpful. She believes that, by splitting the second and third waves of feminism as is widely done, generations are pitted against one another, which is not helpful to the feminist movement as a whole. She also claims that by describing the current feminist movement as third wave, we are saying the second wave is over and no longer exists as it once did. She examines the shift from the first to the second wave and determines that a continuity was present and celebrated. In contrast to this first shift, the shift from second to third wave feminism is marked by those in the third wave wishing to distance themselves from second wave feminists.

Most feminists continue to use the wave metaphor in their theorizations of feminism. In their essay, "Genealogies and generations: The politics and praxis of third wave feminism," Gillis and Munford (2004) argue that third wave feminism has a rich and complicated history within the United States, despite being a relatively new movement. They begin by showing how many both within and outside the academy

uncritically interchange third wave feminism and post-feminism. They show how these two concepts sometimes slide into one another in discussions about the state of feminism, and they argue that these two concepts and movements are very different, and need to be better understood. They show how, before popular conceptualizations of Girl Power erupted with the Spice Girls, there were a number of third wave feminist organizations for young women and girls that created and maintained third wave feminism. These groups included the grrl movement and riot girls. They conclude, borrowing from Bailey (1997), that the wave paradigm "paralyzes feminism" and should be rearticulated.

Third wave feminism is often said to have emerged out of the frustration young women felt about the strictness and forced parameters of the second wave of feminism. Whether or not the rigidity of the second wave actually existed, many young women felt bound, judged, and oppressed by what they perceived to be as strict rules and ideals of what "made a good feminist." Rebecca Walker, only child of well-known author and activist Alice Walker, has been a leading voice within the third wave movement. In her edited volume about third wave feminism, *To be real: Telling the truth and changing the face of feminism* (1995), Walker discusses her struggles with attempting to fit into the framework of feminism while wanting to engage in normative female behaviors and relationships. She claims that second wave feminism is too rigid and that is does not allow for the contradictions and messiness of many young women's lives. Walker believes that this is why so many young women refuse the label of feminism. She calls for young feminists to make their own way without worrying about fitting into perfect feminist norms and ideals, and her edited collection is a reflection of how she envisions the new wave of feminism to exist in the world. The collection is noticeably less political

than many similarly situated second wave books, and Walker struggles with this in the introduction. This book embodies the problem that many older feminists have with third wave feminism—a lack of political grounding and a, at times, annoying individualistic tone that seems both self-reflective and narcissistic.

Similarly, *Listen up: Voice from the next feminist generation* (1995), edited by Barbara Findlen, is a major text within third wave feminism. In this text, Findlen tries to provide a context for young women to make their voices heard. Like Rebecca Walker, Findlen points to the fact that many young women refuse the label of feminist, and this book attempts to show through stories, essays, and personal narratives, how, regardless of labels, there are plenty of both female and male feminists within the younger generation. She addresses the reasons many young people reject the feminist label, and she iterates the need for personal and political activism around issues of sexism, racism, and heterosexism. She claims that the stories of young people are an important "point of entry" (p. xv) for feminist consciousness and activism, yet many of the essays don't link their individual experiences to broader regimes of structural oppression. Again, although an important contribution that addresses the dearth of young feminist voices in the 1990s, this volume also fixates on the individual, often at the expense of larger, structural critiques and commentary.

Catching a wave: Reclaiming feminism for the 21st century (2003), edited by Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier, was written partially in response to the seemingly individualistic and apolitical nature of many third wave feminist texts. This edited volume attempts to give voice to individual stories of young women struggling with various issues of feminist concern, yet this text makes explicit attempts to "use personal

experience as a bridge to larger political and theoretical explorations of the third wave; these essays function as the very tools we need to effect change" (13). The authors claim that third wave feminists have indeed been politically active, but because they are not involved in a massive, national movement like the second wave feminists, they get labeled as apolitical and apathetic. This collection then is their offering of "proof" as to the ways in which young third wave feminists have continued to act upon the important links between personal lives and political struggles. This collection of essays covers a wide variety of third wave feminist topics, including feminist media analyses, interrogations of the mother-daughter relationship, and the politics of building feminist activist groups on college campuses. This text is a much needed addition to the canon of third wave feminism because of its commitments to social activism and social justice.

Many feminists across varying academic disciplines have described and critiqued third wave feminism since its demarcation. Catherine Orr (1997), in "Charting the currents of the third wave," describes the various venues through which third wave feminism is disseminated, consumed, and enacted. She claims that third wave feminists are of a younger generation, and that they are often far removed from both second wave feminisms and academic feminisms. She believes that the distance between the feminists of both waves can be conceptualized as the classic mother/daughter split, and that this is problematic for the feminist movement as a whole, and that it dissuades both generations of feminists from learning from one another. She notes that many third wave feminists see second wave feminists as elitist, rigid, and not grounded in the everyday realities of life outside of the academy. Although a gross oversimplification of second wave

feminists, she concludes her essay by asserting that academic feminists have much to learn from the activism and groundedness of third wave feminists.

Similarly, the dialogue between Rita Alfonso and Jo Trigilio (1997) that they published as “Surfing the third wave: A dialogue between two third wave feminists” expresses their concern that feminism is too academic and not rooted in the struggles and realities of women's everyday existences. Surprisingly, they worry that third wave feminism exists too much in the academy, and that unlike the prior two waves, is not directly connected with a big feminist social movement. They are concerned that agendas within the academy have too much control on the content and actions of third wave feminism. They make the point that it is important to take context into consideration when reflecting upon the different ideals and actions that second and third wave feminists engage in. The conservatism that third wave feminists have been subjected to directly influences how they experience and enact their feminism. They end the article by calling for feminists in the academy to learn “the art of freestyle thinking” (15). They believe that the institutionalization of feminist philosophy has led to feminism's capitulation to dominant forms of thinking and writing. These two authors hope that feminists can work outside of normalized modes of philosophy in order to keep feminism radical and productive.

In “The legacy of the personal: Generating theory in feminism's third wave,” Deborah Siegel (1997) acknowledges the divide between academic feminists and other feminists, and she calls on feminists in both camps to recognize how they are influenced by each other. She attempts to show that despite the seemingly vast differences between feminists inside and outside of the academy, these different groups are in fact informing

each other's thoughts, actions, and writings. She envisions the third wave as a space in which scholars can reimagine the boundaries of inside and outside of the academy as "mutually informing and intersecting spheres of theory and practice" (p. 70).

One of the most pertinent and important critiques about third wave feminism was voiced in 2003 by Winnie Woodhull in her essay, "Global feminisms, transnational political economies, third world cultural production." This essay appeared in the special edition for the *Journal of International Women's Studies* that specifically addressed the connections between third wave feminism and Women's Studies. Woodhull asserts that third wave feminism is primarily a "first-world" phenomenon, and that, like previous feminist movements, excludes women who live outside of the West. She believes that third wave feminism has little concern for the realities of women outside of the first world, and that this can be seen in a variety of ways. Third wave feminists within the United States talk little about global issues and politics, and their focus on individuality and freedom of expression are not conducive to critiques of the plight of women globally. She claims, like many other critics of third wave feminism, that many third wave feminists lack political grounding and are anti-intellectual. She argues that third wave feminists need to work to acknowledge other forms of feminisms outside the West in order to form much needed alliances in work against oppression. She believes that third wave feminists are right in calling for new forms of feminism to address the changing contexts in which we find ourselves, yet she challenges them to think outside of their Western contexts in order to create and sustain global connections amidst processes of globalization and neo-colonialism. This essay is provocative and productive and is a much needed voice within discussions of third wave feminism. Although third wave

feminism is more diverse in many ways than second wave feminism, it still has created an outside, and this needs to be reconceptualized and critiqued from the inside.

Post-Feminism

Post-feminism is a complicated term that has been used in a number of different ways (Brooks, 1997; McRobbie, 2004). Those who argue that society is currently within a post-feminist space often suggest that gender equality has been achieved, and that sexism is no longer a structural or individual problem. Post-feminism assumes that women now have the same amount and kind of choices that men have; consequently they have arrived at gender equality. In what follows, I will first discuss how the term post-feminism is most widely used. I will then discuss one scholar's alternative definition of post-feminism, and follow that with a discussion of another writer who has moved away from the term entirely because of the complications associated with its usage. I will finally outline the ways in which post-feminism is described and utilized in the literature in order to provide a larger context for the term and how it is currently being conceptualized.

Many scholars have suggested that the turn away from critiquing and engaging with political power structures (including patriarchy) has created what has been termed post-feminism. Angela McRobbie is one of the leading scholars who challenges and critiques the idea of post-feminism. Although this term has wide variation depending upon discipline (and even within discipline), McRobbie (2004) defines post-feminism as:

> An active process by which feminist gains of the 1970s and '80s come to be undermined. It proposes that through an array of machinations, elements of

> contemporary popular culture are perniciously effective in regard to this undoing of feminism, while simultaneously appearing to be engaging in a well-informed and even well-intended response to feminism. (p. 258)

Post-feminism suggests that the goals of feminism have been attained and, thus, there is no need for further collective mobilization around gender. As McRobbie (2004) argues, in order for feminism to be "taken into account," it has to be understood as having already passed away. Women are presumed to be free to articulate our desires for sex, power, and money without fear of retribution. The notion of choice discussed in terms of post-feminism takes the stance that women are free agents in their lives thus they are able to make choices free from sexist constraints and institutionalized oppression. The focus remains on the individual (the personal as split from the political) instead of how the individual is located within a heteropatriarchal culture (the personal is political).

Ann Brooks, in *Postfeminisms: Feminism, cultural theory and cultural forms* (1997), uses the term post-feminism in a very different way from most scholars studying and engaging with post-feminism. Brooks claims that, rather than demarcating an anti-feminist movement/historical time frame, post-feminism marks a productive intellectual space similar to poststructuralism, post-colonialism, and post-modernism. She understands post-feminism to be a concept that refers to feminism's interactions with other "posts" within the academy, and she believes that it represents pluralism and difference. Although this is an interesting point and her use of linguistics is intuitive, Brooks seems to be in the minority in how she uses this term and concept.

Susan Douglas (2010) has moved away from the term post-feminism because of the complex and sometimes contradictory ways the term is used. She openly rejects the term because she thinks that the idea of post-feminism has become too complicated. Douglas uses the idea of enlightened sexism in order to describe patriarchal ideas and actions that young girls and women must combat on a daily basis. She prefers the concept of enlightened sexism, explaining that it is "feminist in its outward appearance (of course you can do anything you want) but sexist in its intent (hold on, girls, only up to a certain point, and not in any way that discomfits men or pushes feminist goals one more centimeter forward)" (p. 10). She asserts that the term post-feminism is misleading, because ideas and actions contained under the umbrella of post-feminism actually have nothing to do with feminist goals or objectives.

The most well-known text describing post-feminism has circulated outside of the academy since being published in 1991. Susan Faludi, in her national bestseller *Backlash: The undeclared war against American women* (1991), claims that there has been an explicit backlash against second wave feminism which has been propagated within the mainstream media in a number of ways. She shows how the backlash against feminism has portrayed the feminist movement as actually responsible for many of the injustices suffered by women. She carefully interrogates the backlash against career women after the second wave of feminism, and she points to the contradictions in the various arguments against women working outside of the home. She argues that the social and cultural conditions which have created post-feminism were very purposefully perpetuated by various cultural, religious, and media groups.

Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra argue that the connotation of a backlash against feminism is not able to fully encapsulate the full range of ideas, actions, and motivations of those proclaiming the era of post-feminism. In the introduction to their edited volume, *Interrogating postfeminism: Gender and the politics of popular culture* (2008), they claim that the unidimensional and linear framework of a backlash is too simplistic when considering the politics of post-feminism. They describe post-feminism as a concept which positions women as individualistic, independent consumers who have the freedom to make their own decisions and choices. They argue that post-feminism therefore is premised around the experiences of privileged, often middle-class White women who do occupy consumer-oriented subjectivities. Post-feminism flattens conceptualizations of women and women's experiences by refusing to take into consideration important structural and institutional influences, especially involving ever-present racism, classism, and sexism. In other publications, Tasker and Negra (2005) use film studies in order to show the type of femininity that post-feminism is perpetuating. They assert that there are two types of post-feminist women in recent films. The first post-feminist character represents the commodified image of female agency, where agency usually means that freedom and ability to consume. The second character embodies a “retreatest” mentality; this kind of woman displays her empowerment by retreating from the workforce and public life. This woman embraces traditionally feminine roles, but she does so by asserting her agency and choice through this process of decision making.

Angela McRobbie's most recent text, *The aftermath of feminism: Gender, culture, and social change* (2009), also interrogates the uses of post-feminism within popular culture. In this important text, she shows how women's continued subordination and

oppression are perpetuated through various representations of femininity in popular culture. She shows how consumer culture interpellates women, producing them as consumers and apolitical subjects within continually oppressive, patriarchal structures. She suggests that, although women are assumed to have gained many important rights and opportunities within Western culture, post-feminism works against the continued empowerment of women and girls by forwarding the idea of gender equality. She analyzes film, television, and magazines in order to highlight the ways in which post-feminism is perpetuated in the United Kingdom. In this text, as in many of her other writings, McRobbie uses the example of the movie *Bridget Jones' Diary* in order to illustrate post-feminist thinking and embodiment within Western culture. She claims that the character of Bridget Jones embodies post-feminism in a number of telling ways, and she deconstructs this popular culture text in order to explicate the allure and perpetuation of post-feminism.

Ashleigh Harris (2003) argues that post-feminism has signaled a "more insidious form of patriarchal distribution of power" in various societies. She claims that the gains of the feminist movement have been slowly eroded since the 1980s, and that this has especially been the case within popular culture. Popular culture represents feminism as anachronistic, which leads young women away from feminist movements as actions. She believes that the notion of political correctness has de-radicalized feminism, and that the current post-feminist space is creating another generation of women who are expected to capitulate to the patriarchy in different ways.

Conclusion

Although I separated the literature into the categories of Girls' Studies, third wave feminism, and post-feminism, these three areas of study are all inextricably connected. The literature that I reviewed all points to the importance of studying the creation and perpetuation of girlhood. These three areas also stress the importance of theorizing race, class, gender, and sexuality. The field of Girls' Studies is in need of empirical studies that explore particular contexts in order to make sense of girlness; since there is no a priori existence of girlhood, it is necessary to study and theorize how girlhood comes to be in specific social locations. Girls' Studies is also in need of qualitative research that speaks directly with girls so that they are able to provide their own insight into how girlness exists in their lives. Third wave feminism and post-feminism are important to my research because they inform my theorization of the data, and because third wave and post-feminism discourses are present and influential in the current cultural context of the ethnography. My feminist ethnography collected important data that adds to the growing body of research about girls and girlhood.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

My dissertation was a feminist ethnography in which I studied girls' experiences in an after-school, all girls extracurricular club. I conducted this research in the metro Atlanta area, and I was specifically interested in the ways in which particular subject constructions were facilitated and encouraged by the club. I paid particular attention to factors such as race, class, gender, and sexuality. In order to understand the experiences of the girls in the club, I utilized participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

Methodology

Ethnography

According to Crotty (1998), research methodology is the "research design that shapes our choice and use of particular methods and links them to the desired outcomes" (p. 7). Similarly, Ramazanoglu and Holland (2005) state that methodology in social research "comprises rules that specify how social investigation should be approached" (p. 11). The methodology of this study was feminist ethnography. I will outline ethnography in order to show the benefits of this type of research, along with possible drawbacks or challenges

to this type of research. I will also discuss how I am conceptualizing the term feminist for this particular research project.

Ethnography is able to respond to many different types of research questions. Because it utilizes methods that seek to understand people's lives and environments, ethnography facilitates the creation of complex, layered interpretations that help to understand multiple identities and positionalities. "Qualitative researchers seek to embrace education in all its complexity and specificity, attempting to incorporate and elaborate just those elements that quantitative researchers need to set aside and simplify" (Labaree, 2004, p.68). Rather than classifying people and cultures into simplified and generalized frameworks, ethnography instead is able to portray its subjects in ways that acknowledge complexity and contradiction. This is especially useful when looking at, for example, the interplay between race, class and gender within different aspects of education. The ability of ethnography to acknowledge and investigate many different layers within the research question enables it to facilitate the creation of rich data that speaks to our complex and contradictory world(s). Moreover, ethnography is able to give voice to its subjects in ways that other research methodologies are unable to do (Tedlock, 2000). For example, individual stories are often included within ethnography, as well as direct quotes from those being interviewed and studied. Ethnography thus provides a perspective within research that other methodologies cannot provide with their generalizations and representations based on numbers and statistics. Although feminists and post-colonial anthropologists have problematized the concept of giving voice, it remains true that ethnography, as opposed to other methodologies that focus on generalizability and the authority of the researcher, provides more space in which the

research participants are represented in their own words, even though those words are inevitably chosen, edited, and framed by the researcher. While providing space for the voices of the research subjects, ethnography also often allows for the researcher to situate him/herself in relation to the research subjects and their environments. This is important because this allows for the researcher to work within, rather than against, his or her own subjectivity. All research is subjective, and ethnography (as opposed to many quantitative methods) encourages the researcher to acknowledge the ways in which the research is influenced by the particular subjectivity of the researcher. Because all research is subjective, it is important for researchers to engage in continual self-reflexivity, and this is an important concept that I will theorize in-depth later on in my discussion of power, representation, and the role of the researcher.

Although ethnography is useful for a number of different kinds of research questions, it also has its own limitations. For one, ethnography typically does not encompass large numbers of research subjects. Unlike surveys and other quantitative methods, it cannot easily reach and therefore represent large populations and it therefore is unable to make useful generalizations about groups, cultures or populations. Because ethnography seeks to provide rich descriptions of individual lives and cultures, it logistically is unable to use the sheer numbers of research participants that many other research methodologies can use. This restricts the conclusions and findings for ethnography since it is unable to make generalizations and predictions. Also, since both the compilation and analysis of ethnography is so subjective, many researchers tied to traditional ideas of validity and objectivity reject its observations or findings as too subjective and therefore irrelevant. Often ethnographic writing is viewed as a ‘text’ or as

a piece of writing which does not give it the same kind of credibility as other research methodologies (Vidich & Lyman, 2000). Many see ethnographic research as too loosely defined and therefore unworthy of serious attention (Eisenhart, 2001). The final limitation of ethnography that is worthy of mention is the fact that the term ‘culture’ has multiple meanings and has changed throughout the years (Eisenhart, 2001). Defining culture is a particularly messy yet necessary process, and the various definitions and descriptions of culture make it challenging for ethnographers to consequently study culture and its interaction with other individual and social forces. As Eisenhart notes, “when culture is used as an idea ‘to think with’” it is “provocative and can move research forward” (Eisenhart, 2001, p.16). Yet when it comes to defining culture for a research design, culture must often be conveyed as static and unchanging in order to select and utilize the appropriate methods (Eisenhart, 2001).

My ethnography was feminist. Although I recognize that there are multiple feminisms that offer competing and/or contradictory methods/epistemologies/theoretical frameworks, for the purposes of this discussion I will be using the terms 'feminism' and 'feminist' in a general sense. Following Ramazanoglu and Holland (2005), I conceptualize feminism as a broad umbrella term that can be utilized to think with and through the messy, complicated power relations and practices that directly or indirectly contribute to the oppression and/or subjection of women. Lila Abu-Lughod offers a similar, simplified definition: “A minimal definition [of feminism] might include a concern with women's conditions and with the political, economic, social, and cultural implications of systems of gender for them” (Abu-Lughod, 1993, p. 4). Feminist frameworks are crucial since:

> At present, feminism and feminist theory remains the only lens that specifically names and is reflexive about the politics and problematics of gender and that offers a means of analysis of the complicated ways gender, race, sexuality, class, and embodiment are distinct yet intertwined in dominant structures of power. (Pillow & Mayo, 2007, p. 156)

As Pillow and Mayo illustrate, feminism is not only concerned with gender; rather, race, class, sexual orientation, and other subjectivities must be simultaneously engaged with when using feminism and feminist frameworks.

Because this was a feminist ethnography, I focused on the experiences of the girls in an after-school club, paying particular attention to the ways in which race, class, gender, and sexuality intersected in their lives both inside and outside the club. I was interested in exploring how their girlness played out in the club, and what sorts of influences the club had on how they perceived themselves. Feminists have voiced many important critiques of traditional ethnography, many of which informed my research and data analysis. I will explore these critiques in my later discussion of feminist ethics and power within ethnographic research.

Research Question

My research was focused around one primary question, and three subsequent sub-questions.

- How is girlness conceptualized, perpetuated, and performed in an after-school club for middle school girls?
    - What are the experiences of the girls in the club?

- How do the girls interact with each other, the club sponsors, and the club activities?
- What kinds of discussions are present and not present within the club?
- What ideas and messages about girlhood is the club facilitating?

Research Site

The research site was a middle school in the metro Atlanta area. Washington Middle School[1]is a magnet school located in a middle class neighborhood. As of 2010, the school's demographics were as follows: 9% White, 55% Black, 34% Latino, 2% Asian-American, and less than 1% Native American and Pacific Islander. Although the school is in a middle class neighborhood and appears to have adequate funding, it is a Title I school and 86% of its students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Washington Middle School did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2010. In 2011, the school announced that it was an International Baccalaureate Candidate School.

I was introduced to Washington Middle School by a friend who conducted research in the school. I became interested in the club, the Lady Trojans, after reading the club description on the school's website. The club's description used heavily gendered language and ideas. For example, it claimed that even the "stoutest of *Tom Boys*"[2] would not be able to resist their end-of-the-year high tea. The description referenced activities such as spa day, and it also emphasized the importance of community service and international citizenships. Overall, the description was not very

[1] The names of the school, the girls, and the club sponsors are all psydonyms.
[2] Capitalization and italics used on the website.

well written. It was hard to read and follow, and it contained improper grammar.[3] The club description on the internet was out of date and listed a few club sponsors who were not sponsors during the year that I observed. The Lady Trojans had six club sponsors; 5 of the sponsors were African American and the other sponsor was White. I was very interested in the club because of the overt references to traditional femininity in the club description, and it was easy for me to gain entry in the school because of my friend's connections with the principal.

Data Collection

This ethnography was a year-long study in which I collected data in three different ways. First, I conducted participant observation. Participant observation is a way to "collect data in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe and/or take part in the common and uncommon activities of the people being studied" (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002, p. 2). Although participant observation originated in the discipline of anthropology and was used in order to study those living in cultures outside of the West, it has since been criticized, reconceptualized, and modified in order to be used across a wide variety of disciplines. I utilized participant observation in order to explore the culture of the after-school girls club, and I also used it to inform the questions that I asked in the individual interviews that I conducted. I attempted to use "thick description" as outlined by Geertz (1973). This entailed providing rich, layered descriptions that included the context that was important to future engagements with the data.

[3] I later found this particularly disturbing considering one of the club sponsors was an English "professor" (the school calls their teachers professors) at the school.

The after-school club met every two weeks for one hour, and I was present at those meetings in order to take notes and observe how the girls interacted with each other, how they interacted with the sponsors, the kinds of activities in which they participated, and the explicit and implicit messages they were exposed to given the structure and culture of the club. Although I do not subscribe to a generalizable, methodical way of collecting data, the questions below helped me to analyze more thoroughly the meetings that I attended. Because I am a novice research (and a person who does not easily notice details), I found it helpful to have an observation protocol that I could consult while observing to ensure that I was being as observant and thorough as possible.

Setting

- What does the physical environment look like?
- What is the context of this meeting?
- What kinds of behavior does the physical environment enable, permit, discourage, not permit?

Participants

- How many people are here?
- How are the girls arranged in the room?
- What are the roles of the students and sponsors?

Activities and Interactions

- What is going on?
- What activities are planned?
- How are the girls interacting with each other?
- How are the girls interacting with the sponsors?
- How do the girls interact with the activities?

- How do the girls use verbal communication?
- How do the girls use non-verbal communication?

Subtle Factors

- Who is included/excluded?
- What non-verbal communication is present?
- What does not happen here?

I utilized what Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) define as moderate participation while I observed the meetings and activities of the girls. "Moderate participation occurs when the ethnographer is present at the scene of the action, is identifiable as a researcher, but does not actively participate, or only occasionally interacts, with people in it" (p. 20). I attended all of the meetings and took notes during each of the meetings, but I was not actively involved with the girls outside of the interviews that I conducted. By actively involved, I mean that I did not pursue personal relationships with the girls either during the meetings or outside of the context of the club. Following Lesko and Talburt (2011), I am suspicious of youth researchers who believe they can lessen power dynamics by "going native"; said differently, I recognize that there are inherent power differentials between me and the girls, and although I theorized and paid attention to these dynamics, I do not believe I could lessen them by forming close relationships with the girls or by immersing myself in their lives.

Second, I conducted semi-structured interviews with five of the girls in club. At the beginning of the year, the club had over 30 girls who attended the meetings; by the end of the year, participation was varied, and there were usually 15 girls or less at the

meetings and activities. Outlining what makes research feminist in orientation, Ramazanoglu and Holland (2005) discuss the importance of having face-to-face interactions with women in order to better understand how they make sense of their experiences and every-day meaning making. When utilizing semi-structured interviews, the researcher has an interview guide (interview notes/prompts) that "includes a list of questions and prompts in order to increase the likelihood that all topics will be covered in each interview in more or less the same way" (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002, p. 122). Using semi-structured interviews allowed for the girls to answer open-ended questions in any way that they wanted while also guaranteeing that all of the points I was investigating were covered during the interview.

Third, I used documents and texts that the club created and/or distributed in order to better understand the ways in which they were attempting to represent themselves and their activities. I conducted textual analyses of their club description that I found online, the handouts that they gave the girls, and the brochure that they provided about their community service project. Following Prior (2003), I did not merely see these documents and texts as "containers of content" (p. 3). Rather, I understand documents as containing facts, ideas, and messages, but I also understand that documents "can influence and structure human agents every bit as effectively as the agents influence the things" (p. 3). Recognizing the un-static and fluid nature of documents and their effects/affects on the world, Prior suggests that documents are best studied in their social setting. He asserts that we should pay attention to "how documents are manufactured and how they function rather than simply on what they contain" (p. 4). I theorized how the club's documents

both reflected the people who created them, and how they also created certain subject possibilities for the girls, and for whomever else might have come into contact with them.

Theoretical Framework

Throughout my graduate course work, I have investigated and sustained multiple theoretical allegiances. The theoretical frameworks that I have been existing within and between are critical theory and feminist poststructuralism. Following David Stinson (2009), I used an eclectic theoretical framework that merged critical theory with feminist poststructuralism. I will briefly explain both theoretical frameworks and then discuss how the two could work together.

Critical theory seeks social transformation and emancipation through the critique of the material realities of existence (Marcuse, 1989). Critical theory works toward a critical engagement with oppressive forces within society in order to create conditions of freedom for all people. It critiques perceived social injustices in order to unveil oppressive hierarchies and power relationships. This orientation insists that all relationships and interactions are infused with power differentials, and feminists within this tradition insist on the primacy of race, class, and gender in analyses of power and privilege. Feminists are able to use critical theory when conducting qualitative research and analyzing data. Within this tradition, the feminist researcher can code and analyze data in order to center the voices of the traditionally marginalized within academic research and representation. Researchers can recognize and analyze oppressive power relations in order to understand more fully the ways in which certain groups are marginalized and/or silenced within society. In many ways, I value research that places

socially and historically contextual notions of social justice at the center of the research process. I, too, wish to provide empowering representations of the girls that I will be interviewing and observing; parts of me strive to make sense of the pressures they face using feminist and critical theories that are able to provide concrete, data-supported conclusions and suggestions when investigating power, privilege, and oppression. Research within this tradition asserts that there is such a thing as "liberation" and "justice" and that they can be known, and these terms are defined by the researcher based on the context of the research. Research within this tradition is more linear, less messy, and is able to speak to traditional qualitative research concerns related to validity, trustworthiness, credibility, and dependability.

The second major theoretical allegiance I have is with feminist poststructuralism. This orientation resonates with me because it highlights the socially, historically, and discursively contingent nature of subjectivity. According to Tisdell (1998), there are four important tenets of feminist poststructuralism, including: 1. they build on feminist structural critiques of privilege and oppression; 2. they problemetize grand narratives of Truth; 3. they highlight the shifting and fluid notion of identity and identity construction; and 4. they deconstruct categories and binary opposites. These tenets point to the ways in which feminist poststructuralism challenges and deconstructs traditional, Western conceptualizations of the individual. Within this framework, humanistic notions of an authentic, core, interior self are questioned, and experience is not taken as a given. The problematization of the concept of experience is especially important for qualitative researchers. Experience of research subjects is one of the most important tenets of qualitative research, and to challenge the primacy of experience has significant

implications for qualitative research. Feminist poststructuralists "are interested in different discourses in which different statements and different material and political conditions might be possible" (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p. 4). This framework questions and challenges concepts such as authenticity, validity, trustworthiness, credibility, and dependability.

Following Stinson's (2009) use of theoretical and methodological eclecticism, my research utilized both critical theory and feminist poststructuralism. Stinson asserts that research should not be confined to one theoretical framework; rather, researchers can and should utilize different strengths of sometimes contradictory frameworks in order to respond to contextual circumstances. His framework of theoretical and methodological eclecticism allows for me to use the relevant aspects of both critical theory and feminist poststructuralism. Following critical theory, I believe that girls have the right to self-empowerment, and that an unveiling of unjust social conditions and circumstances is a necessary component of self-empowerment (Freire, 1970). By studying the structure, purposes, and functions of the club, I was able to better understand the types of messages being communicated to the girls about girlhood in order to theorize the workings of racism, sexism, and classism within their lives. There were a number of questions that critical theory helped to address within my research: How were the girls expected to act, and how was this related to their social locations in terms of race, class, gender, and sexuality? How did/could the club help girls to become empowered? How were the girls able to name their own worlds, and how does the club facilitate this or not (Freire, 1970)? How did the girls define empowerment? What political agendas were being perpetuated (intentionally or unintentionally) within the club?

Feminist poststructuralism guided my research in different ways. This theoretical framework allowed me to understand the girls as subjects rather than as individuals (Stinson, 2009). This meant that I could focus on the ways in which the girls were both produced by discourse and producing themselves within discursive webs. In this conceptualization, the girls made sense of themselves through the discourses that were made available, but there was no easy translation between the messages the club was sending and the ways in which the girls interacted with those messages. Feminist poststructuralism interrupts positivist notions of the stable individual who acts coherently and rationally and instead insists that subjects are produced and created based on the social, historical, and political discourses that are available. This implies that there is no such thing as empowerment or liberation; rather, girls are constantly negotiating discourses in order to define themselves within their contexts.

In order to better understand how I can utilize an eclectic theoretical framework, there are four primary academic works that I am using for guidance. As mentioned earlier, David Stinson advocates for the acceptance of using more than one theoretical framework within educational research. His 2004 dissertation entitled, "African American male students and achievement in school mathematics: A critical postmodern analysis of agency" utilizes critical theory, post-modernism, and critical race theory to make sense of his data. Stinson justifies his use of eclecticism by outlining his purposes of using each of the theoretical frameworks, and he makes the case that theoretical purism is an unnecessary constraint on educational researchers.

Similarly, Venus Evans-Winters (2005) uses an eclectic theoretical framework in her ethnography entitled *Teaching black girls: Resiliency in urban classrooms*. In this

urban ethnography, Evans-Winters uses post-modernism and black feminist theory in order to facilitate critical, nonessentializing analyses of black girls within urban education. She argues that, although some tenets of black feminist theory and post-modernism seem to contradict one another, it is nonetheless appropriate to utilize useful components of each of the theoretical paradigms when analyzing ethnographic data.

Patti Lather and Chris Smithies' (1994) work with women with HIV/AIDS is an example of the merging of critical theory and feminist poststructuralism. Arguably, they are wedded to ideas of emancipation and liberation, yet they do not see these terms as static or universal. Within their research, they work with the women for self-empowerment and understanding, yet they simultaneously reject positivist notions of the individual and of liberation. The women create their own definitions of empowerment and self based on the discourses available to them, and both researchers help the women to create their own self definitions.

Similarly, Elizabeth St. Pierre's (1995) dissertation research arguably straddles critical theory and feminist poststructuralism. As a feminist researcher, she works toward better understandings of the lives of the women whom she is researching. She is openly interested in the politics behind women's lives, and the ways in which women negotiate various oppressions. Yet she does not subscribe to positivist notions of Truth, liberation, or emancipation. Instead, she explores how "women construct their subjectivities within the limits and possibilities of the discourses and cultural practices that are available to them" (2000, p. 258). She takes a critical approach when analyzing the structural constraints the women face, yet she simultaneously complicates her structural analyses with discussions of subjectivity, discourse, and agency.

Data Analysis

My data analysis consisted of a two-fold approach. My first way of analyzing data followed a more traditional approach in which I coded, memoed, analyzed, and debriefed with my advisor. My second approach was poststructural and allowed me to interact with the data in different ways using varying theoretical orientations and perspectives. As Talburt (2004) explains in her article entitled, "Ethnographic responsibility without the 'real,'" data analysis is inevitably influenced by how researchers "conceptualize the purposes of and audiences for their research" (p. 82). She asserts that researchers who wish to "produce useful knowledge, or knowledge that might be applied in practice in multiple contexts" are generally more concerned with traditional notions of verification. Conversely, she suggests that traditional ideas of verification are unnecessary and even harmful for researchers who wish to "challenge readers' sensibilities," or who wish to encourage their audience to "question commonsense" (p. 82). Instead, researchers can allow for uncertainty and multiplicity within ethnography by refusing to participate in positivistic ideas of reality and truth that seek better methods and accounts of research. Because I used my research data in different ways, in what follows I explain both approaches to data analysis.

In my first approach to data analysis, I identified themes from within my observation, interview, and document data in order to better understand the ways in which girls were influenced by patriarchal, Eurocentric structures and ideals. I was specifically interested in the messages that the club facilitated about race, class, gender, and sexuality. In order to analyze my data, I used different codes in order to identify salient themes. "Code[s] represent and capture a datum's primary content and essence"

(Saldana, 2009, p. 3). I coded my participant observation notes using initial coding during my first cycle of coding. Initial coding breaks down qualitative data into parts in order to examine them for similarities and differences (Saldana, 2009). Initial coding is especially appropriate for ethnographic data collection, and it is an appropriate coding scheme for novice researchers. In order to code my interview data, I used initial coding, and I also used in vivo coding. In vivo coding uses the words of the participants in order to generate patterns and themes. In vivo coding prioritizes and honors the participants' voices by using their words and phrases in the coding process (Saldana, 2009). During the second cycle of coding, I used focused coding. Focused coding uses the most salient or frequent initial codes in order to develop categories and theories that support the data. The two rounds of coding helped me to better conceptualize what sorts of themes I wished to theorize from my data.

Throughout the research process, I also used memos to help with my thinking and coding processes. "Memo-writing is the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers. When you write memos, you stop and analyze your ideas about the codes in any—and every—way that occurs to you during the moment...it prompts you to analyze your data and codes early in the research process" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 72). Memos also served to heighten my self-reflexivity, which is an integral part of feminist ethnography. In order to critically engage with my interpretations of the data, I worked closely with my advisor, Dr. Esposito, and she checked my data patterns and themes. We had multiple conversations about my interpretations in order to ground my interpretations in my observation and interview data.

My second approach to data analysis involved using poststructural ideas and concepts to explore possibilities for meaning making. I used poststructuralism in two different ways during data analysis. First, I used my data analyses in chapter 5 to disrupt the traditional data analysis presented in chapter 4. I provided multiple readings of the same data sets in order to point to the socially constructed nature of data analysis and data representation. Second, in the data analyses in chapter 5, I utilized poststructural ideas and concepts in order to make meaning of the data. In poststructural interpretations of data analysis, there is no truth about reality to be found within the data; rather, a focus on discourse and subjectivity is used in an effort to create meaning from the data. “The language of discourse and subjectivity offer ways of talking about complexities and contradictions in understanding girls' schooling” (Jones, 1993, p. 157). I located discursive regularities, “objects, forms, concepts, statements and themes relating to a particular issue” (Grbich, 2007, p. 149) that constituted particular discourses, but I also focused on discontinuities, or disruptions, in order to track the ways in which particular discourses constitute, create, and are challenged/altered by different subjectivities or by different actions. During data analysis, I recognized that the discourses that I located from the transcriptions and observation notes were a product of my own subjectivity, as well as a product of my/our current social, political, and cultural location(s). By immersing myself in the literature of Girls' Studies in order to identify discursive regimes relating to girlhood and girl identity, I was able to create meaning from the data that I collected by identifying the ways in which the data supports, contradicts, and/or challenges previous research that is concerned with the ways in which girls are socialized and constituted.

Validity

Rather than rely on modernist conceptualizations of trustworthiness that assume there is a Truth to the data that can be uncovered through proper methods and analysis, I utilized Patti Lather's (2007) most recent conceptualizations of validity "in the science possible after the critique of science" (p. x). Lather speaks to the importance of challenging authoritative renderings of qualitative inquiry. Rather than seeking to enact "better" methods and methodology, she suggests working a doubled science:

> My interest in a feminist double(d) science, then, means both/and science, and not-science, working within/against the dominant, contesting borders, tracing complicity. Here, the doubled task is to gain new insight into what not knowing means toward the telling of not knowing too much, and rigor becomes something other than asserting critical or interpretive mastery. (p. 14)

Lather insists that a space of not knowing, or of rejecting traditional, scientific notions of authorial mastery, is a productive space in which regimes of truth are called into question while allowing for contradiction and uncertainty. It is for these reasons that she suggests alternative notions of ideals such as validity, trustworthiness, and credibility. Lather plays with four new ways of approaching validity, which she calls "transgressive validity," and they include ironic validity, paralogical validity, rhizomatic validity, and voluptuous validity. For the purposes of my ethnographic study, I will explore ironic and paralogical validity.

Ironic validity illustrates the problematics with asserting truth claims while foregrounding the insufficient nature of language (Lather, 2007). “Contrary to dominant validity practices where the rhetorical nature of scientific claims is masked with methodological assurances, a strategy of ironic validity proliferates forms, recognizing that they are rhetorical and without foundation” (p. 121). I worked within ironic validity by providing multiple truths/stories/narratives about my data. Instead of engaging in one reading of the data texts, I challenged methodological certainty by refusing to commit to one way of “better” knowing.

Similarly, paralogical validity is concerned with identifying difference and heterogeneity within data in order to point to contradictions and disruptions in “the territory we already occupy” (Lather, 2007, p. 128). The goal of paralogical validity is “to foster differences and let contradictions remain in tension” (p. 122). Lather illustrates, using a recent dissertation on African-American women and leadership, how the use of strategic member checking and peer debriefing can assist with paralogical validity. Member checking and peer debriefing can be used to de-center the authoritative voice of the researcher, and these strategies can also be used to provide counter narratives to the initial data analysis performed by the researcher. These strategies “refine our sensitivity to differences, introduce dissensus into consensus, and legitimate via fostering heterogeneity” (p. 123). I worked within paralogical validity by using peer debriefing as described above. Although I was not able to member check because of logistical circumstances, I conducted peer debriefing with Dr. Esposito and I was able to record differences in our analyses of the data. These differences are represented in the different, and often contradictory, interpretations and representations of data presented in chapter 5.

Following Lather, chapter 5 is a space in which I allowed for the contradictions of the data to "remain in tension."

Ethics and the Role of the Feminist Researcher

There are different levels of ethics with which I needed to engage in relation to this feminist ethnography. At the most basic level, I protected the confidentiality of my participants by using pseudonyms, and I gained consent from them before conducting my research. I also acquired IRB approval for my project before beginning. I conducted interviews with girls who turned in their consent forms, and they were free to stop the interview at any time.

There are many ways in which feminist researchers have attempted to address, challenge, and work within the ethical problematics of power that accompany "the gaze" within feminist ethnography. Because feminist ethnographers are usually committed to using their research for social, political, or economic "good," they have theorized a number of ways to negotiate the contentious history of anthropology and ethnography. I am going to outline different approaches feminist ethnographers use when addressing these issues, but they are in no particular order or hierarchy. At the end of this discussion, I will explain how I negotiated these issues in my own ethnographic research.

First, feminist researchers insist on theorizing and addressing issues of power in the research relationship (Glesne, 2005). There is an inherent imbalance of power between those conducting research, and those being researched. As many scholars have noted, researchers tend to research "down," or people who have less social, cultural, and/or economic capital than they do. Often, researchers have more social power than the

people that they research, and feminists call into question how these power dynamics inevitability influence the research process and “results” (Bishop, 2005). Feminist researchers have explored different ways to address these power imbalances. Some researchers explore the differences in research when research is conducted by a cultural insider (Merriam et al., 2001). Cultural insiders can navigate the social location of the research participants, and some researchers believe that it is possible to lessen the power differential between researcher and participant by having this cultural insider status. Similarly, some researchers feel that it is important for research to be participatory, and that researchers should ideally be invited into their research contexts by community members (Bishop, 2005). Instead of forcing a pre-determined research agenda onto a community, some feminist researchers believe that it is important for the community to be inextricably involved with all stages of the research project, and that this should start with an invitation from the community to the researcher to do research (Smith, 1999). The intention behind this kind of participatory research is to lessen power dynamics by allowing the research participants to be fully involved in the creation and execution of the research project. This practice can be especially appropriate for communities that have a long and painful history of being colonized (Smith, 1999; Bishop, 2005). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) asserts, from an indigenous New Zealand perspective, that previously colonized communities deserve to set their own research agendas, in order to further their own priorities and own the knowledge that is being created for and about them. This conceptualization of academic research troubles the traditional power dynamics inherent in research by placing the concerns and priorities of those being researched at the center

while allowing them to directly control what kinds of knowledges are being produced and circulated.

Similarly, Elizabeth Enslin (1994) interrogates the power relations within ethnographic research. In her article entitled “Feminist practice and the limitations of ethnography,” she argues that feminists must be involved in political and social activism in order to make their academic work relevant and ethical. In order for feminist researchers to use their power and privilege in productive and useful ways, feminist research must be praxis oriented. Enslin does not believe it is enough to write in feminist ways about feminist concerns. “The discourse of feminism alone in our writings does not alter the fact of women's oppression” (Enslin, 1994, p. 552). She believes that feminists need to be activists, bridging the space between their academic privilege and those that have been victims of social, cultural, colonial and/or economic oppression. “We must actively consider ways in which to close the gap between those who write, those who read, and those who are written about” (Enslin, 1994, p. 552). She asserts that praxis, the intentional aligning of theory and action, is the most productive and ethical way for feminists to enact their commitments to social justice.

Many feminist researchers use specific research practices to address the inherent power dynamics present within academic research. Although they do not explicitly name this practice as feminist, Rubin and Rubin (2005) refer to the people that they interview as conversational partners. “Our term conversational partner has the advantage of emphasizing the active role of the interviewee in shaping the discussion and in guiding what paths the research should take” (p. 14). While this focus on linguistics may seem to be a superficial way of addressing the power differentials in interviewing, they argue that

this representation of the relationship between the interviewer and the participant allows for the possibility of the co-production of knowledge, which is arguably a feminist research priority (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Tedlock, 2000).

Member checking is another research practice used by feminists to address issues of power and privilege in research. Member checking involves returning to the research participants with the textual representation that the researcher has created in order to give the participants a voice in how they are represented. Rather than claiming complete textual authority, feminist researchers who use member checking attempt to share the power of authorship by returning to the participants in order to get their input and/or approval before the research text is finalized. They can also then use the differences in data interpretation and analysis provided by member checking in order to produce other validities, as suggested by Lather (2007).

Critical self-reflexivity is another important way that feminist researchers attempt to address power differentials within their research. "Feminist researchers and other critical ethnographers use self-reflection about power as a tool to deepen ethnographic analysis and to highlight the dilemmas of fieldwork" (Naples & Sachs, 2000, p. 195). Self-reflexivity is used in order to speak directly to the exploitative nature of many earlier ethnographies that were carried out by Western researchers and field workers. As Ramazanoglu and Holland (2005) state, "Reflexivity, in the sense of making explicit the play of power relations in your research process, and in identifying your relationship to the researched, is particularly important given the interrelation of politics, ethics and epistemology in feminist research" (p. 158). By examining their own subjectivities, as well as examining the consequential power relations embedded within research

relationships, feminists attempt to challenge the seemingly inherent hierarchy that exists in most research projects. Self-reflexivity is seen as a necessary and integral part of nearly all feminist research projects, and this is especially true for researchers who are committed to negotiate ethically "the gaze" within their own research.

Closely related to critical self-reflexivity is the idea that feminist researchers disclose and interrogate their own social location. Some argue that it is important for feminist researchers to "expose" their "position" when actively researching and writing about their data (Grbich, 2007, p. 96). It is argued that feminist researchers must be aware of their own power and privilege during the research process, and that this should be perhaps be verbalized within interactions with research participants, as well as within data analysis and representation.

Some feminist researchers reject the idea that research can be more ethical when power relationships are acknowledged and made visible. These researchers instead choose to write ethnographic representations as fiction or as an authoethnography in an attempt to point to the fact that all representation is, in fact, fiction in many important ways (Davies, 2000; Grbich, 2007; Visweswaran, 1994). These researchers avoid attempting to create more "real" or "better" representations by making explicit the creation of research stories and narratives.

In my own research I used self-reflexivity in order to theorize the role of power within my ethnography. Because I was not an insider to the group that I researched, it was important for me to examine my privilege and power as a White, (usually) middle

class,[4] female graduate student who was not born and reared in the South. I examined my power and privilege by submersing myself in feminist literature, debriefing with my advisor, and memoing. I also theorized my subjectivities in relation to the interviews that I conducted, the notes that I took, and how I engaged with the club's activities and events.

Display(s) of Data in Report

Poststructuralism "frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Similar to St. Pierre (2000) and Lather and Smithies (1997), I struggled with how to "trouble" authoritative representations of data. In her essay "Nomadic inquiry in the smooth spaces of the field: A preface," St. Pierre (2000) describes the frustrations that she encountered while trying to determine how to negotiate the structures of the dissertation process with her own understandings of her ethnographic location, participants, and data. Referring to her dissertation, St. Pierre says that, "that very long essay employed an arborescent, circular architecture and lumbered along under a fairly benign disciplinary gaze dutifully tracking the prescribed grid" (p. 261). She claims that she had trouble knowing where to begin and end her "long essay" because both would be arbitrary and somewhat meaningless markers that didn't make sense with the kinds of stories she was trying to tell. She was saddened to realize that the voices of the women in her ethnography would not be

[4] My class history is complicated. My parents grew up poor, working on their family farms in Iowa. They both managed to earn graduate degrees (through a lot of hard work and a grant from the NDEA), and I was consequently raised middle class. Since entering graduate school, I have been living well below the poverty line, but I understand the difference between choosing to live below the poverty line and not having a choice in relation to class location. I also understand that even though I have to make very deliberate financial decisions, I do have the privilege of having a social safety net from my parents, and this gives me a certain amount of privilege.

welcomed before chapter four. She was not comfortable with authoritative ways she was expected to write about her methodology and data analysis. In order to work within the rigid dissertation structures that dis-allowed the introduction of her participants before chapter four, St. Pierre decided to use the "centuries-old theatrical convention" of the "aside" as a "textual space where they might perform too soon" (p. 271). She used the aside throughout her dissertation as a way to "speak to the reader without the rest of the text hearing me....as nomad space that might encroach on the authoritative, legitimate, and ponderous text that surrounded it" (p. 271). By splitting her text and using two voices simultaneously within her dissertation, St. Pierre challenged the authoritative-ness that is expected within dissertations. She was able to work within the structure to both perform normalized academic writing while troubling the structures and expectations of that very same writing.

Similarly, Lather and Smithies (1997) challenge traditional, canonized data analysis and presentation with their text *Troubling the angels: Women living with HIV/AIDS*. Instead of presenting a straight-forward narrative of the struggles that women living with HIV/AIDS face, they authored a multi-layered text that plays with issues of voice, representation, and activism. The book is non-linear, and parts of it are written in a split-text format. The voices of the women are in the top half of the page, and Lather and Smithies' journal entries, theorizing, and/or commentary are on the bottom of the page. This format encourages the recognition that there is no correct interpretation or representation; the layout of the text purposely unmasks the construction of a text that is usually hidden from view. Also, throughout the text, there are "Intertexts" and text boxes that focus on different aspects of their topics. Some contain historical information while

others contain statistics that supplement what the reader has read so far. These interruptions in the text provide context and different layers of information for the reader, and they complicate the readers' understandings of the stories that they are reading.

Following St. Pierre (2000) and Lather and Smithies (1997), I engaged in non-traditional data analysis in order to show the problematic assumptions inherent in traditional data analysis. In chapter 4 I presented a linear, coherent representation of the data by presenting three themes that were grounded in the data. I created these themes by coding the data, debriefing with peers, and writing memos. In chapter 5, I disrupted the traditional data analysis and presentation in chapter 4 by presenting multiple readings of the same data. In chapter 5 I also included data that was ignored (silenced?) in chapter 4. Additionally, I analyzed my subjectivities and explored how I was changed by the research. I also theorized how my positionalities inevitably affected the data and data analyses. By writing two different chapters of data analysis, I was able to highlight the social construction of data and data analysis, and I was also able to trouble authoritative, traditional representations of the research process.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this ethnographic inquiry was to investigate the ways in which certain gender practices are produced, encouraged, and performed. As stated earlier, because they are all inextricably connected, gender must be theorized in relation to race, class, and sexuality. I conducted participant observation during all but one of the Lady Trojan club meetings, interviewed six of the girls that were club participants, and performed textual analyses of the club handouts. In this chapter, I utilized "traditional" qualitative data analysis in order to code and then identify salient themes from my data. I coded my participant observation notes and interviews using initial coding during the first cycle of coding. Initial coding separates qualitative data into parts in order to examine the data for similarities and differences (Saldana, 2009). Initial coding resulted in codes such as: religion, uniforms, and emphasis on being a lady. After the first cycle of coding, I also used in vivo coding in order to prioritize the actual words and language of the participants during coding (Saldana, 2009). An example of an in vivo code that occurred frequently was "being a lady means to respect yourself." During the second cycle of coding, I used focused coding in order to distinguish the salient and frequent initial codes. This allowed me to develop categories that supported my data. I also wrote memos to further problematize my thinking after I completed participant observation at the club meetings. Memoing helped me to ground my observations theoretically, and it also

helped me to explore different questions that I had after observing, as well as tease out the complex dynamics of my role as researcher at the club meetings. As Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) explore, writing can be a rich and productive activity that pushes inquiry in many different directions; this was true for me during data analysis. Many of the memos helped me to identify important aspects of the themes that I identified within my data.

After my first and second cycles of coding, I grouped related codes together in order to create code families (Bogdin & Biklen, 2003). I used these code families to help organize and conceptualize my data. After grouping the codes into code families, I began to look for theoretical connections between the code families in order to create themes. After examining the literature within Girls' Studies and feminist theory, I identified three themes that address the research questions. First, Eurocentrism was present within the club's spoken and unspoken rules, activities, and standards of behavior. Second, Christianity was used covertly and overtly within the club. Third, the girls were conceptualized as and therefore treated as objects by the club sponsors.

Eurocentrism

The term Eurocentrism was first given theoretical weight after Samir Amin's publication of his book, *Eurocentrism* in 1989 (Cohen, 1997). Since then, theorists in a variety of disciplines have used the concept to explain the historical roots, maintenance, and perpetuation of Western European dominance and White supremacy. Eurocentrism is the centering and consequent normalization of European ideas, philosophies, traditions, and customs. Rooted in colonialism, Eurocentrism often serves to uphold European

values and traditions as more civilized and advanced than other cultural traditions and practices (Chatterjee, 1986; Feagin, 2001). The valorization of Europe often goes unmarked and unnoticed within the United States because so many mainstream practices and philosophies are rooted in Western European values. "White and European are viewed as the norm and thus not named as other races and ethnicities are named" (Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist, 2003, p. 66-67). Multicultural educators argue that Eurocentrism devalues the home cultures of minority children, potentially lowering their self-esteem, encouraging disinvestment in formal education, and perpetuating White supremacy (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995). Eurocentrism also serves uphold dominant narratives that justify existing power structures and inequalities (Banks, 1997).

Lady Trojans Etiquette Day

One of the most important meetings of the year was the etiquette meeting. The sponsors repeatedly proclaimed that it was important for the girls to know "proper etiquette." The sponsors were all visibly excited about the opportunity for the girls to dress up and practice having a formal dinner. According to Meredith, the focus on etiquette was how club sponsors advertised the club to the girls' parents at the beginning of the year when students were allowed to choose which clubs they wanted to join:

> Alison: So did your mom, do you feel like your mom knew what the club was when she signed up, or she just thought…
>
> Meredith: She was like talking to Ms. Summers 'cause Ms. Summers was here and we were looking at the board that they had up, and it was talking about etiquette. And I think she wanted me to learn that, but the club doesn't

> really…the only part we really did with etiquette was like, one activity. So, she, I don't think she really knew that we'd be doing like, decorating cupcakes and painting our nails.

The etiquette meeting was the main way that the sponsors advertised the club at the beginning of the school year when parents visit the school to sign their children up for extra-curricular activities.

Prior to the etiquette meeting, the sponsors talked repeatedly about the importance of what the girls were going to learn. The day of, the cafeteria was decorated extensively, and the sponsors made the food that the girls ate. When I walked into the cafeteria, at each place setting was a pink etiquette booklet that was ten pages in length. The booklet looked like it was put together in a hurry from a number of different sources that provided contradictory information about place settings. The first page of the booklet provided a basic description of setting the table, and this page stressed the importance of discussions of pluralism and food traditions: "Every country has traditions and customs about how food, dishes and eating utensils are laid out so people can eat…if this setting is different from your customs, talk to your children about the differences." This was reiterated at the bottom of the page: "Encourage discussion about alternative table settings." The page had a diagram of the "usual table setting in the U.S." The first page of the book was obviously taken from a teacher's guidebook since it included pedagogical tips about how to teach about etiquette. The first page of the booklet was incongruous with the rest of the booklet. It was the only page that encouraged pluralism and the respect for other customs and traditions in relation to serving food and eating. When taken out of context of what took place at the Lady Trojans meeting about

etiquette, it would appear that the club encouraged discussions about different cultural and historical traditions because of the contents of this first page. The messages on this page were intended to open up space for girls with varying backgrounds, and they encouraged dialogue about culture, tradition, and eating. This was in stark contrast to the lack of conversation about pluralism and varying cultural traditions at the meeting. The sponsors did not talk about this first page, and they did not acknowledge the cultural value of other eating traditions during the meeting, even though one of the sponsors verbally expressed to the girls that they intended to do so. At the meeting prior to etiquette day, one of the sponsors proclaimed that they would be teaching the girls about "eating traditions from around the world" (Observation notes, October 26, 2010), but there was no mention of global eating traditions outside of those of Western Europe on the day of the meeting. I assert that the privileging of Western European traditions and customs is Eurocentric, and that the uncritical centering of Western European traditions necessarily devalues other customs and traditions. Not only did the sponsors not encourage discussions about alternative eating traditions and customs, they did not explicitly name the customs they were teaching as Western European. And although this was made explicit in the etiquette booklet, it was only done so on the first page, and this was not discussed during the actual meeting. The Eurocentric nature of how the sponsors define etiquette was unnamed and unmarked. The etiquette rules that were presented at the meeting were presented as the Truth about etiquette, and there was no room for pluralism or for the honoring of different cultural or family traditions. During my interview with Zykeria, she expressed that she liked the etiquette meeting when I asked her about activities that she wished the club could have done. When I asked her about the

specific traditions that were propagated during the meeting, she did not know where the eating traditions came from, although she claimed to have read through the booklet after the meeting. The fact that she did not know that etiquette is culturally contextual points to the ways in which Eurocentrism was propagated during the Lady Trojans' etiquette meeting:

> Alison: What else do you think that they could do to help girls your age?
>
> Zykeria: Um, when, how to eat properly, I think that was a good one.
>
> Alison: Mmm. So what did you learn with that?
>
> Zykeria: How you wasn't supposed to um, cut like several pieces and leave them all on the tray. Like cut the piece you gonna eat, and eat it…
>
> Alison : Where do those traditions come from? Do you know?
>
> Zykeria: I really don't know. Probably how..mmmm…I wanna say like…I really don't know.

This exchange was followed by my explaining how different cultures have different traditions and proper ways of eating. Zykeria seemed surprised and interested in the fact that there was not just one proper way of eating. This is an example of the ways in Eurocentrism existed as unnamed and unmarked. White, Western European traditions were presented as normalized, maintaining and justifying their cultural dominance. Etiquette was narrowly defined, which led to the conceptualization of girlhood being narrowly defined. The right kind of girl was assumed to have a particular kind of knowledge (albeit superficial at best) and demeanor.

In addition to centering, and therefore normalizing, Whiteness, the Eurocentric eating practices that were present at the meeting also have particular class signification. As Bourdieu (1984) explicates, attributes such as tastes in food, music, and art are class markers which serve to fracture societies into recognizable social class hierarchies. Class distinctions are learned at a young age; visible social class markers are taught (explicitly and implicitly) to young children which leads to the social and cultural reproduction of class hierarchies. Arguably, the club sponsors were trying to teach the girls how to be read as middle and/or upper class by introducing them to the manners associated with particular classed situations. The place settings that were described in the club handout were settings that one would find in upper class homes and restaurants. The club sponsors were showing the girls how to visibly mark themselves as upper class.

The valorization of Eurocentric ideas about etiquette relate to Nayak and Kehily's (2008) conceptualization of the neoliberal girl. As outlined in chapter 2, Nayak and Kehily claim that one particular construction of girlhood involves the idea that girls should be flexible, socially mobile subjects willing to capitulate to neoliberal ideals and practices. Similarly, Harris (2004) discusses the idea of the can-do girl. "Flexibility and self-actualization are now expected of young women" (p. 16). The sponsors were arguably trying to encourage the girls to learn how to be flexible and socially mobile. At the meeting prior to etiquette day, one of the sponsors proclaimed, "If you go to the White House, you'd be intimidated, but we are going to help with that" (Observation notes, October 26, 2010). There are a number of issues to unpack in this statement and its corresponding assumptions. First, the sponsor was assuming that the girls lack the cultural knowledge to be comfortable in the kind of formal situation that they would

encounter at the White House. She was arguably assuming that while they are not yet can-do girls, they can be if they have the correct manners and demeanor. She was engaging in deficit thinking about the girls, but believed that their deficits could be overcome with flexibility and the right kind of knowledge. Second, she was assuming that she had the cultural knowledge that would make them comfortable in this situation. She positioned herself as the authority who was there to educate the girls on how to be the kind of girl who could function seemingly naturally in this particular social situation. Third, she was perpetuating a particular notion of the meritocratic American Dream. The message was if the girls learned how to act, if they learned Eurocentric etiquette, they could earn their way to the White House. While this may be actually possible, it is highly unlikely. Fourth, she was reifying Eurocentric norms by positing the White House, which is a very Eurocentric institution, as the ultimate social space for which the girls should strive.

Lady Trojans' High Tea

While the etiquette meeting was an extremely important meeting for the club, the high tea at the end of the year seemed to be the most important meeting, at least for the sponsors. The sponsors changed the date of the high tea after they handed out a save the date note card. This led to some apparent confusion among the girls, and the sponsors were visibly frustrated because of this. The sponsors told the girls in the meetings prior to the high tea that they must wear their "Sunday Best" to the tea, which included, as stated explicitly by one of the sponsors, a fancy dress, pearls, gloves that they can buy at the "Oriental" store, and hats (Observation notes, March 29th, 2011). The sponsor added that they would have some extra hats for the girls in case they did not own any. The use

of the word “Oriental” is highly problematic. As Edward Said (1978) famously theorized, the Orient was a Western, exoticized creation that served to create an Other, the Middle East, against which the West defined itself. It was arguably Eurocentrism that created the false set of assumptions that accompanied the notion of the Orient. The club sponsor’s use of the word Oriental is a minor but poignant point worth noting when discussing the Eurocentrism of the club.

The high tea was presented as the most important meeting for the club. Throughout the year, the sponsors stressed that the high tea was a space in which the girls could dress up and be elegant ladies. There was no discussion about the history of formal teas, and there was also no discussion about the historical roots of the gloves and hats that they were expected to wear to the tea. The European roots of this tradition were once again unnamed and consequently centered and normalized. The girls were told that it was extremely important for them to dress up and look beautiful for the high tea. Beauty was defined in one exclusive way: as properly dressed in a fancy dress with pearls and a hat. There was no discussion about beauty or different clothing traditions, and there was no discussion with the girls about whether or not they were interested in this activity.

The Propagation of Christianity

The second theme that I identified from my data was the propagation of Christianity. The club was not advertised as being a Christian club. There was nothing on the club’s website that alluded to the club being a Christian club. The club propagated Christianity in explicit and implicit ways. I first describe how the club explicitly

promoted Christianity, and then I discuss how the club implicitly propagated Christian norms and values.

Explicit Examples of the Propagation of Christianity

From my observations, the club sponsors seemed to assume that all the girls were Christian. The sponsors made a number of references to church throughout the year. The references were obviously to Christian notions of church. The sponsors often referenced church and Christianity when stressing the importance of dressing properly. For example, one of the club sponsors advised the girls to wear their "Sunday best" for the high tea at the end of the year (Observation notes, March 29th, 2011). The same club sponsor referred to church when describing why she did not allow one of the girls to attend the Lady Trojans' meeting. She sent the girl home after school because her pink Lady Trojans shirt was too wrinkled: "That is not representative of the club. Would you go to church wearing stuff like that?" (Observation notes, January 25th, 2011).

The sponsors also seemed to assume that I was Christian. One of their activities was packing sack lunches at a food bank. This activity was touted as a community service activity, but the food bank was located eight miles from the school that the girls attended. Eight miles is not a long distance in some communities, but it is a significant distance in metro Atlanta, where there is high population density. The food bank was run and supported by one of the sponsor's churches. Ms. Summers attended a Baptist church, and as part of their outreach, they provided boxes of food for families in need. Before one of the meetings, Ms. Summers proudly told me about the food bank after handing me the brochure. I was very surprised to see bible verses on the brochures that they give the

girls. Ms. Summers described the food bank to me, and one of the most startling features of the food bank was that each box of food had a bible included, and after the family takes the food, a representative from the church is sent to their house in order to evangelize to the family. Ms. Summers said that the church representative follows up with the family in order to "help them with their other needs besides food" (Observation notes, February 8th, 2011). She gave me a knowing look when she said "other needs," and her assumption seemed to be that I recognized the importance of Christian churches reaching out to those not yet saved. Within the Southern United States, evangelical Baptist churches spend much time and energy trying to save non-Christians from the damnation that comes from not being saved. To be saved means to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and Baptists believe that that is the only way people can enter Heaven. If an individual does not accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, Baptists believe that he or she will go to Hell (Southern Baptist Convention website, http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/basicbeliefs). Ms. Summers' pride in her church's mission and outreach was apparent from her description of the food bank, and I felt like she expected me to have the same response while listening to her description of her church's "community service."

The sponsors handed out a brochure about the food pantry, and on the brochure there were two quoted bible verses, and one additional reference to Jesus, in what appears to be their mission statement: "Together we serve Jesus Christ by serving others and spreading His love." There is a section at the top of the page entitled, "How can my church become involved in Storehouse ministries?" Again, the assumption was that the girls attended church, and since the food bank was run by Southern Baptist churches, it

seems safe to assume that the sponsors believed that all the girls in the club are Christian. If the assumption was not that all the girls are Christian, at the very least, there was no recognition of potential alternate religious practices or beliefs. The connection to Christianity was not problematized (i.e., perhaps the sponsors could have mentioned that there are other non-profit and non-secular organizations that help serve the community), and was therefore normalized and perpetuated.

The last activity in which the girls participated was the final way in which the club explicitly evangelized to the girls. During the two meetings prior to the high tea, the girls were given a 25-page booklet. On each page of the booklet there was a color picture that included African American women, accompanied by a corresponding lesson. All of the lessons began with the phrase: "I've learned…" At the bottom of each picture was a bible verse that supported the sentence about what had been learned. The life lessons represented in the booklet cover a variety of topics, including love, child-rearing, marriage, and morality. For example, one of the pages reads: "I've learned….That when you're in love…with GOD, your mate, your children, or your fellow man, it shows. 1 Corinthians 13:1-8." Another explicitly Christian message was as follows: "I've learned…That life is tough, but I'm tougher, because I draw my strength from GOD. Phillipians 4:12, 13" (capitalization in the original). Each girl was expected to read through the booklet and select three of the pictures, lessons, and bible verses that best represented what they had learned in the club. The sponsors expected the girls to actively identify with the bible verses on the handouts. The girls then cut out the pictures and lessons in order to make a booklet to give to their mothers at the high tea. There was not much conversation among the girls during this activity that I could hear. Most of the

girls seemed to enjoy it, and they were all actively participating during the meeting. During our interview Taylor expressed that she enjoyed the activity when I asked her which club activities were her favorite:

> Alison: So you liked the column one, you liked the decorating cupcakes, what else did you like?
>
> Taylor: I think it was the collage one
>
> Alison: Oh, the collage one too…
>
> Taylor: It had, we just had to put a bunch of pictures, like, it's your story. It's no one else's. The only way it could be someone else's was if they copied yours, but it's your story and no one else can like take it away from you
>
> Alison: I like that a lot. "Cause no one's going to pick the same however many…and even if they do pick the same ones, it…
>
> Taylor: It may be in different…views of something. 'Cause I could view Beyonce as like the best singer ever and they could view, I don't really like her. And she could be a part of their bad memories
>
> Alison: Right, right.
>
> Taylor: So everything has a different meaning to some people in that collage.

What is interesting about this is that Taylor perceived that she had a wide range of choices during this activity, and that she could show her individuality through "canned"

messages that have very narrow themes and foundations—namely Christianity, heterosexuality, and traditional femininity.

Implicit Examples of the Propagation of Christianity

There were three ways in which the club implicitly propagated Christian ideals and values. First, as mentioned earlier, the club had mandatory community service in which they stocked sack lunches at a food bank that was run by one of the club sponsors' churches. The brochure for the food bank had explicit Christian references on it, but I argue that the way in which community service was conceptualized was implicitly Christian. Although the idea of "giving back" to the community can be positive, I argue that the social context of community service is important. The girls were not given a choice as to how they wanted to give back to the community, nor was this activity technically community service because, as mentioned earlier, the food bank was not located close to the school. Community service was narrowly defined for the girls, and it was defined in a very Christian way: the girls were defined as good community citizens through their work of giving food to the "poor."

There were two different ways in which the girls were taught Christian morality. First, there were a number of instances in which the club sponsors, along with the outside speakers that they invited to present to the club, created an expectation that the girls remain chaste and non-sexual. For example, a woman came in to talk to the girls about puberty and personal hygiene on two separate occasions because she was very late to the first meeting at which she was supposed to present. During her second presentation, the speaker handed out a picture of female genitals that the girls labeled. After the girls

labeled all of the body parts that they knew, the speaker named and described the female body parts that were diagramed on the handout. During both presentations, the speaker only made two references to sex. One of these references was when she described the clitoris.[1] The speaker only mentioned sex twice during both of her presentations and she verbalized the expectation that the girls wait until they were older to engage in sexual activities. "It's [the clitoris] the part of the body that's made for sensation, and it's for when you're older and ready to have sexual intercourse" (Observation notes, March 15, 2011). Although she was explicitly describing all of the internal and external sexual organs and body parts, this was one of the only times sex was mentioned during both meetings.

Throughout the year, the only other time sex was mentioned was during a meeting in which the girls read 'Dear Abby' columns, and then made up their own questions to ask and answer for each other. At the beginning of the meeting the club sponsors handed out columns for the girls to read, but they did not preview the columns before handing them out; consequently, a number of the questions had to do with sexual harassment and sexual abuse. I could tell that the serious and sensitive nature of the questions took the sponsors by surprise because they seemed unprepared to discuss these topics. The sponsors engaged the girls with the questions, but they did so in a very superficial way. One of the sponsors said repeatedly that the girls could come up with "lightweight" questions; it seemed that she was repeating this so that the girls would stay away from topics that she found uncomfortable (Observation notes, December 7th, 2010). When the

[1] [1] It is worth noting that the clitoris was actually included on the picture; before the feminist movement the clitoris was not included in science textbooks or in discussions about women's sexuality. It is significant that (some) girls today are being taught about the clitoris.

sponsors had to discuss the questions about sexual harassment and abuse,[2] they told the girls to tell an adult if they were ever victims. After comparing sexual abuse to bullying, one of the sponsors said, "You can always go and tell someone and they can get in serious trouble. That's what you should do. Always tell someone" (Observation notes, December 7th, 2010). Although sex and sexuality were discussed at this meeting, sex was framed as dangerous and an activity from which the girls should abstain.

During my interviews, I asked the girls why they thought the dress code was so important for the club. One of the girls verbalized that, to her, the dress code helped the girls to present themselves in a respectful, non-sexualized way:

> Alison: Why do you think that the dress code is so important to the club?
>
> Zykeria: I think…it's so important so we won't walk around here just looking any type of way, and that we, that the way we dress, we show that we can respect ourselves.
>
> Alison: Mmm. So you think that….the way you dress…shows how you feel about yourself?
>
> Zykeria: Mm hmm [nods in agreement].
>
> Alison: Or how you want to be treated?

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[2] One of the sponsors contrasted sexual harassment to sexual abuse by asserting that, "Sexual abuse is different. That's when an older person does something to a younger person" (Observation notes, December 7th, 2010). Not only is this a wrong definition, it is a potentially dangerously wrong definition. If the girls understand sexual abuse as only possible between adults and children, how will they frame sexual abuse from someone their age?

> Zykeria: Yeah. Yeah, you know, some people they just walk around with all that out, that stuff [gesturing to her breasts].

To Zykeria, girls should not present themselves in sexualized ways if they want to be respected, and she believes that that is why the dress code was so important to the club. She mentioned respect a number of times during our interview, especially when asked about what it means to be a lady, and the concept seemed to be very important to her.

Zykeria's beliefs about respect and sexuality were echoed at the end of the year at the high tea. The club had a speaker present at the high tea. The speaker was an African American woman. She is a very successful engineer, and her husband teaches at the school. She spoke to the girls about making the "right choices," and she emphasized making good choices in relation to education, relationships, and health. She advised the girls to abstain from sex until they were older. She advised the girls to be wary of boys, and that if they like and respect themselves, they'll make boys wait: "They make up stories about girls, and let it be a lie. If you like me, then you have to wait. Having heavy relationships is too hard, make them wait. You have your whole life to have that" (Observation notes, May 17th, 2011). Again, the message here was that the right kind of girl makes good life choices that include chastity, even when being pressured to engage in sexual activity. She positioned the girls as the gatekeepers; there was no discussion about mutual responsibility, pleasure, or safe sex. Rather, she placed all of the responsibility on the girls with the assumption that chastity was a viable and preferable option.

Additionally, the club was a very heteronormative space. There were numerous examples of the club sponsors assuming that all the girls were heterosexual, and that they would be in a heterosexual marriage when they were older. During the meeting in which the club sponsors had a woman come in to talk about personal hygiene and puberty, as mentioned earlier, the women leading the meeting only mentioned sex twice. The second time she mentioned sex was when she was describing the function of the vagina: "There is a small hole that only lets semen, or sperm. So when girls insert tampons and they wonder if they can get lost, no, it stops right there. During sexual intercourse the penis can't get lost either. It stops right there" (Observation notes, March 15th, 2011). This was one of two times that sex was mentioned, and it was mentioned in a heterosexual context. The assumption was that, when the girls are old enough to engage in sexual behavior, they will be involved in heterosexual relationships.

Also, when the club sponsors were explaining the purpose of the save-the-date card for their high tea at the end of the year, the sponsors said that those are cards that are used for weddings. After handing out the cards, one of the sponsors said, "Do you know what that is? Well, if you get married, you send this out, and it tells people that something important is going to happen and they should put it on their calendar" (Observation notes, March 29th, 2011). Since gay marriage is illegal in Georgia, the reference to marriage was a reference to heterosexual marriage. Although it is notable that the sponsor said "if" rather than "when" you get married, the subtext is still one of heterosexuality.

As discussed earlier, the sponsors gave the girls a packet of 25 pictures and corresponding life lessons that were all based on bible verses. Of the 25 pictures and

sayings, five were explicitly heterosexual. For example, the first page of the booklet had a picture of an African American woman on it, and she was dressed in an elaborate wedding gown and was holding a bridal bouquet of flowers. The page read, "I've learned…No one in the world is perfect until you fall in love with them [sic]. Song Of Solomon 4:1-5, 7." The reference to love was obviously a reference to heterosexual love because the picture included a wedding dress, and the life lesson was based on a bible verse.

As discussed earlier, the club had a guest speaker present at their high tea at the end of the year. Her advice about relationships and boys is worth quoting at length:

> When I talk about relationships, I have to talk about boys. I have a little experience with boys. Boys are ubiquitous. That means ever present. They will always be around. You don't have to make a commitment at 12. Trust me, they get better. Don't just limit yourself to who's here now. When you get older, they get smarter, and they get cuter. Some of them, not all of them. Put boys in their proper perspective right now…You have to make good choices about boys. (Observation notes, May 17th, 2011)

When the speaker discussed relationships, she was talking about romantic relationships. She only talked about the girls having romantic relationships with boys. Although the message in the above quote is primarily one about making good choices, the speaker made the assumption that the girls were or would be involved in heterosexual relationships with "boys." She normalized heterosexuality by assuming that all the girls present were, or will be, romantically interested in boys.

Michelle Fine's (1988) foundational essay about the "missing discourse of desire" in relation to girls and sexuality is an appropriate framework that can also be used to understand how the Lady Trojans club engaged with the topics of sex and sexuality. In this essay, Fine argues that girls' desires are largely absent from discussions about young women's sexualities, especially within sexual education curriculum. When sexuality is discussed, it is framed in a negative way; girls are defined as "at risk" if they are sexually active. There is no discursive space for girls to name or use their desire and sexuality in positive, empowering ways. Even though her essay is nearly 25 years old, her main arguments are still valid. The girls in the Lady Trojans' club were not allowed any space in which to discuss sexuality in positive ways. The club framed sexuality in a negative during the only two times it was discussed during the club meetings. When sexual pleasure was mentioned in relation to the clitoris, the speaker said that the clitoris provided "sensations" and was only to be used when the girls were older. Sensations are distinctly different than pleasure; all body parts have sensations. The only other time sex was mentioned was when sexual harassment and abuse were brought up during one of the club meetings. This was unintentional, and the sponsors skimmed over the topic; they proclaimed that the girls should tell an adult if they had been touched inappropriately. Although this is a very important topic, sex and sexuality were presented as dangerous and harmful. There was no mention of healthy, empowering conceptualizations of sexuality, nor were the girls taught about pleasure or desire. The girls were expected to be chaste and non-sexual, and if they weren't, the message was that they were not the appropriate kind of girl.

The club's emphasis on service, chastity, and heterosexuality are all arguably linked to Christian ideals of femininity. In order to conceptualize the club's emphasis on these particular ideals of femininity, it is useful to engage Tanenbaum's (1999) main arguments in her book, *Slut! Growing up female with a bad reputation*. Tanenbaum suggests that the category of slut is multilayered, with particular sexual and class connotations. The label of slut is used against girls in order to force them to conform to specific cultural norms and standards. "A girl's sexual status is a metaphor for how well she fits into the American ideal of femininity" (Tanenbaum, 1999, p. 11). Tanenbaum argues that girls are labeled as sluts if they have sexual desires, and if they selfishly act on those desires; the assumption is that "good girls have no desire" (p. 113). Arguably, the club was heavily invested in encouraging the girls to define themselves in opposition to definitions and stereotypes of the category 'slut.' Following Hall (1993), individuals often produce their identities through defining themselves against or in opposition to who they are not. Self-definition requires an Other who epitomizes all that the self is not. Throughout the year, the club sponsors often emphasized how they *did not* want the girls to act. During many of the club meetings and activities, the girls were being taught to not look or act sexually available. They were taught to ignore boys, and they were only taught about their bodies in the context of hygiene. The club's emphasis on service can be read as an attempt to contain the girls within the "good girl" category.

Girls as Objects

The final theme that I theorize from my data involves the concept of objectification. I argue that the girls were objectified by the sponsors in a variety of ways. First, I use Freire (1970) to critique both how the girls were talked to during the

meetings, as well as the lack of dialogue and discussion within the club. I also assert that the girls' interests were not taken into account during the construction of the club's events. Second, I use Bartky (1990) and Bordo (1993) to explore how the club perpetuated particular ideas about femininity, the presentation of self, and clothing.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970) critiques traditional practices of education. He asserts that traditional education, which he labels banking education, treats students as objects rather than subjects. Banking education is defined by the static, authoritarian role of the teacher, and the passive, objectified role of the student: "In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing…the teacher teaches and the students are taught…the teacher talks and the students listen—meekly" (p. 72-73). Students are expected to be passive consumers of information, or containers to be filled, rather than active co-creators of knowledge. He specifically critiques educators that talk at, rather than with, students. Throughout the year, the sponsors repeatedly talked at, rather than with, the girls. The sponsors initiated discussions with the girls only once during the 12 meetings that I attended. The only somewhat in-depth discussion that the sponsors had with the girls occurred during the meeting when the girls were encouraged to read, answer, and come up with their own "Dear Abby" columns. Occasionally the sponsors would ask the girls questions during the other club meetings, but they were usually rhetorical questions. For example, one of the sponsors asked the girls if they "heard that Pringles is selling something?" while she was giving out Pringles as a snack. Before they could answer she told them what she had heard on the news about Pringles (Observation notes, April 26th, 2011). Similarly, when one of the sponsors

was telling the girls the importance of the dress code, she said, "What's coming up? Christmas. Put that [a black skirt or pair of pants] on your list…ask Santa for a pair of pants or a skirt" (Observation notes, December 7th, 2010). Also, during the meeting where the girls talked about the 'Dear Abby' columns, after one of the girls read her column outloud, the sponsor said, "The last one has to do with sexual harassment. Do we all know what sexual harassment is?" (Observation notes, December 7th, 2010). She then rushed on to give her own definition before any of the girls could answer. If the questions weren't rhetorical, the sponsors would only provide space for one girl to answer before either providing their own answers, or moving on to a different topic. Often, the only questions that the sponsors asked the girls during their meetings was when the next meeting date was, or why they weren't wearing their Lady Trojans shirts.

Because there was there a lack of dialogue during club meetings, most verbal exchanges between the sponsors and the girls were directive. According to my notes, the sponsors primarily used the terms "lady" or "ladies" when instructing the girls to do something or act a particular way. The sponsors used these terms when asserting their authority. For example, the sponsors used the terms repeatedly when instructing the girls to clean up. During the etiquette meeting, one of the sponsors was upset when one of the girls said something negative about the food that she was eating. The sponsor responded by saying, "Ladies don't complain" (Observation notes, November 8th, 2010). Similarly, at the beginning of the year, one of the sponsors said, "Do ladies say thank you?" when she was handing out snacks (Observation notes, September 28th, 2010). There was no dialogue about what being a "lady" meant to the girls; instead, the sponsors used the word, and the girls' assumed investment in the word, to encourage compliance.

The etiquette meeting exemplifies how the sponsors treated the girls as objects rather than subjects. As mentioned earlier, there was no dialogue between the girls and the sponsors during the etiquette meeting. The girls were expected to passively watch the movie about etiquette, follow directions to take their seats, listen to one of the sponsors read from the etiquette book, and finally eat their dinner while having "light conversation" (participant observation notes, November 8, 2010) amongst themselves. The sponsors did not engage the girls in critical conversations about what they were supposed to be learning. Also, the sponsors did not ask the girls if they had any questions or comments about the content of the meeting. The sponsors were talking at the girls, and the girls were expected to listen and follow directions. The structure of the meeting was very much what Freire labels as traditional, banking education. During this meeting, the sponsors were in the active, authoritarian role and, since they did not ask the girls about their own thoughts or prior experiences, it can be assumed that the sponsors did not believe that the girls had knowledge worthy of discussion. They were assumed to "know nothing." The sponsors saw their role as one consisting of the need for knowledge transfer; they had information that the girls needed (appropriate gender and class practices in relation to formal dinners), and they handed over this knowledge as a "gift" for what they perceived to be beneficial for the girls. The girls were assumed to have nothing to contribute and were consequently passive and silenced by the club activities. Freire insists that dialogue is necessary in liberatory education; dialogue was noticeably absent during this meeting. Consequently, the girls were not allowed to be active, empowered participants in the creation of their realities.

Freire believes that people must have an active role in creating their own realities in order for them to move from being objects to subjects. This involves students having an active role in the creation of their education. The girls were not allowed an active role in creating the club's activities; consequently some of the girls did not find the club's activities relevant. The girls were not asked what was important to them during prior meetings, nor were they involved in the construction of their meetings. The sponsors decided that it was important for the girls to know, and this was decided before the school year even began. In fact, according to Meredith, the club's focus on etiquette is how club sponsors advertised the club to the girls' parents at the beginning of the year when students were allowed to choose which clubs they wanted to join:

> Alison: So did your mom, do you feel like your mom knew what the club was when she signed up up, or she just thought…
>
> Meredith: She was like talking to Ms. Summers 'cause Ms. Summers was here and we were looking at the board that they had up, and it was talking about etiquette, and I think she wanted me to learn that.

Meredith's interview shows that the club activities were planned far in advance, and that the girls' interests were not taken into account. The girls were denied an active role in shaping the club activities, and therefore, as Meredith later verbalized, many of the club activities were not relevant for the girls. This arguably led to a number of the girls dropping out of the club. At the beginning of the year there were over 25 girls at the meetings; by the end of the year, there were less than 15 girls at the last few meetings:

> Meredith: One of the girls even dropped, like a bunch of the girls I know dropped out.
>
> Alison: Oh really? Why did they drop out?
>
> Meredith: Just not…fun? Like Jaylen I know, she's like an eighth grader, she dropped out, and she wasn't like them [the club sponsors]. Like, she's like, not a girly girl and stuff, and she just didn't like it and stuff, so that's why she dropped out.

The club's activities were seen as too "girly" for some of the girls, and they consequently dropped out. Meredith wanted to drop out of the club also, but her mom insisted that she stay in the club through the end of the school year. If the girls had been given an active role in shaping the club, it would have been relevant to their lives, and they would have been participants in shaping their own realities. Instead, the club sponsors treated the girls as objects; dialogue was not allowed, and the sponsors assumed that they knew what was best for the girls.

The club sponsors were highly invested in the club uniforms. The official club uniforms consisted of light pink collared shirts that had "Lady Trojans" embroidered on them, black pants or a skirt, and pearls. A few of the club sponsors and some of the girls also occasionally wore fake pink flowers as corsages or in their hair. At the beginning of the year, a lot of club time was spent on the logistics of the girls ordering their shirts. Before all of the girls had shirts, the sponsors told the girls to wear pink shirts until they had their official Lady Trojans shirts. At the first meeting that I attended (which was the second Lady Trojans meeting of the year), one of the sponsors made an example of one

of the girls: "She has on pink. Very nice. Black and pink…very nice. We like our girls to look nice. Always" (Observation notes, September 28th, 2010). After all the girls purchased their shirts, there was a continual focus on whether or not the girls were wearing the shirts during the club meetings. While taking roll at the first meeting in November, one of the club sponsors insisted on the importance of the uniform: "You have to wear your shirts on the day when we are to meet…it sets us apart. You're special. You're not special if you don't wear the uniform. We're special! Look at the boys' club! They'll be wearing their shirts tomorrow, and they'll be special" (Observation notes, November 8th, 2010). Later in the same meeting the club sponsors told the girls that the Gentleman's Club at the school had invited the girls to their business roundtable. The sponsors once again insisted on prioritizing the Lady Trojans uniform: "You are not going to participate if you don't have your uniform on…I don't want us to be embarrassed. They won't let you in if you're not dressed appropriately" (Observation notes, November 8th, 2010). At the beginning of their meeting in December, one of the sponsors announced that the girls were "worrying [them] to death" about the shirts. She continued on to say, "If you're ashamed of being in the club, of wearing the shirt, then don't be in the club. We don't want you here if you're ashamed to be here…Be proud of your shirts. When I'm in the street and people see my shirt, they say that's so pretty, they want to have a conversation" (Observation notes, December 7th, 2010). Similarly, one of the club sponsors talked about the importance of wearing their uniforms to their community service project at a food bank: "Yes, they need to wear their shirts to the community project, so people will know who we are. They may not remember that we're from Washington Middle School, but they'll remember our pretty pink shirts"

(Observation notes, January 25th, 2011). The sponsors often made one of the girls stand up and model when the girl exhibited the right kind of Lady Trojans look. Nancy Lesko (2001) discusses this idea of "affectional discipline." Affectional discipline was used by Victorians and Progressives, and it "utilized love, guilt, and shame to manipulate and control children's behavior" (p. 98). After making two of the girls stand up in order to show off how "good" their uniforms looked, one of the sponsors told the rest of the girls, "They look really pretty and nice and you should all try to look like them" (Observation notes, March 29th, 2011). There were multiple instances in which one or more of the girls would be forced to stand up and model for the rest of the girls.

In her chapter, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," Sandra Lee Bartky (1990) introduces the idea of the panoptical male connoisseur. Using Foucault's discussion of the panoptican, Bartky suggests that women learn to control and regulate their own bodies through institutional, technological, and discursive norms and ideals. She asserts that women internalize particular ideals about body, dress, and behavior, and that they consequently become self-regulating. Women learn to objectify themselves so that they can present their bodies as the perfect object for others. The internalization of patriarchal regulation facilitates self-objectification. She uses the term panoptical male connoisseur to describe the self-regulation many women undertake, and she links this process directly to patriarchy. "A panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women: they stand perpetually before his gaze and under his judgment. Woman lives her body as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal Other" (p. 101). I argue that, in the examples from above, the club sponsors were directly involved in creating and maintaining the panoptical male

connoisseur for the girls in the club. The sponsors were verbalizing what they wish the girls would feel/hear internally. By constantly reiterating the importance of the dress code, the sponsors were encouraging the girls to objectify themselves. One of the club sponsors made this process explicit in the above quote from December 7th. She stated that when people see her in her pretty pink shirt on the street, they want to have a conversation. The message here was that women/girls are only worthy of being talked to if they look "pretty" and "nice." It is important to be the right kind of object so that one will be worthy of attention and conversation. Similarly, when the sponsors insisted that the girls stand up to model when they have achieved the right kind of look, they were treating the girls as objects to be admired and imitated. The girls were learning how to please the gaze of the (patriarchal) Other, and when they dressed and acted in the right way, they were publicly praised and held up as an example for others to follow.

Conclusion

I engaged in traditional data analysis in order to elaborate on three themes that emerged from my data. I provided examples of Eurocentrism, and I followed this with a discussion about the ways in which Eurocentrism exists and functions within this particular social location. Next, I highlighted instances in which Christianity was implicitly and explicitly present within the club's activities, handouts, and meetings. I consequently linked this to femininity in order to explore how the emphasis on Christianity informs the girls' ideas and practices of femininity. Finally, I showed how the club conceptualized the girls as objects. I used Freire's conceptualizations of dehumanization and banking education in order to theorize the lack of dialogue at the club meetings. I also utilized Bartky's conceptualization of the panoptical male

connoisseur to theorize the practices and potential effects of the objectification that the girls experienced.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to complicate the traditional thematic analysis presented in the previous chapter. I am using this chapter to disrupt the assumption that qualitative researchers are able to accurately (re)present reality through the use of "good" methods and modes of analysis. I do not believe that there is an a priori reality that researchers can uncover through the use of "correct" research methods and data analysis practices. Qualitative researchers actively create their data, and subsequent themes, by what they choose to document, what they choose to theorize, and what and who they choose to silence/ignore.

> While educational ethnography promises the narrative cohesiveness of experience and identity and the researcher's skill of representing the subject, poststructuralist theories disrupt any desire for a seamless narrative, a cohesive identity, or a mimetic representation. (Britzman, 2000, p. 31-32)

As Lather (2007) suggests, providing complicated and contradictory interactions with data allows the reader to see the socially constructed nature of data analysis and presentation, and for the researcher to push against the "taken for granted" theoretically and methodologically. It also encourages contradiction, recognizing the messy and

complicated ways in which subjects are constituted. Although the themes that I discussed in chapter 4 were grounded in my data, they were not the totality of my data. Inevitably there were large sections of my data that I left out, and there were multiple ways in which I could have interpreted and/or read the data that I did use in my thematic analysis. This acknowledgement does not invalidate the usefulness of the themes presented; even though I work to challenge the authoritativeness inherent in the production and presentation of themes, I still believe they can be used productively to expand and push the theorization of girlness. In what follows, I add to the traditional data analysis in order to present other perspectives, challenging my authority as a feminist researcher. In this chapter, I work to show the messiness of data analysis. I practice what Lather calls "getting lost" (2007). For Lather,

> …the concept of getting lost functions as a paradox. It is a means of critiquing a certain confidence that research must muster in the audit culture…it is a way to engage a new interdisciplinarity that is able to question not just the nature of knowledge but its grounds of practice in postfoundational times. Here loss bears the very possibility of Foucault's (1970) idea that, finally, we can begin to think again. (p. 12)

This chapter challenges the authoritative confidence that most research purports by emphasizing contradiction and dissensus. I move towards the alternative versions of validity that Lather (2007) outlines; specifically, I engage her delineation of ironic and paralogical validity in order to think with and through my data in different ways.

As outlined in chapter 3, ironic validity illustrates the inherent problems with authoritative truth claims. While traditional data analysis masks the subjective and rhetorical nature of truth claims with adherence to "better methods," ironic validity "proliferates forms" (Lather, 2007, p. 121). In what follows, I interrupt the straight-forward narrative of data analysis that I presented in chapter 4. I explore multiple interpretations of the same data in order to open up meaning, and to highlight the socially constructed nature of data analysis and meaning-making. I will also use paralogical validity. According to Lather, paralogical validity entails identifying difference and heterogeneity within data in order to point to contradictions and disruptions. The goal of paralogical validity is to "foster differences and let contradictions remain in tension" (p. 128). "The point of [post-structural] analysis is not to expose the hidden truth in all its simplicity, but to *disrupt that which is taken as stable/unquestionable truth"* (Davies, 2004, p. 7). In this chapter, I work to provide counter narratives to the data analysis provided in chapter 4. I do this by providing multiple readings of the same event, analyzing data left out of chapter 4, and I interrogate my subjectivities and my role as researcher. Following Honan et. al (2000) and Youdell (2004) I provide multiple readings of the same data in order to open up possibilities for meaning-making, and to highlight the ways in which theoretical orientations influence data analysis. By providing multiple readings of the same data set, I allow for the contradictions within the data to remain in tension while also destabilizing my prior claims to thematic truth. While Honan et al. utilized multiple readings to illustrate how different theories and theoretical frameworks construct differing research subjects, I provide different readings in order to increase the number of perspectives about my data, and to allow space for the

contradictions within my data. Proving multiple/different readings of data also shows the socially constructed nature of data analysis. Similarly, I analyze data that did not fit neatly within the three themes that I discussed in chapter 4. I discuss my role as a researcher, highlighting how my Whiteness potentially influenced my data collection. I also explore how my experiences in the club led to my own bodily self-discipline.

Etiquette Day

In chapter 4, I explained the context of the Lady Trojans' etiquette day. I described the events of the meeting, and I also discussed the etiquette booklet that the sponsors gave to the girls. I will now explore different ways of making meaning of the meeting, using different theorists and theoretical orientations to do so.

Reading #1

Lisa Delpit, in *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* (1995), argues that it should be the responsibility of public schools to educate children of color for power. She asserts that marginalized children must be taught the "codes or rules for participating in power" (p. 25), and that this includes ways of dressing, talking, and interacting. Although she acknowledges the need for students to feel pride in their own cultural backgrounds and heritage, she insists that marginalized children, particularly children of color within the United States, must be taught about the implicit power dynamics so that they will be able to increase their own economic and social power in the future. This is arguably what the sponsors were attempting during this meeting. Although Delpit discusses students fitting into educational social spaces, her argument can be expanded to all situations in which cultural capital is useful and even necessary.

The sponsors modeled the gendered and classed behaviors and performances that are socially expected in formal dining situations; they provided the girls with the social knowledge that could potentially help them acquire cultural capital. They instructed the girls about what was appropriate to wear to a formal dinner, and they modeled this by wearing their own fancy clothes. At the meeting, they provided an instructional video about how to use the appropriate flatware, and what to expect from wait staff at expensive restaurants. They also provided the girls with a handout about etiquette that explains the different place settings, and how to negotiate eating with different place settings. The sponsors are attempting to make the dominant traditions of the United States intelligible and manageable for the girls so that they are able to more easily navigate possibly unfamiliar social situations. This is potentially allowing the girls to be comfortable participants in the "culture of power" that is outlined by Delpit.

Although the club sponsors were trying to provide the necessary knowledge and experience for the girls to be comfortable in a variety of social situations, they did not explicitly discuss the relationships between power, race, class, and gender. Delpit (1995) asserts that if students are not already within the dominant culture of power, "being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier" (p. 24). I argue that being explicit about the rules of power must include a critical analysis of structural racism, classism, sexism and Eurocentrism; it is not enough to give students the tools to fit into cultures of power. Rather, educators must discuss the history, maintenance and effects of power so that students can better understand their potential power and agency. Discussing the important of cultural capital yet also critiquing teachers who uncritically teach in ways that normalize Whiteness and European history, Hickling-Hudson and

Ahlquist (2003) assert, “It is, of course, essential for ethnically oppressed students to master the discourses of power. What is often not understood is that the discourses of power cannot be taught by means of an uncritical curriculum” (p. 84). Although they are specifically discussing the roles of school teachers in relationship to curriculum, their point is an important one when considering what students learn in extracurricular clubs and activities.

Reading #2

Critical race theory (CRT) arose from critical legal theorists who challenged the racism inherent in the America judicial system, and its central assumption is that racism is endemic to American life (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Matsuda et al., 1993; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Yosso (2005) defines critical race theory in education as a “theoretical and analytical framework that challenges the ways race and racism impact educational structures, practices and discourses” (p. 74). Race is central in CRT because historically, and too often currently, theoretical analyses of race have been absent and/or silenced within academia. “Thus, the strategy becomes one of unmasking and exposing racism in its various permutations” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 11). CRT is committed to using intersectionality theories in analyses because “race does not exist outside of gender and gender does not exist outside of race” (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 12).

Yosso (2005) uses CRT in especially provocative and useful ways. She critiques normative ideas of cultural capital that suggest that communities of color lack the tools, because of social location, for social mobility. Scholars such as Delpit (1995) suggest

that schools must educate children in order to increase their cultural capital, which is described as the "knowledges of the upper and middle classes [that] are considered capital value to a hierarchical society" (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). Cultural capital here illustrates the ways in which hierarchies are maintained; certain kinds of knowledge are valued, and social mobility depends on the accumulation of valued social and cultural knowledge. Yosso critiques this conceptualization by pointing to the ways in which this keeps as central White, middle class norms and values. She asserts that "a traditional view of cultural capital is narrowly defined by White, middle class values" (p. 77). Yosso suggests that there are multiple ways of conceptualizing cultural capital, and that traditional notions of this ignore the rich and diverse kinds of cultural capital possessed by communities of color. She rejects the necessary deficit thinking perpetuated by traditional notions of cultural capital in order to re-value the cultural knowledge and experience located within communities of color. She offers an alternative rendering of cultural capital that she calls community cultural wealth, which encompasses six forms of capital not included in traditional notions of cultural capital: aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital (p. 79-80).

CRT enables an important reading of the Lady Trojans' etiquette meeting. I argue that, through the etiquette meeting, the club performs two separate but interrelated functions. Through the structure and content of the etiquette meeting, the club sponsors perpetuated deficit thinking in relation to the girls in the club; and they also ignored the potentially rich experiences and traditions of the girls' families by utilizing a narrow conceptualization of cultural capital and its uses for social mobility.

The Lady Trojans' etiquette day perpetuates deficit thinking about the girls in the club. Deficit thinking is rooted in classism and racism, and it is utilized in education in order to explain differentials in student performance and behavior (Banks, 1997; Gorski, 2008). Deficit theory suggests that poor people are poor because of their lack of intellectual abilities and efforts (Collins, 1988). Within schools, educators and administrators use deficit thinking to explain differentials in student performance and behavior.

> Deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education. (Yosso, 2005, p. 75)

The purpose of etiquette day was for the sponsors to provide the girls with knowledge about table etiquette. They assumed that the girls did not already have this knowledge, and that any knowledge that the girls did possess was not important. This can be seen from the lack of conversation present at the meeting. Not once did the sponsors ask the girls about their own family traditions or cultural knowledge. Following Yosso's description of deficit thinking, the sponsors assumed that the girls entered the school without the "normative cultural knowledge and skills." As a result of this assumption, the club sought to "fill up supposedly passive students with forms of cultural knowledge deemed valuable by dominant society" (p. 75). This was done by the homemade video about etiquette that the sponsors made. It was also done by the etiquette booklet that they handed out to the girls. The booklet was not used as an object lesson with which to think; instead, it was utilized as if it were the final word on appropriate table etiquette.

According to my observation notes, only one club sponsor provided guidance about how the girls should interact with the etiquette booklet. She told the girls to turn to page seven and, "Read that information." The sponsors did not provide any other guidance for the girls' readings of the etiquette booklet, nor did they ask the girls to consider how the information in the book related to their past experiences or their own family traditions.

Reading #3

The etiquette meeting can be understood using Judith Butler's theorization of gender performance. Butler makes a number of claims about sex and gender which inform her thinking about gender performance. Her first suggestion is that the binary of sex and gender needs to be broken down and re-examined. She claims that we to need recognize the social construction of not just binary gender categories, but also binary sex categories. "An account of gender must not merely assume that it is the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex" (Gilbert, 2007, p. 130). Gender should not be understood as a cultural interpretation of a biological fact; rather, the binary categories of male/female must be understood as socially and historically situated. Although she does not dismiss the various differences in biology that are present, she believes that the ways in which we categorize and name these differences are socially constructed and therefore non-essential (Butler, 1999). These differences are first *constituted* as differences, which then allows for categorizing and labeling.

Interrogating the arguably constructed nature of biological sex consequently points to the tenuousness of gender and gender categories. Within Western discourses about sex and gender, it has been assumed that gender and gender categories have been

founded upon binary sex categories that have been based in essentialized, biological differences. Butler points out that the instability of gender and gender categories is a natural consequence of questioning the constitution of binary sex categories. If gender is no longer thought to be reflecting biological essences, then gender itself is a performance that "regularly conceals its genesis" and is highly unstable (Butler, 1988, p. 903). This leads to her conceptualization of gender performance.

> Because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. (Butler, 1988, p. 903)

Gender performance is a necessary fiction that naturalizes sex and gender. Butler does not believe that gender performance is a "singular deliberate act" (Gilbert, 2007, p. 130). Rather, it is a "reiterative practice by which discourse produces the effects it names" (Butler, 1993, p. 2). Gender identity is an imitative process whereby certain gender performances are socially sanctioned, while others are not. The imitation of certain gender performances reinscribes the seemingly naturalness of gender categories, again upholding the fiction of binary sex/gender systems. "Gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original" (Butler, 1991, p. 643). The constant, regulated imitation/reiteration of gender through socially sanctioned performances perpetuates normative views and beliefs about binary gender systems.

The Lady Trojans' etiquette meeting illustrates the work that goes into the cultural production of gender. In the meeting, the girls were expected to imitate a particular kind

of femininity. Before the actual meeting, the sponsors repeatedly told the girls that they must dress up for the meeting. They were expected to wear their "pretty pink shirts," black pants or a skirt, and their pearls. The sponsors provided pearls at the meeting if the girls did not own any. At the etiquette meeting, the sponsors verbally praised the girls who complied with the correct imitation of gender. They did so publicly, in front of the other girls. Additionally, the girls who performed the correct kind of femininity were photographed by one of the club sponsors; the girls who did not wear their shirts, who did not properly perform gender, were left out of the picture (and consequently left out of the slideshow shown at the end-of-the-year High Tea). This meeting illustrates the work that goes into producing the properly gendered subjects. The girls who did not perform their gender properly were left out of club activities, and the girls who upheld traditional ideals of femininity were rewarded in various ways.

The performances of gender within the club were constituted by what Nayak and Kehily (2008) call gender achievements.

> The production of a seemingly coherent gender identity is then the result of a series of successive, though never fully accomplished, 'gender achievements.' These 'achievements' conceal an extraordinary amount of mental and physical labour that go into making these identities appear normal, 'just so.' (p. 30)

Subjects never fully accomplish a coherent gender identity, yet they are expected to continuously imitate and reiterate socially sanctioned gender performances. The girls were encouraged to perform a socially sanctioned kind of femininity, and they were expected to do so using the appropriate gender achievements. Following Butler, I argue

that the etiquette meeting illustrates the socially constructed nature of gender binaries. If current gender binaries were natural and innate, the girls' gender practices would not need so much regulation. The sponsors would not have to overtly encourage specific gender achievements if gender were a biological given. This meeting illustrates that gender norms and behaviors must be taught, and it also illustrates the behind-the-scenes work that girls must do in order to be read as appropriately gendered.

The Production of Ladies

Because the word 'lady' is in the name of the club, I paid particular attention to when and how the word was used throughout the year. As I discussed in chapter 4, the sponsors used the word when they were directing the girls to do something or act in a particular way. They called the girls ladies when they told them to throw away their trash, say thank you, or not complain. There was no discussion of what being a lady meant, or the history of the word; rather, the sponsors assumed that they all had the same understanding of the word. It was almost as if the sponsors used the word as a threat. Because the word was in the title of the club, the sponsors assumed that all the girls were invested in becoming ladies. It was assumed that the girls all wanted to fit the description of a lady. Working from that assumption, the sponsors used that investment in order to get the girls to act in certain ways. It was implied that if the girls did not "act right" their privilege of being thought of as a lady would be taken away by the sponsors. In order to complicate the unidimensional description in chapter 4 of how the word 'lady' showed up during the club meetings, I am going to provide a genealogy of the word 'lady' in order to provide a different understanding of its current usages and context.

Although the history of the word lady was not discussed within the club, it was part of the hidden curriculum. The history of the word was very much alive and present within how the club was structured, and how the girls were expected to act. Allan (2009) asserts that the dominance of the 'lady' discourse can be traced to the eighteenth century, specifically to etiquette guides from that era. Through these etiquette guides, particular ideas about femininity, specifically calmness, luxurious tastes, ease, and restraint, emerged (Poovey, 1984). Popular etiquette guides delineated the correct kind of White femininity. For example, Langland (1995) explains the values and ideals that the popular 1837 *Etiquette for Ladies* guide propagated. This guide included suggestions about how women were to dress at different times of the day, how they were to care for their homes, how their homes should be a place of "class display," and the guide suggested that women be active in their communities for the betterment of the lower social classes. Although the etiquette guides were directed specifically toward upper class White women, eventually the ideals and norms began to encompass femininity in general, and not just upper class White femininity. During the nineteenth century, these feminine ideals became middle class norms; middle class women could prove their respectability through the right kind of conduct and appearance (Skeggs, 1997). Allan (2009) notes that there is a current resurgence of the lady discourse, and that this can be seen in the newly published etiquette guides for girls and women, the renewed interest in afternoon tea rituals, and the popularity of etiquette training and courses available for business women and young girls.

The Lady Trojans was arguably a space in which the resurgence of the popularity of the lady discourse can be witnessed. The assumptions and values that undergirded the

Lady Trojans' meetings and activities were strikingly similar to the etiquette guides that Allan (2009) and Poovey (1984) outline in their discussions of what it has meant historically to be a lady. First, the girls were overtly encouraged to dress in 'respectable' ways. This included dressing in non-provocative ways, and the girls were expected to wear pink, which is a traditionally feminine color. They were also expected to wear pearls and black slacks or skirts. Also, they were expected to participate in the high tea, which was the culminating event of the year. The high tea was hyped during the whole year—the sponsors discussed the tea at most of the meetings prior to the last meeting, and it was deemed so important that the girls were expected to have their mothers join them at the tea. The girls were encouraged to participate in community service. This included serving those "less fortunate" (Observation notes, February 15th, 2011) than themselves by volunteering at the food pantry. Finally, the girls were expected to be silent and passive during most of their meetings.

Although the word lady was not discussed during club meetings, the girls that I interviewed had shared conceptualizations of what the word meant, and these definitions were similar to the definitions outlined in the etiquette guides that Poovey (1984) discusses. As mentioned earlier, there were a number of ideal feminine qualities that the etiquette guides propagated, including calmness, ease, restraint, and luxurious decoration (Poovey, 1984; Allan, 2009). Three of the girls that I interviewed talked specifically about what they thought being a lady entailed, and all three arguably described the qualities that appear in traditional nineteenth century etiquette guides. Carly was a sixth grader who was very tall and heavy for her age. During our interview she said that she was in special education the prior year, and she also attended a charter school that year.

She liked the Lady Trojans because it helped her meet friends. During the interview, we talked about what it meant to be a lady:

> Alison: Um, what kind of things have you learned from the club?
>
> Carly: How to be a lady? [She said this as a question]
>
> Alison: What does it mean to be a lady?
>
> Carly: It is to…I learned how to uh, be polite. And, and…be quiet sometimes. I'm still working on that one!
>
> Alison: Well, there's times to be quiet, and times to not be quiet.
>
> Carly: Yeah. I think I'm kinda good at that. I think that like, sometimes I'm, I'm really stubborn, so I learned how to be less stubborn. Like to, and then I learned how to keep up with stuff because I don't wanna be like, at Lady Trojans, and she remind me, oh you, you haven't turned this library book in.

Carly learned in the Lady Trojans that being a lady meant being polite, quiet, less stubborn, and more responsible. These qualities are very similar to the traditionally feminine qualities outlined in the etiquette guides, specifically calmness and ease. According to Carly, in the club she learned that in order to be the right kind of girl, one who deserved to be considered a lady, she needed to be polite, which often means keeping one's opinions to oneself while also being in tune to how others are feeling. This is a very traditionally gendered expectation that girls are socialized within. She also learned that she should be "quiet sometimes." Without hypothesizing whether or not this is appropriate for Carly in particular, it is interesting to consider the gendered

components of this. As Sadker and Sadker (1995) have documented, within the culture of many schools in the United States, girls are rewarded for being quiet and compliant. Even though an extracurricular club could be a potential space in which this is challenged, the club instead reinforced this message. Carly explicitly learned that she should work on being quiet. She did not mention this when I asked her earlier in the interview what she learned by being in the club; rather, Carly learned that part of being a lady, which is the ultimate goal of the club, is being quiet. The last thing that Carly listed when I asked her what it meant to be a lady is that she learned how to be less stubborn. Carly learned that ladies should not be stubborn, and that if she wanted to be a lady, she would have to be less stubborn. Historically, being a 'lady' meant that one had to be calm, restrained, and at ease. These three attributes are not possible when one is stubborn.

In addition to the gendered analysis of the importance of Carly's belief that she needed to work on being quiet, it is important to consider Carly's race and class positionality. While middle-class White girls are taught empowerment through learning to assert themselves and make their voices heard, Black girls are assumed to be (inherently?) too loud, assertive, and/or aggressive. Carly arguably fits the social conceptualization that Harris (2004) describes as an "at-risk" girl. As described earlier, "at-risk" girls are usually working-class, ethnic minorities who are assumed to be predisposed to making "bad" decisions. They are defined by deficit perspectives, and they are assumed to not know how to act. "At-risk" girls are therefore susceptible to being controlled and regulated by various institutions, including schools. Carly fits this description based on her race and class positions. Earlier in the semester, I heard Carly

asking one of the club sponsors what she should do if she couldn't afford the club shirt. As a Black, apparently working-class girl, Carly is visibly marked as a body in potential need of disciplining (Morris, 2005). Not only was Carly's voice being silenced (through her adherence to the sponsors' suggestions, implied or verbalized, that she needed to work on being quiet), she was located within the public imaginary as "at-risk" because of her race and class status.

Two of the girls I interviewed had differently complicated understandings of what it meant to be a lady, even though parts of their definitions were similar to the etiquette guides outlined above. Taylor was a sixth grade girl who was new to the school. She changed schools often because her mom was in the military, and she seemed very emotionally mature compared to many of the other girls in the club. In what follows, Taylor explains what it means to be a lady:

> Alison: So what does it meant to be a lady do you think?
>
> Taylor: You know, you can be classy, but you can also have your moments when you just might lose the classiness, and just be like, don't mess with me...but there's elegance and there's nice...there's, being a lady is...fun...it's good being a lady because some people act like they're not, but truthfully they are.
>
> Alison: Mm hmmm. So you think it's being both strong but...
>
> Taylor: Elegant. And being a lady, you know when people say something, you just know, keep it in you, and when they act nice to you, be like, remember when you did this? Just sayin', remember?

> [...]
>
> Alison: So you think that the dress code helps show that you're all ladies?
>
> Taylor: Mm hmm. I'm not saying that no one in the school is a lady because every person can be a lady. Every girl can be a lady. And she's showing elegance, and just like...how to be nice, and sometimes you may not dress like one but you may act like one...

For Taylor, being a lady meant being classy, elegant, nice, and showing restraint. She asserted that ladies might sometimes "lose the classiness" when they stand up for themselves. Taylor verbalized that ladies must show restraint; they must "keep it in" so as to act ladylike. It seemed like, for Taylor, if a woman stands up for herself, she is not acting ladylike, but she can still be considered a lady as long as she returns to being "elegant" and "nice."

Many feminists have argued that it is important to critique binary, or dichotomous, thinking (Bordo, 1993; Collins, 2000; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Grosz, 1994; Plumwood, 1993). Binary thinking creates either/or terms or concepts which inevitably lead to the creation of hierarchies. Binaries such as male/female, reason/nature, mind/body create and maintain particular hierarchies in society, and this thinking has entered the realm of common sense (Plumwood, 1993). One of the reasons that feminists have critiqued binary thinking is because either/or thinking leaves no space or room between the binary; the two binary terms are conceptualized as polarized and mutually exclusive. Binary thinking was evident in Taylor's description of what it meant to be a lady. For Taylor, there is no in-between space between the dichotomy of lady/bitch. A

woman can be a lady if she is elegant, nice, and showing restraint. She asserted that women must “keep it in” in order to be considered ladies. She verbalized that if a woman stands up for herself she is existing outside of what it means to be a lady, and she can only be considered a lady once she returns to being nice and elegant. Women can switch sides of the binary, but the two subject categories are mutually exclusive. Also, there is an inherent hierarchy between the terms; for Taylor, women must constantly police themselves so as to fit within the definition of a proper lady, and they must work against being categorized in opposition to being a lady.

Zykeria also had an interesting understanding of what it meant to be a lady. Her response is relatable to the traditional femininity that was outlined in the etiquette guides, but she also used some ideas that I argue can be found within third wave feminism.

> Alison: What do you think of the Lady Trojans?
>
> Zykeria: I think it's useful and helpful, and it teaches you more how to use more manners in a more respectful way...and...basically teach you how to be a lady.
>
> Alison: Mm hmm. What does it mean to be a lady to you?
>
> Zykeria: To respect yourself more, and...basically make the right choices, and that you know...hmm...yeah basically respect yourself more, and have more self-confidence and higher self-esteem.

Zykeria reported that she thought it was important to learn manners, and she also said that she learned how to be a lady in the club. When I asked her what it meant to be a lady, her main response was that being a lady meant respecting oneself. This included making the

“right choices,” and having self-confidence and self-esteem. Later on in the interview, Zykeria made a reference to the importance of self-respect, and this time she verbalized that having self-respect meant not dressing in provocative ways. For Zykeria, being a lady meant dressing in non-sexual ways, and it also meant having self-confidence. Zykeria's emphasis on restraint is arguably related to the idea of restraint propagated by the etiquette guides. Restraint can mean a number of things, but sexual restraint was at that time an important part of being the right kind of woman, one who could be considered a lady. Zykeria had internalized this idea, and she equated being respectable with dressing in non-sexualized, restrained ways.

Feminist poststructuralism suggests that women and girls are constructed by, and construct themselves through, the different discourses that are available to them. Although girls are able to “take up” particular discourses, they are limited by the discourses available to them based on their historical, social, and cultural context (Allan, 2009; Esposito, 2011; Jones, 1993; Youdell, 2004). There were limited discourses of femininity that circulated within the club; Zykeria arguably “took up” what she saw as a liberating discourse about femininity. Zykeria’s ideas about what it meant to be a lady arguably echoed some aspects of third wave feminism discourse. Third wave feminism focuses on individualism, choice, and agency. Zykeria focused on “making the right choices” and self-respect. She believed that the club helped her to make good, individual decisions. Her answers positioned her as an agentic, individualistic girl who could increase her self-respect by how she dressed and what kind of manners she displayed. Zykeria’s indentification with third wave feminism both subjects her *to* neoliberal, individualistic notions of choice and responsibility while also making her an agentic,

active subject *within* her individual context. By taking up this particular discourse, Zykeria illustrated the contradictory ways in which subjects produce and are produced by discourse.

It is important to theorize race and class in discussions about the history of the word 'lady' and how the discourse is being taken up in certain spaces. Historically, 'lady' was a social category that only middle-class, White women could inhabit. Especially in the South, it was impossible for Black women to be considered 'ladies.' As Roberts (1997) outlines in her book, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, Black women suffered (and continue to suffer) under many derogatory icons, all of which were in direct opposition to the above description of 'lady.' "American culture is replete with derogatory icons of Black women—Jezebel, Mammy, Tragic Mulatto, Aunt Jemima, Sapphire, Matriarch, and Welfare Queen" (p. 8). Black women were considered inherently unable to be 'ladies' because the racist assumptions present within the United States. These stereotypes still persist today, as does the assumption that Black femininities are somehow still deficient or deviant (Collins, 2000). For example, there was a recent controversy over Michelle Obama's muscular arms (http://www.latimes.com/features/image/la-ig-arms29-2009mar29,0,4782966.story). Some media outlets focused on the size and shapes of her arms, and this ignited a national discussion about gender, body norms, and femininity. Although not explicitly addressed within the mainstream media, race was an aspect of this story. Black women have been caricaturized as being unfeminine and too muscular. The professional tennis players Venus and Serena Williams have been similarly caricaturized within the mainstream media. The discussions and debates about Michelle Obama and the Williams

sisters illustrate the persistence of the belief that Black femininity is somehow deficient or deviant. All three women have been castigated by many as being too masculine because of their bodies; they have not been allowed within the 'lady' discourse because of material/bodily constraints and expectations. It is within this context that the club sponsors are encouraging the girls to conform to traditional ideals of femininity. Perhaps this task seems more urgent because, historically and currently, Black women have not been allowed to exist within the definition of 'lady.'

Sorority Sisters in Training?

In what follows, I offer an additional analysis of the gender practices that I observed throughout the year at the Lady Trojans' meetings. I argue that many of the ideals, rhetoric, and practices of the club can be traced to the ideals and practices of black sororities. Before delineating a brief history of black sororities, I will first discuss my own subjectivity in relation to sororities.

I cannot remember a time when I was even somewhat ambivalent about sororities. For as long as I can remember, I have been a very adamant critic of sororities because of the ways in which many, if not most, sororities focus on traditional performances of gender and heterosexuality. I viewed sororities as spaces in which women learned how to embody patriarchy. There was not a large Greek presence on my undergraduate campus. I had a few friends who pledged, but my closest friends chose not to pledge because they, like me, were highly critical of how gender seemed to be performed, policed, and perpetuated within the organizations. When I moved to Atlanta, I was surprised when a number of my African American friends vehemently defended

fraternities and sororities, with the caveat that Black fraternities and sororities were different from the generalized (stereotyped?) ideas I had about fraternities and sororities. I remained unconvinced of the usefulness of these organizations even after multiple conversations in which I began to better understand the very different histories behind Black fraternities and sororities. Because of these conversations, I thought that I understood their importance, but for me, the hegemonic ideals of femininity, masculinity, and heterosexuality that the organizations perpetuated outweighed any good the organizations could potentially do.

During my research, I had two separate experiences that made me realize that I needed to research the literature about black sororities in order to better understand certain aspects of the club. First, during one of our meetings in which we were talking about my data, my advisor, Dr. Esposito, pointed out the strong connections between what I was observing and the histories and practices of black sororities. Although she was not in a black sorority, many of her friends and colleagues are or have been. When Dr. Esposito suggested I familiarize myself with the traditions of black sororities, I was very resistant for two reasons. First, I was resistant because of my prior ideas and beliefs about sororities in general. I had no interest in learning any more than I already knew about sororities. Second, I did not want to play the role of the White feminist researcher critiquing black women. Gasman and Payton-Stewart (2006), in their article entitled "Twice removed: A White scholar studies the history of black sororities and a Black scholar responds," describe my positionality in relation to this topic as being "twice removed" (p. 131). I am neither an African American woman, nor am I a member of a sorority. Although I do not subscribe to the idea that only insiders can research

marginalized communities, I was nonetheless very nervous about analyzing black sororities from my "twice removed" position.

The second experience that I had that made me realize the importance of researching the history and current practices of black sororities was at the club's poetry slam. This meeting was one of my favorite meetings because the club sponsors encouraged the girls to either bring in their favorite poem, or to bring in poems that they had written. Many of the girls read poems at the meeting, and all of the sponsors read poems as well. I participated in this meeting by reading a poem by Alice Walker. Toward the end of the meeting, one of the girls went to the microphone and, instead of reading a poem, recited a sorority cheer/chant. Immediately I felt uncomfortable because I expected the sponsors to chastise her for not following directions. Instead of getting in trouble for reciting a sorority pledging chant, the girls and sponsors snapped[1] and whistled. The girl was then told to repeat it because one of the sponsors, who was a Delta, had not been paying attention. The girl's chant was from the Delta sorority, and three of the sponsors told her over and over again how great it was after she repeated it a second time. They also encouraged the girls to clap, rather than snap, for her. Then they proceeded to list all of the teachers in the school that were Deltas. The girl was obviously very pleased and flattered, and the sponsor who was a Delta gave her a lot of verbal praise. After this experience, I could not long deny the appropriateness of Dr. Esposito's advice, and consequently I began to research the history of black sororities within the United States.

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[1] Before the meeting, one of the club sponsors instructed the girls that they were to snap instead of clap at the poetry slam.

Black Greek Lettered Organizations (BGLOs) began within the United States in the early twentieth century. They emerged within the context of segregation and racial oppression, and they were foundational in creating safe and productive spaces for Black students on university and college campuses (Gasman and Payton-Stewart, 2006; Hughey, 2008; Whaley, 2010). "Participation in the Greek system for Black Americans allowed them to function, in the eyes of White college administrators, as legitimate and recognizable college organizations" (Whaley, 2010, p. 17). Historically, BGLOs "served as organizational venues for the social production of a cadre of an emerging black upper class that W.E.B. DuBois famously branded the 'talented tenth'" (Hughley, 2008, p. 444). BGLOs were created to facilitate supportive friendships, racial uplift, and service to the Black community, and Black sororities in particular have been, and continue to be, active in politics, service, education, and philanthropy (Gasman and Payton-Stewart, 2006). Currently, BGLO membership is estimated to be between 800,000 and 1 million worldwide (Hughey, 2008).

When the club's ideals, rhetoric, and practices are analyzed in relation to black sororities, the influence of Black sororities on the club becomes arguably obvious. Gasman and Payton-Stewart notice assert that, "young women are prepared from an early age by their mothers, aunts, sisters and grandmothers for participation in these vital organizations" (2006, p. 134). Based on my research, teachers and club leaders could be added to the list of women who prepare young girls for participation in Black sororities. There are three important aspects of Black sororities that I observed in the Lady Trojans' meetings and activities, including a focus on appearance, service, and class elitism.

As has been discussed at length, the club spent much of its time focused on the girls' appearance. Uniforms were a major part of the club, and the club sponsors emphasized the importance of looking respectable and uniform. The sponsors often told the girls that how they looked was a direct representation of how they felt about themselves and the club. For example, when one of the sponsors was telling the girls that they needed to wear their shirts for the meetings, she said, "If you're ashamed of being in the club, of wearing the shirt, then don't be in the club. We don't want you here if you're ashamed to be here…Be proud of your shirts…What are the purposes of the shirt? Pride. To show that we are ladies. Yes! And that we're respected, that's right" (Observation notes, December 7th, 2010). The club sponsor made a number of interesting connections in this quote. First, she asserted that only girls who look "right," who were wearing the same shirts, could be a part of the club. Second, she assumed that if a girl was not wearing the correct clothes, she was not respecting herself, she was ashamed of the club, and she did not want to be a part of the club. Third, she proclaimed that the shirts showed that the girls had pride, and that they were ladies.

Whaley (2010) describes the changes she saw in her sister when she pledged the Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) sorority during college: "I witnessed my sister, then a senior in college, and her fellow pledges, wearing the same clothes and hairstyles and walking in unison during their pledge process" (p. 2). For the AKAs, it was imperative that the pledges look and act in uniform ways so that they could distinguish themselves from other women on campus. Similar to the Lady Trojans, part of what set the AKAs apart from the rest of the women on campus was the clothes that they wore and the way that they acted. According to Whaley,

> Black sorority women's former and current pledge activities create a rite of passage that stems from a long-standing cultural tradition among Black Americans to patrol and redraw the boundaries of Black respectability. (2010, p. 89)

The sponsors were arguably policing the girls in order to model and perpetuate the "right" forms of Black respectability, which included wearing the "right" kinds of clothes in order to correctly represent the club. They tried to instill the importance of pride by telling the girls that how they dressed represented whether or not they were respectable and proud.

Black sororities have a history of service to the Black community. Part of the mission of Black sororities is for the women to contribute to social uplift. Often, Black sororities undertake community service projects so as to help those less fortunate within the Black community. Throughout the year, the Lady Trojans were encouraged to participate in community service. There were two different ways in which the Lady Trojans could enact community service. As mentioned in chapter 4, the girls were given the opportunity to help at a food bank that was run by one of the club sponsor's churches. There were three different Saturdays throughout the year during which the girls could volunteer at the food bank. Although the food bank was arguably not within the community, this activity is similar to the kinds of activities Black sororities traditionally undertake (Whaley, 2010). The second community service activity that, unlike the first, was mandatory, involved the girls making cards for soldiers overseas in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. This meeting was a spontaneous meeting, and I was not informed that it had been called; consequently, I was not present at this meeting. The girls'

participation in community service was reinforced by the sponsors during a number of the meetings. The sponsors, on more than one occasion, had 1-2 girls get up and tell the rest of the girls how they felt when they volunteered at the food bank. Inevitably, the girls said that they felt good about themselves after they had volunteered, and the sponsors verbally praised all of the girls who "gave back to the community" (Observation notes, February 15th, 2011).

One important and persistent critique of sororities is that they create and maintain classist divisions among African American populations (Hernandez, 2007; Whaley, 2010; Gasman and Payton-Stewart, 2006). "In the twenty-first century, the Black sorority remains entrenched in middle-class values, whether or not the actual members identify as being a member of the working or elite classes" (Whaley, 2010, p. 126). It costs money to be a part of a sorority, and many sororities spend a significant amount of money on their various activities (Whaley, 2010). Many of the Lady Trojans' activities were activities usually associated with upper-class lifestyles, either because of how much they cost or the amount of leisure time needed to facilitate the activity. For example, one of the club meetings involved cupcake decorating. There is a certain amount of resources and time that is necessary in order for cupcake making to be a viable option in one's life. Similarly, the girls had to paint their nails during one of the club meetings. Again, there is a certain amount of time and resources necessary for this to be a part of one's lifestyle. Before they began the activity, one of the club sponsors essentially told the girls how to participate in this activity even if they were not in the social class with the right amount of disposable income: "This is called in-home nail care. When you make the kind of money I make, you gotta do it at home. And then you can say, look, aren't my nails so

cute? That's what me and my daughter do at home" (Observation notes, January 25th, 2011). During this meeting, the sponsor showed the girls how to present themselves as middle to upper class even if that was not their economic realities.

One of the most disturbing examples of classism in the club involved one of the sponsors policing the dress code policy. After complimenting the girls at the meeting who wore their shirts, one of the club sponsors told the girls that she sent one of the girls home after school because her shirt was wrinkled. "That is not representative of the club. Would you go to church wearing stuff like this? Would you go to school looking like this? Tell me no. You need to represent" (Observation notes, January 25th, 2011). I found out later that the girl had brought her old Lady Trojans shirt to school, and that her new shirt had arrived and one of the other sponsors had it. Although I cannot be sure, it seemed like the girl had brought her old shirt just in case her new shirt had not arrived. Instead of being rewarded for bringing a back-up shirt, she was sent home because she did not iron the shirt before bringing it to school. The sponsor assumed that the girl had an iron at home and that either she was allowed to iron her own clothes, or she had a parent present who had the time to iron clothes for her. The girl was not allowed to be a part of the club that day because she did not "represent" the club appropriately; the girls in the club were expected to have the resources, time, and self-initiative to iron their clothes before club meetings.

"None of my friends are in the club": Identity, Race, and Resistance

Meredith was the only White girl in the club. She was one of the first girls to get her consent form back to me, and she was my first interview. She was in sixth grade, and

at the beginning of our interview she told me all about her grades and the other clubs that she was in. She seemed very invested in school. At the beginning of the year, Meredith seemed engaged in the club's activities. She sat with the other girls and participated. Towards the middle of the year, I began to notice that Meredith was not as engaged at the meetings. She didn't socialize as much, and there were two meetings during which she was completely isolated from the other girls. Throughout the year I was very surprised to see no bullying or ostracizing during the club meetings. I had expected to witness bullying, or at least negative kinds and amounts of peer pressure, in the club for a number of reasons. First, some of the Girls' Studies literature suggests that bullying among girls is a major problem (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2008). Second, we are currently in the midst of an arguable moral panic about bullying in K-12 education, due in part to the recent bullying-related suicides within the United States. Third, as Lesko (2001) suggests, there seem to be a number of "confident characterizations of adolescence" (p. 2) that have entered the public common sense, and one of these is that adolescents are peer-oriented, which makes them especially prone to peer pressure. Finally, my own memories of middle school created an expectation that bullying and peer pressure would be an important part of what I observed during the year. To my surprise, I did not witness bullying or significant amounts of peer pressure during my participant observations. Of course this does not mean it was not present, but the fact that it was not visible to me is significant. This relates to Meredith in that she was not sitting alone because she felt like she was being bullied. In fact, during the two meetings that she chose to sit by herself, a number of girls reached out to her and asked her to come and sit with them. One of them even asked what was wrong, and Meredith declined to talk with her about it. Meredith

was present at all of the meetings, but she did not attend the high tea at the end of the year.

In what follows, I will theorize Meredith's participation in the club and our interview in multiple ways. First, I examine Meredith's resistance to the club. I argue that it was perhaps easier for Meredith to resist because of her race and outside social support. Second, I use Foucault's conceptualization of subjectivation to theorize how Meredith was simultaneously subjected to, as well as a subject of, various gendered discourses because of the club. Finally, I theorize my relationship with Meredith paying attention to the dynamics of feminist research, and how race potentially influenced how Meredith viewed and interacted with me.

Reading #1

During our interview, Meredith explained the changes in her behavior throughout the year. She said that over the course of the year she came to dislike being part of the Lady Trojans, and she was only still in the club because her mom wanted her to finish the year, and because Ms. Summers (the only White sponsor) wanted her to finish the year also. Meredith also mentioned that Ms. Summers was the leader of another after-school club of which Meredith was a part, and so it was strategic for Meredith to not upset Ms. Summers. Meredith claimed that she did not like being a part of the club because none of her friends were in the club; she said that she was actually ashamed to be in the club. After I asked her about the activities that she did not like, Meredith explained why she did not like being in the Lady Trojans:

Meredith: And, making, like collages and stuff, wasn't really that fun to me.

Alison: Why? Because you don't like doing that kind of art? Or cause you'd rather be doing other things, or what?

Meredith: It's not that I don't like art, but it's just…I can't see me doing all of this stuff with my friends, more than just doing it by myself.

Alison: So it's mostly that…your friends aren't in the club too.

Meredith: No. And I don't tell anybody that I'm in this club.

Alison: Oh really? Why?

Meredith: …Because I don't, cause…[long pause]…'cause I'm very ashamed to be.

Alison: Why?

Meredith: [very, very quietly] I don't know, it's just like, because you gotta wear pink and pearls…

Alison: Yeah…

Meredith:…every day, I mean every other Tuesday, that why I don't wear it.

Alison: Yeah. So you don't wear it? I hadn't noticed. Yeah, they're very into uniforms…

Meredith: And if I do wear it, I change right after school and then I put my jacket on until I come here…

Meredith later asserted that she was not a "girly girl" and that she therefore did not like the club's activities. She said that while she got along with her mom, she spent a lot of time with her dad.

Alison: So is your mom into the pearls and dress…

Meredith: My mom's a girly girl.

Alison: Oh. That's the thing. Hmmm. Does she put a lot of pressure on you…to look certain ways or act certain ways?

Meredith: Um, not at home mostly, but when we're out…yeah.

Alison: Mmm hmmm. How does that make you feel?

Meredith: [long pause] Um, it's fine. Sometimes I get annoyed when she tells me, you know, like stuff, but I meant I know that…it's just proper courtesy.

[…]

Meredith: 'Cause I usually I don't hang around her, like, I hang, like mostly when I go out, like, I'm with my dad…never mind…

Alison: What were you going to say?

Meredith: It's just, um, I hang around my dad a lot.

She mentioned her dad multiple times during the interview, and it became obvious that he was very important to her. In fact, Meredith was able to skip the high tea at the end of the year because her dad was willing to lie for her. After talking about how she did not

like the etiquette meeting, Meredith abruptly told me that she was not going to the high tea.

> Meredith: I'm not going to the tea.
>
> Alison: You're not going to the tea?
>
> Meredith: It's like, I told my dad, I showed it to my mom and she's, and then I asked my dad if I had to go, and 'cause, 'cause my dad knows that I'm not like that. And like, the whole pearls and hats and gloves, so he said that he'd make up an excuse for me.
>
> Alison: Really? Good for him.
>
> Meredith: [laughs] I just, I don't wanna go to school with like a dress and hat and gloves and then have tea.

Meredith felt confident in her resistance to the club because she had her dad's support. Throughout the interview, she mentioned numerous times that her dad knew that she "wasn't like that." It was apparent that her dad's support and love for her gave her the courage to verbalize her discomfort about being in the club. Because Meredith had a support system that validated the fact that she did not want to act like, and be treated as, as "girly girl," Meredith was able to exist outside of this category without too much policing and judgment.

It is important to recognize that Meredith's ability to resist was mediated by social factors such as race.

> Girls have the power to both acquiesce to traditional femininity as well as resist it. The self, formed through both discourse and structure, makes choices about femininity within limits mediated by such factors as race, class, and sexual orientation. (Esposito, 2011, p. 89)

How is Meredith's Whiteness important to her ability to resist? Meredith and I did not talk about race during her interview. One reading of Meredith's ability to resist the club's hegemonic gendering is that Meredith was able and willing to resist because of how her Whiteness was conceptualized by others. In general, White girls are policed less within institutionalized schooling, and they are not seen as "at risk," as many girls of color are (Harris, 2004). Perhaps it was not seen as dangerous for Meredith to reject traditional forms of femininity because she was already assumed to possess the right kind of femininity because of her race. Because of her White privilege, Meredith was already assumed to have the correct kind of respectable femininity; this is not true for Black girls. Arguably, Meredith's White privilege positioned her as already possessing an acceptable femininity; therefore, she had support (her dad, her friends) when she decided to resist traditional norms and performances of femininity.

Reading #2

As I outlined in chapter 1, the subjects of poststructualism are not the coherent, autonomous, rational subjects of modernist thought. Rather, subjects are constituted through different discourses, and they are embedded in various power relationships. Subjects are understood as contradictory, relational, and embedded in particular discourses and contexts that inevitably both constrain and produce action and

understanding. Subjects come into being through discourse, and they are produced and constrained through the power dynamics within discourse. Foucault argues that modernist ideas of power must be complicated in order to engage with this different conceptualization of subjecthood. He argues that power is present in all relationships, and that we must shift our ideas about power away from power-over/oppression narratives to understanding how power is always and already embedded within relationships. "Power is productive rather than oppressive...subjects are constituted within power relations" (Gannon & Davies, 2006, p. 84). In this view, power is seen as relational, and it has positive, productive potential in that it is necessary for the creation of various subjectivities that can comply, resist, interrupt or disrupt particular discourses.

Foucault's (1991) conceptualization of the process of subjectivation (the production of subjects) allows for an interesting and productive reading of how the word 'lady' showed up within the club. Foucault plays with the double meaning of the word. According to Foucault, subjects exist in seemingly contradictory ways within webs of discourse and power. They are simultaneously subjected *to* discourse, and they are also subjects *of* discourse. He points to the productive power of discourse, maintaining that subjects exist as both/and within discursive webs: they are both constrained and agentic. In Judith Butler's (1997) work, she usefully delineates this notion of subjectivation:

> ''subjectivation'' . . . denotes both the becoming of the subject and the process of subjection—one inhabits the figure of autonomy only by becoming subjected to a power, a subjection which implies a radical dependency. [. . .] Subjection is, literally, the *making* of a subject, the principle of regulation according to which a

> subject is formulated or produced. Such subjection is a kind of power that not only unilaterally *acts on* a given individual as a form of domination, but also *activates* or forms the subject. Hence, subjection is neither simply the domination of a subject nor its production, but designates a certain kind of restriction *in* production. (Butler, 1997, 83-84, original emphasis, as quoted in Youdell, 2006)

Although some critics of poststructuralism bemoan what they see as a lack of agentic freedom of the poststructural subject, many feminist poststructuralists assert that agency is possible, although it must be conceptualized differently. Subjectivation points to the contradictory nature of subjecthood—the very constraints in which subjects find themselves also open up possibilities for their (albeit limited) agency.

Meredith's resistance to the club exemplifies the contradictions inherent in subjecthood. Meredith was simultaneously *subjected to* an oppressive gender discourse and the *subject of* that discourse. She asserted her agency through resisting the very discourse that created her as a knowable, gendered subject. Meredith remained intelligible by creating her identity against what she was expected to be. Subjects are created and maintained within certain discursive webs, and in order to remain intelligible, they must take up particular discourses. For example, girls are "inaugurated" into subjecthood through gender discourse, but they must continually "cite" the rules of this discourse if they are to remain intelligible (Youdell, 2006, p. 37). Meredith cited that rules of the "girly girl" discourse in order to resist that discourse. The creation of her identity simultaneously reinforced and resisted the "girly girl" discourse. The discourse was reinforced because Meredith cited it in our interview, but she also resisted it by refusing to participate in the gender performances sanctioned by the discourse.

Reading #3

As I discussed in chapter 3, feminist research pays attention to inherent power dynamics that are involved in the research process. Throughout the year, it was obvious that I was an outsider to the club. I usually sat by myself on the edge of the group and took notes on my computer. I participated minimally; I occasionally took pictures for the sponsors, and I did read a poem at their poetry slam. I also talked with the girls, but I talked with them mostly when they initiated the conversation. Not only was I an outsider because of my status as a researcher, I was also an outsider because of my race. All but two of the girls in the club were African American, and five of the six club sponsors were African American. This fact was never voiced or discussed. According to my notes, race was only mentioned four different times throughout the year. The first time was during the hygiene class. The guest speaker asked the girls how often they should wash their hair, and one of the youngest girls raised her hand and replied, "I don't mean to be racist or anything, but I think White girls have to wash their hair every day." The speaker responded by saying, "Yes, it varies, and it depends on if you're Caucasian or Asian or Latina, you wash once a day" (Observation notes, October 12th, 2010). She proceeded to ask the only Asian American girl in the club her nationality, and she then moved on to talk about how African American girls should wash their hair. The second time race was brought up in conversation was when one of the sponsors was talking about seeing Nikki Giovanni read her poetry while she was in college. The sponsor said that she loved Nikki Giovanni with her "hair all natural" (Observation notes, January 25th, 2011). The third time race was mentioned was also in relation to the poetry slam. One of the sponsors asked the girls, "Anybody know any African American poets, or Caucasian poets, or

Hispanic poets?" (Observation notes, January 25th, 2011). The last time that race was mentioned was during the speech at the high tea at the end of the year. The guest speaker talked to the girls about making "good choices." During her talk, she said, "I'm really big on health, especially as African American women, and as women, and we sometimes make bad choices, and sometimes we put other people ahead of ourselves" (Observation notes, May 17th, 2011). Race was never purposefully discussed; in fact, three of the four times it was brought up I felt like the person who brought it up immediately thought it was unwise. The girl in the first example actually verbally apologized, and when race was mentioned when talking about poetry and health, it seemed like the adults made what they said more inclusive in order to skirt the topic of race.

My attention to the underlying importance of race is outlined in DeVault's (1999) discussions of feminist research and the importance of being attuned to race and ethnicity within qualitative fieldwork. DeVault argues that researchers

> should treat questions of racial-ethnic positioning as integral to the developing analysis in qualitative study and that 'hearing' race and ethnicity in our talk with informants requires active attention and analysis rather than passive listening and recording. (p. 85)

Even though race was not an overt component of the club, it inevitably influenced the club and the research that I conducted within the club. As mentioned earlier, part of my outsider status came from being a White researcher. Also, throughout the year, it seemed like Meredith felt a connection with me, and I believe that this was because of race. She was the first to hand in her consent form, and she was my first interview; she seemed

eager to talk to me and it was very easy for us to schedule the interview. Also, during some of the meetings, I would catch her looking at me, and it seemed like she was trying to see what I thought of the club's activities. I think that it is also safe to assume that she was so open and honest with me about her dislike of the club during our interview because of race. This consequently made me question how race influenced my other interviews. What kinds of stories were safe for girls to tell me? How did my position as a potential authority figure influence how the girls answered my questions?

The Post-Feminist Space of the Lady Trojans

As outlined in chapter 2, post-feminism suggests that the goals of feminism have been attained and, thus, there is no need for further collective mobilization around gender. As McRobbie (2004) argues that within post-feminist discourse, in order for feminism to be "taken into account," it has to be understood as having already passed away. Post-feminism assumes that girls and women, through the efforts of the feminist movement, have now "arrived" at gender equality; consequently, gender is no longer a significant lens through which to see and analyze the world. Since it is assumed that girls now have the same opportunities and choices as boys, it is no longer problematic when and if they "choose" traditionally feminine actions and roles.

I suggest that the Lady Trojans was a post-feminist space, and that it would not have been in existence if it were not for post-feminist discourses. If it was believed that we, as a society, were still struggling for gender equality and equal opportunity, there would have been questions raised about the club's goals, mission, and activities. Because it is now assumed that girls have equal educational and social opportunities, the messages

of the Lady Trojans are seen as one choice among many from which the girls can choose. The girls in the club could embrace aspects of traditional femininity, such as wearing pink, painting their nails, making cupcakes, and wearing pearls, and it was assumed that their femininity would not hurt their future chances of success. This suggests that the sponsors assumed that femininity is no longer looked down upon; the assumption seemed to be that because gender is no longer an issue, the girls can look and act in feminine ways and it will not hurt their future careers or success. The club was arguably engaged in the post-feminist work of "undoing feminism" (McRobbie, 2004, p. 7) by uncritically perpetuating traditional femininity.

Disciplining My (Researcher) Body

In her article, "Tracing bodylines: The body in feminist poststructural research," Somerville (2004) argues that, although the body has been central to feminist theorizing and political action, it has been under "erasure" in much contemporary feminist theorizing due to the influence of poststructural and post-modern influences (p. 47). Similarly, Marshall (1999) suggests that feminist researchers pay attention to embodied experiences, and "ordinary experiences of the body" (p. 66). Following these feminist researchers, I offer a theorizing of my embodied experiences of research during the year that I spent with the Lady Trojans.

Throughout the year while I was conducting research, I became increasingly critical of how the club sponsors sought to discipline the girls' bodies. As I have explained in different sections of data analysis, the club sponsors overtly policed how the girls performed femininity in a variety of ways. After reading and re-reading my

observation notes and memos, and through conversations with my advisor, I began to realize that I changed the ways in which I presented myself at club meetings. Because the club was so focused on appearance and femininity, I began to police myself in different ways. In chapter 4 I argued that the club sponsors attempted to instill a patriarchal male connoisseur within the girls in order to insure they perform the correct kind of traditional femininity. I was very surprised to recognize that the club functioned similarly for me. For example, I was very self-conscious about my nose piercing. I deliberately only wore a nose stud instead of a nose ring. The nose stud is less noticeable, and from my experience, many people think that a nose ring is somewhat anti-feminine, or at least alternatively feminine. Before getting out of my car for one of the January meetings, I realized that I had forgotten to replace my nose ring with the stud. I sat in the car and debated about what I should do. At that point in the year, I thought that the club sponsors would have considered me as a role model for the girls, and I was worried about jeopardizing this by wearing my nose ring. In the eight years since I had my nose pierced, I have never taken the piercing out for any length of time, yet I took out my nose ring and went to the meeting.

The second way in which I increased my bodily self-discipline because of the club was how I chose to dress for the club meetings. At the beginning of my research, I always dressed up for the meetings in clothes that I typically wear to teach. I always wore dress pants, skirts, or dresses at the meetings. By the second semester, I realized that I was wearing primarily black pants or skirts to the club meetings, and this was because the club sponsors always insisted that the girls wear black pants or a black skirt. I

had unconsciously started performing the kind of femininity that was expected and rewarded by the club sponsors.

In the memo that I wrote after the meeting before which I took out my nose ring, I questioned this action and wondered what it signified and meant for my role as a feminist researcher. Throughout the year I became more conscious of my body, and how it fit in, or did not fit in, with the type of femininity that the club sponsors were encouraging. I struggled with questions such as: Was I being sneaky by dressing in ways that did not represent how I normally dressed? How do I normally dress? Should I dress to please the sponsors, or should I dress in such a way as to show the girls an alternative femininity? Would the sponsors continue to welcome me if I did not practice/perform gender in traditional ways?

I recognize that these questions are un-answerable, and that they provide productive space that allows for me to think through important questions about feminist ethics, subjectivity, and the role of the researcher. For now, I have momentarily settled on the idea that since I do not subscribe to modernist notions of an authentic, interior self, I was only being deliberate about the particular kind of "mask" that I wore for the club meetings. Although I do not necessarily prefer the gender performances that I was choosing for the meetings, I realize that I was attempting to juggle many different subject positions which are contradictory. Feminist poststructuralists describe subject formations as being scattered, non-linear, contradictory and messy, and this is exactly the positionality that I embodied throughout my time as a researcher within the club. I had to negotiate many contradictions. For example, I wanted to please the sponsors/I did not agree with very much of what the sponsors did or said; I wanted to be read as a legitimate

researcher/I look young; I wanted to fit into the club as to not seem like even more of an outsider/I often do not practice gender in traditional ways; I wanted to speak up and out against harmful messages that were presented to the girls/I did not want to interrupt and/or participate too much.

I am not sure that I made the "right" decisions when I consider how I presented myself at the meetings, but I am not convinced there was a "right" decision to be made. I inhabited a contradictory subject position that I constantly questioned, and as I mentioned earlier, I capitulated to traditional gender norms and practices unconsciously at times. What would have been lost or gained if I had made different decisions about disciplining my body? How would this have changed my role as a researcher? How would it have changed my data?

Whose Definition Defines and Why?

The Lady Trojans had a club motto, but it was only chanted after the first and third meeting that I attended.[2] Below is an excerpt from my field notes that I wrote during the first meeting:

> Before they let the meeting out, Ms. Howell asks the girls what their saying is. Most of the girls get the first two adjectives... "We are smart, beautiful and _____." A number of the girls shout out, "bold, bold!" but the saying, as reiterated by Ms. Howell, is "We are smart, beautiful, and CHARMING!" (Observation notes, September 28th, 2010)

[2] I missed the first meeting because I was waiting for IRB approval.

At the third meeting, the same sponsor asked the girls what their motto was, and none of the girls said bold; they instead said it correctly and ended the motto with the adjective charming.

The club motto was the same motto that has been used in previous years for the Lady Trojans. This meant that the girls were not involved with the creation of the motto; instead, they were expected to memorize and repeat the motto when they became members of the club. Their definitions of what it meant to be a Lady Trojan were not welcomed by the club sponsors. The differences between being bold and being charming are related to the bodily and behavioral discipline that the sponsors expected from the girls. Being bold, especially for females, implies being empowered and assertive; conversely, being charming suggests being coy, reserved, and potentially manipulative. Currently, there is a resurgence in the popularity of charm schools, or finishing schools, within the United States. Many corporations now send their employees to these kinds of schools, and there have been a number of popular television shows that feature charm schools.[3] Originally, charm schools were created in order to teach girls how to perform the correct kind of femininity. Charm schools provided etiquette training, and proper etiquette included instructions on how to act socially. Rather than acting assertive or aggressive, women were taught to use their charm and beauty to their advantage. Charm schools taught girls to discipline their bodies and emotions in order to conform to traditional notions of femininity. Many of the original tenets of charm schools were present in the Lady Trojans' club, and the competing definitions for the club motto

[3] VH1 created a show about charm schools. The show ran for three seasons and was hosted by Mo'Nique, Sharon Osbourne, and Ricki Lake.

highlight potential differences in definitions of femininity between the girls and the club sponsors.

A Non-concluding Conclusion

This chapter was an attempt to introduce uncertainty, or dissensus, into the certitude inherent in traditional qualitative data analysis. By utilizing various theoretical frameworks, and by examining my own positionality within the research, I struggled towards a different kind of validity. I conducted non-traditional data analysis in order to highlight the socially constructed nature of data, data analysis, and data presentation. In so doing, I also opened up different, and sometimes contradictory, spaces of meaning-making. I provided different readings of the same data, none of which were right or wrong; instead, the different readings illustrated the importance of theory, perspective, and positionality. The different readings and perspectives presented also pushed me to think differently about Truth, theory, and the taken for grantedness of experience.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this year-long feminist ethnography was to investigate how girlness was conceptualized, perpetuated, and performed within an all girls', after-school club. The institution of schooling is one of the most formative spaces in which young people learn to reproduce normative gender practices. "We see how it is in the minutiae of school life, its routine practices, mundane occurrences, and everyday interactions that students come to be performatively constituted" (Youdell, 2006, p. 39). This study examined the kinds of messages and expectations girls received about gender and gender performance within the club, and it also explored how the girls made meaning of those messages. Additionally, I theorized how gender, race, class, and sexual orientation informed one another, and I illustrated the socially contextual nature of these identity categories.

This study illustrated the prolonged and sustained work it takes to uphold the cultural status quo in relation to gender norms and ideals, and how the social construction of gender is related to race, class, and sexuality. It pointed to the importance of naming the institution of schooling as a formative cultural space that reproduces binary gender categories that are then used to perpetuate current hierarchies within society. As Butler

(1988) claims, if gender binaries were natural and innate, they would not be so heavily policed. The fact that there is so much cultural space and individual and collective time dedicated to the maintenance and perpetuation of gender binaries illustrates that the binaries are not naturally occurring; instead, gender performances are learned and (re)produced within particular social contexts. Butler suggests that subjects produce a gender identity through imitating an imitation, "Gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original" (Butler, 1991, p. 643). Girls learn at a young age which gender performances are socially sanctioned, and "girls are systematically rewarded for performing traditional femininities" (Esposito, 2011, p. 89). Often, if girls resist socially sanctioned gender performances, they are publicly policed and/or shamed. Making the processes of gendering visible allows for open and critical conversations about the social construction of gender, and the implications particular constructions have for the embodied lives of girls.

In chapter 1, I outlined the purpose and significance of this study. I argued that it is important for feminist researchers to examine the socially constructed nature of girlness. I explored important poststructural concepts that have informed my thinking about this study. In chapter 2, I reviewed the literature within Girls' Studies, third wave feminism, and post-feminism, positioning my study within these three areas. I outlined my methodology in chapter 3. I explained my methods of data collection, and I also delineated the two theoretical frameworks utilized in this study. I explored alternative notions of validity, and I also discussed research ethics and the role of the feminist researcher.

I used traditional data analysis in chapter 4 and created three themes from my ethnographic data. Using data to support my claims, the themes that I presented were Eurocentrism, the propagation of Christianity, and girls as objects. In chapter 5 I disrupted the straight-forward thematic presentation of the data in chapter 4 by presenting the data in different and contradictory ways. I presented different readings of the same data, I included data that I had excluded in chapter 4, and I interrogated my role as a researcher.

In this chapter, I review the findings of this ethnography. I discuss the two different approaches to data analysis that were used in chapters 4 and 5. I explore the significance of the study, and how it contributes to educational research. I claim that this ethnography makes important contributions to qualitative research within the education, and that it also contributes to feminist research in education. Next I discuss the implications this study has for educational policy, and the possible limitations and/or complications of the study. Finally, I explore future research possibilities.

Review of Findings

In chapter 4, I utilized traditional data analysis in order to create three themes from my data. I conducted participant observation, individual interviews, and textual analysis as my methods of data collection. I wrote memos after each meeting that I observed, and I also discussed my notes, interviews, memos, and Lady Trojan handouts with my advisor. The first theme that I generated from my data was Eurocentrism. I argued that Eurocentrism was present in many uncritical ways within the club. For example, during the meeting where they were to learn table manners and etiquette, the

girls were only taught Western European eating traditions and customs, and there was no discussion about other eating traditions. When I interviewed one of the girls and asked her about the etiquette meeting, she did not know that they were being taught Western European traditions and customs. Similarly, Eurocentrism was present at their last meeting of the year. The sponsors hosted a high tea at the end of the year, and the girls were expected to dress up and bring a female relative to the tea. As I discussed in chapter 4, the high tea is a European tradition that has particular class connotations. The European roots of the high tea were not discussed, which led to the centering and normalization of Western European traditions and customs.

The second theme that I discussed was the propagation of Christianity. Even though the club was not a Christian club, the club sponsors explicitly and implicitly propagated Christianity. First I explored some of the ways the club explicitly propagated Christianity. For example, at the end of the year the girls were expected to create a booklet for their female family members who were accompanying them to the high tea. The sponsors handed out 25 pages of pictures and inspirational sayings to the girls, and they were supposed to pick three of the pictures that best represented what they learned in the club. All of the pictures had bible verses on them. Similarly, the club sponsors gave the girls a brochure about the food bank where they were doing their community service for the club. The brochure also had bible verses on it, and the food bank was organized by local Baptist churches. Next, I showed how the club implicitly propagated Christianity. I argued that the club promoted Christian ideals of femininity, including a commitment to community service, chastity, and heteronormativity. For example, when an outside speaker came to talk to the girls about puberty and physical development, she

emphasized that the girls should wait to engage in sexual activities, and she did not mention sexual pleasure or non-heterosexual relationships. Also, the speaker at the high tea at the end of the year assumed that all of the girls would be involved in relationships with boys, and she too asserted that the girls must wait before engaging in (hetero) sexual activity.

The last theme that I explored was that the girls were treated as objects during club meetings. Using Freire (1970), I suggested that the girls were subjected to banking education, and that their past experiences were not valued within the club. I critiqued the lack of dialogue present in the club, arguing that the girls were not allowed to be agentic, co-creators of their own realities. I also asserted that the club attempted to instill a patriarchal male connoisseur (Bartky, 1990) within the girls. The club sponsors regularly policed the girls' appearance, and I argued that this was done with the hope that the girls would come to internally police themselves in order to perform the correct kind of traditional femininity.

In chapter 5, I sought to disrupt the straight-forward data analysis of chapter 4. Following Lather's (2007) poststructural conceptualizations of validity, I offered additional, and sometimes contradictory, analyses of the data in chapter 4. For example, I presented three alternative analyses of the Lady Trojans' etiquette day in order to disrupt the linear analysis that I offered in chapter 4. This also illustrated how data analysis and interpretation is dependent upon theoretical frameworks and researcher subjectivity. I also analyzed data that I ignored (silenced?) in chapter 4. I analyzed parts of my notes and interviews that I did not address in my traditional data analysis. Finally, I interrogated my subjectivities and theorized how my various subject positions influenced

my data and analysis. I also detailed how the club affected my own gender performances.

Implications for Educational Policy/Recommendations

In traditional policy analysis, researchers offer a set of concrete, authoritative recommendations for changes in policy and practice, based on the results of the research. Although I find the set of assumptions inherent in that action problematic, I nonetheless know it may be useful to offer possible suggestions based on this study. Throughout the year, there were four separate occasions when the sponsors asked my opinion about a specific aspect of what they were doing that day, and they followed this by asking if I could give them feedback about the club and the club's activities. They explicitly asked for my advice about club activities, and they wanted my perspective as an "outsider" and as a researcher. In what follows, I start by offering recommendations for the club by comparing the club's activities to the club's description found on the school website. I compare what actually happened in the club to what the club claimed was going to happen, and I offer suggestions and recommendations based on that comparison. Second, I present my own recommendations; I offer suggestions for how to create a relevant and empowering space for girls in which their own interests and issues are taken into consideration.

In their description of the club on the school's website, the club sponsors made two references to their commitment to exploring different cultural traditions. In the first sentence they stated that their high tea at the end of the year draws from Chinese and English cultural traditions. Later in the club description they stated that the girls will

learn how to be comfortable dining anywhere in the world. As I discussed in detail in chapters 4 and 5, there were no discussions about the Eurocentric nature of the club's standards and ideals, and there was no discussion of other, global traditions. I suggest that the club sponsors make it more of a priority to discuss different cultural traditions since they claim that this is an integral part of the club's goals.

Similarly, the club description claimed that the girls will be exposed to famous modern day poets at their Poetry Stomp. Although the girls and sponsors did read poems from a few poets who would be within this classification, there was no explanation or discussion of the poet's personal histories or backgrounds. They created a space in which the girls could have learned about different kinds of poetry, but they did not capitalize on this opportunity by talking with the girls. The club description also stated that the girls have the opportunity to "hone their math skills." The club sponsors never discussed math at any of the meetings. There were plenty of opportunities during which the club sponsors could have initiated discussions about math, but they did not. The club sponsors should consider how they can teach and discuss math in relation to the club activities.

The last sentence of the club description stated that the club promotes social, mental, and physical health. Although this is a very ambiguous (and clichéd) statement, there are a number of changes the sponsors could make to align the reality of the club with these club goals. First, as I mentioned earlier, the club sponsors should know the girls individually, and they should encourage the girls to get to know each other. Second, the club sponsors could focus on the girls' intellectual capabilities. Besides requiring the girls to bring in and show their report cards, the sponsors did not encourage the girls' studies, or the girls' outside intellectual interests. One of the girls that I interviewed

expressed her interest in starting a Lady Trojans book club. She approached one of the sponsors about this, but nothing ever came of it. The club should be a space where the girls are encouraged to develop their intellectual interests and potentials. Finally, as I briefly mentioned, the club should promote healthy eating, and it could be a space in which girls explored different aspects of physical health. For example, one of the girls I interviewed expressed interest in incorporating sports into the club activities. The club sponsors could create a meeting during which girls explored different kinds of physical activities that are not traditionally offered at the school.

It is arguably very important for girls to have social spaces in which they come together. I believe it is critical for educators to create spaces where girls can learn from each other and from adults who are invested in them. The type of space that I envision is very different from what I observed all year at the Lady Trojans' meetings. Although the social and cultural context of clubs are important when conceptualizing potentially positive and productive spaces for girls, in what follows I offer some suggestions for how such a club might be organized.

It can be helpful for girls to have relationships with women to whom they are not related (Oakes and Saunders, 2008). A girls' club could foster supportive relationships between women and girls, but it would have to be done deliberately and mindfully. As Nancy Lesko (2001) elaborates, even if relationships between adults and youth are filled with "good feelings," this does not mean they are not rife with power and unjust hierarchies. Lesko discusses the power of "affectional ties" between youth and adults, and suggests that researchers need to critically investigate seemingly innocuous social spaces:

> I believe it is important to acknowledge the particular kinds of interpersonal power orchestrated in such settings rather than to pretend that authority and control are dissipated or absent in schools with *good feelings*. (2001, p. 98)

I suggest that a girls' club encourage youth/adult relationships, and that these relationships be mutually constitutive. Because adults have more power and authority in our cultural context, the adult women in the girls' club would have to be deliberate about creating spaces in which girls could voice their ideas and concerns. The adults would have to be open to the life experiences of the girls, not assuming that their own experiences mean more because of their age and culturally vested authority. I am not suggesting that girls' ideas and concerns be taken up uncritically; rather, the club could be a space in which their ideas and concerns are centered in conversation and activities.

Similarly, a girls' club should be relevant to the lives of the girls. Rather than asking the girls what was important to them and then constructing conversations and activities accordingly, the Lady Trojans' club sponsors made their activities important to the girls be insisting on their importance and forcing participation. Although the call for relevance sounds vague and simplistic, it often goes unrealized in spaces created by adults for youth. Following Freire (1970), I believe that people need to name their own worlds, and set their own conversational and learning priorities. Rather than assuming they know what girls need to know, adults need to allow for the girls to utilize their past life experiences while setting their own learning agendas. For example, as I discussed earlier, many of the girls that I interviewed had interesting and exciting suggestions for club activities when I asked them in the interviews what they wished they could have done in the Lady Trojans. One girl suggested the club have a sports day during which the

girls experiment playing sports. The same girl also voiced her longing for a meeting during which they talked about nutrition and physical health. Similarly, another girl thought that a field trip to an electrical or water plant would have been exciting; she thought it was important for the girls to understand where their power and water comes from and the processes involved this. Finally, one of the girls wanted to create a book club within the Lady Trojans because she wanted to share her love of reading with other girls in the club. I believe girls' clubs should center the past and current experiences of girls in order to create a relevant and productive social space.

My last suggestion for a girls' club involves criticality and dialogue. Although postfeminists argue that girls now have more options and opportunities than ever before (Harris, 2004), girls face tremendous challenges, many of which remained undiscussed and obfuscated: racism, sexism, emotional/physical/sexual abuse, sexualization, to name a few. One of the most important things a girls' club could offer is a space in which girls critically analyze, question, challenge, and think through their cultural and social contexts. This space would encourage girls to examine the supposedly commonsensical. For example, instead of uncritically emphasizing traditionally femininity, a girls' club should engage with traditional femininity by exploring its history, racial and class connotations, how it is conceptualized based on local context, how it plays out in their lives in different ways, how it feels to resist and the consequences of this resistance, how it feels to enact and the consequences of this enactment. These kinds of critical conversations have the ability to open up different ways of knowing and being for girls. They potentially allow for girls to explore alternatives subjectivities, and they hopefully create more social spaces for girls who are already enacting these differences in their own

lives. A girls' club of this nature could encourage praxis: girls could be encouraged to raise questions about their individual circumstances, and it could also encourage girls to then act to change their circumstances.

Significance of the Study and Contributions to Educational Research

As I discussed in chapter 1, it is important to expose and study that behind-the-scenes work that is required to uphold gender binaries. Schools are "sexualized and gendered institutions" (Pascoe, 2007) that inform young peoples' gendered and sexual identities. This study investigated the heteronormativity of the Lady Trojans' club, which maintained and perpetuated binary ideals of gender and sexuality. Within wider society, the policing of gender binaries and identities permeates all aspects of life. Upholding and policing strict gender binaries arguably contributes to sexual abuse and sexual assault (Browne, 2004; Valentine, 2007). This study is significant because gender hierarchies continue to be a societal problem, and gendered violence (physical and emotional) permeates social spaces, including schools. For example, last month in Missouri a middle school girl's parents sued her school district because she was raped multiple times by a classmate at school. The first time she was raped she reported it to the school. The school's administration made the girl write an apology letter to her rapist and hand-deliver it to him because the school did not believe her. She was also punished by the school district with a suspension. After returning to school, she was once again sexually assaulted by the boy. After a violent rape in the library, the girl's mom was able to take her to undergo a rape kit at a local child advocacy center. After the semen sample was matched with the boy to whom the girl was originally forced to apologize, the boy admitted to sexually assaulting and raping the girl on numerous occasions

(http://abcnews.go.com/US/special-student-sues-missouri-school-district-rapes/story?id=14325659).

There is a constant stream of sexual abuse stories within the United States that are linked to schools. One girl in California was beaten and gang raped after her prom in front of a dozen fellow students, many of whom laughed, took pictures, and even joined in (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/10/27/police-people-watched-gan_n_334975.html). Last month in New York City, a girl's family sued the school district because she was repeatedly raped by the school's IT employee. The girl had written about the abuse in an essay in English class, which led the school authorities to further investigate (http://articles.nydailynews.com/2011-07-19/local/29808338_1_thurgood-marshall-academy-special-schools-investigator-computer-repairman).

Nationally, there have also been a number of suicides that have been linked to normative ideas of gender and sexuality. A Rutgers student committed suicide last year after his roommate secretly videotaped his sexual encounter with another man. The year before, two 11-year-old boys committed suicide within ten days of each other, purportedly because of the homophobic bullying and taunting that they were forced to endure in their respective schools.

In Mississippi, a school canceled prom because a girl wanted to attend with her girlfriend (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/03/11/mississippi-prom-canceled_n_494555.html). The school district only allows heterosexual couples at the prom, and they decided to cancel prom after two of their female students insisted on

coming together because they are dating. Similarly, a student in metro Atlanta was kicked out of school for cross-dressing (http://www.ajc.com/news/cobb/cobb-teen-told-he-156500.html). School officials said that a boy dressing like a girl was too disruptive for the school, and they consequently suspended him for breaking their school dress code.

I argue that all of these incidences are directly related to normative gender regimes. When schools are heavily invested in normative gender ideals and standards, including traditional notions of femininity, gender and sexual hierarchies are created and maintained (Pascoe, 2007). There is much at stake in not having critical, relevant conversations with girls about normative gender ideals and behaviors. There is arguably danger in insisting that girls perform a traditional kind of femininity, one that includes being quiet, restrained, calm, and polite (Buchwald et al., 2005). Girls do not report being victimized; girls are blamed for being victimized; children and young adults are committing suicide for not conforming to gender and sexuality regimes.

This study contributes to educational research by illustrating how schools uphold and perpetuate gender norms. It shows the work that schools undertake to police, regulate, and maintain normative gender roles, and how girls negotiate and navigate these parameters. I documented how one all girls, after-school club conceptualized girlness, and how this was experienced by some of the girls in the club. I also presented a reimagining of what this kind of space could encompass, based on my own priorities and hopes for girls within society. This study illustrated the ways in which gender, class, race, and sexuality intersected in the club, and the kinds of culturally contextual messages that the club perpetuated.

This study contributes specifically to qualitative educational research. I engaged in traditional data analysis, and I also disrupted this presentation by presenting counter stories from my data in a chapter of non-traditional data analysis. By presenting data in this way, I showed the role researchers have in data construction, and I also highlighted the different ways data can be presented based on theoretical orientations. I disrupted traditional data analysis by refusing to present a linear, unified representation of the research data. Instead, I provided a more complex analysis of the data, showing how researchers and their theoretical orientations construct and create data.

This study also contributes to feminist educational research. I situated my research within feminism, and I also engaged in feminist research practices. I critically analyzed my role as a researcher, and I openly engaged how my subjectivity influenced how I participated in the club, how I interacted with the girls, and how I theorized the research data. I struggled openly with particular aspects of my positionality, and how they related to the research. I do not claim that I was able to "come clean" and consequently provide "truer" data and data analysis; rather, my struggles and discussions about researcher subjectivity illustrated the socially constructed nature of the research process, and they also engaged issues of power and privilege that are important to the research process.

Complications of the Study

Traditional qualitative research assumes that researchers can provide better representations of a given reality by increasing their data and forming close relationships with their participants. I do not subscribe to this assumption because I do not believe that

there is one Truth to any reality. The need to list limitations to a study comes from this assumption that there is a way to "get it right" in qualitative research; consequently, I will discuss how I could have conducted my research differently in order to obtain different perspectives, or in order to increase the number of perspectives present within my data.

As I noted in previous chapters, I was unable to be present at the first club meeting. It would have been interesting to see how the sponsors interacted with the girls during this meeting, and also how they presented the mission and goals of the club. Also, I was unable to attend the meeting during which they made cards for United States troops overseas; again, this would have been a very interesting meeting because I was looking forward to seeing how politics showed up in the Lady Trojans. The perspective afforded my studying this group for more than a year would be a fascinating look into how the group functions based on which teachers sponsor it, the personalities of the girls, and the larger political and cultural context. A multi-year study could examine which activities are consistent from year to year, and whether or not their planning problems are a normal part of the function of the club.

Similarly, the study could have been expanded by interviewing more of the girls. The number of interviews I was able to conduct was limited by consent forms, canceled meetings, and girls dropping out of the club. One perspective which would have been productive was if I had been able to interview the girls who dropped out of the club. Their insights would have been potentially rich and interesting data to add to the study. Also, I could have interviewed the club sponsors in order to better understand their motives behind organizing the club, and how they conceptualized girlhood, femininity, and the purpose of the club. Correspondingly, this study could have been deepened by

interviewing the girls' parents so as to investigate their hopes and expectations for the club, their reasons for signing their daughters up for the club, how they think the club influenced their daughters, and their own conceptualizations of girlhood and femininity.

Future Research

This study points to the importance of researching extracurricular, single-gender spaces. Investment must be made in order to explore the minutia of gender work, especially as it exists in public institutions such as schools. Future research could explore single gender spaces in different regions of the country in order to compare and contrast potential regional differences in the perpetuation of gender norms. How do regional contexts influence ideals and norms about gender? Related to this, future research could involve schools in rural areas in order to study how physical location influences the workings of single gender clubs. This study was conducted in a very large city; what might a similar study find in a rural school? Additionally, future studies could research groups with varying demographics. How are the messages about gender related to race, ethnicity, language, and/or religion?

Future research in this area could include an initial study of a group similar to the Lady Trojans, and it could be followed by additional interviews with the research participants in a set number of years. It would be very exciting and interesting to study how the girls' views of the club changed and stayed the same after a certain number of years. Future research could compare and contrast the girls' perspectives on the club during their participation and after a predetermined number of years.

Conclusion

> To think about education, to pursue it, is to be interested in the transformation of "the ways things are" into more just and healthy relations, structures, and ways of thinking and being. It is to analyze and ultimately refuse the rationalizations that assert natural hierarchies of value in which some people get to live fuller, richer, safer lives by virtue of historically constructed and embedded ideas of who they are. It is to be interested fundamentally in the alleviation of suffering and the creation of well-being in the world. (Martusewicz, 2001, p. 8).

Although there is no "outside" of problematic gender norms and binaries, there are ways in which girls and women can open up space for different ways of being in the world. Girls cannot perform just any gender, but they can enact an, albeit limited, agency depending on which discourses are available to them. "Agency is never freedom from discursive constitution of self. Rather it is the capacity to recognize that constitution and to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which on is being constituted" (Davies, 2004, p. 4). Butler presents a reconceptualization of agency specifically in relation to gender binaries. As discussed earlier, she claims that the strict policing of gender binaries points to their unnaturalness and social construction. She follows this by suggesting that gender systems are upheld by constant imitation and reiteration. Subjects can resist sanctioned gender performances by disrupting the processes of imitation and reiteration. Said differently, there is space between iterations during which subjects can interrupt the assumed imitation. This is not to say that there is

an outside of gender structures; rather, there is space for disruptions which can allow for a different performance. Butler describes the possibility of strategic reinscription, where identity categories can "take on non-ordinary meanings and they can function in contexts where they have not belonged" (Youdell, 2004, p. 481). This kind of performative disruption creates possible ways of existing differently, potentially creating social situations and contexts in which traditional gender performances are disrupted and called into question.

Educational spaces should be social spaces that support girls in their individual struggles, challenge their cultural assumptions, and open up possibilities for alternative ways of being in the world. As Martusewicz (2001) delineates in the opening quote, educational spaces should be engaged in critiquing naturalized hierarchies, including gender hierarchies. I believe that it is crucial for educators to work towards what Hickey-Moody and Malins (2008) describe as a Deleuzian ethics. They suggest that, for Deleuze, actions and beliefs which curtail, or shut down, possibilities and multiplicities must be challenged and critiqued, while actions and beliefs which open up space for multiplicities and alternative ways of knowing and being should be encouraged and cultivated. One way in which researchers and schools can open up spaces for young people is by working against gender binaries. This can be done by exposing the unnaturalness of gender binaries; examining the work that it takes to create and maintain gender binaries illustrates their potential instability. This ethnography suggests that schools are an integral social space in which gender binaries are maintained and perpetuated. Rather than upholding these binaries, schools should work to create open and critical spaces for students to challenge and question naturalized hierarchies.

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