UN/TANGLING GIRLHOOD: NEGOTIATIONS OF IDENTITY, LITERACY, AND PLACE AT AN ELITE, INDEPENDENT PRIVATE ALL-GIRLS SCHOOL IN NEW YORK CITY

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ABSTRACT

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Emily Bailin Wells

All-girls schools are commonly framed as institutions meant to empower girls to be their best selves in an enriching environment that fosters learning, compassion, and success. In elite, private schools, notions of language, privilege, and place are often tethered to the school's history and traditions in ways that are seamlessly woven into the cultural fabric of the institution, subsequently informing particular constructions of students. Therefore, a closer examination of the dialogic power of belonging and expectations between an institution and its members is required. Failure to interrogate language and power dynamics in privileged spaces can perpetuate systems and structures of exclusivity and prohibit the construction of authentically inclusive practices and place-making within educational institutions.

This study, which took place at an elite, independent, private all-girls school (the Clyde School) on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, interrogates how ideations of girls and girlhood are constructed and promoted as part of a school's institutional identity and, in turn, how members of the institution understand, negotiate, and reimagine ideals, expectations, and forms of membership within the Clyde School. Drawing on literature from sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and communications perspectives, and concepts of literacy, identity, and place as constructed, situated and practiced, this

study highlights the importance of context and discourse when examining how young people understand themselves, others, and their socially-situated realities.

Data collection included semi-structured interviews, multimodal media-making, and participant observations. The primary method of data analysis was a critical analysis of discourse—an examination of the language, beliefs, values, and practices that collectively work to construct a school's institutional identity; and foster insight into how students perceive and challenge notions of what it means to be a student at the Clyde School.

The findings of this case study offer analyses of individual, collective, and institutional identity/ies. It considers the discursive practices, critical literacies, and place-making processes that young people use to navigate and negotiate their experiences in a particular sociocultural ecology. This study contributes to understandings of girlhood, youth studies, and elite, private independent school settings and provokes further questions about the possibilities of disrupting storylines and re-storying pedagogies.

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DEDICATION

For the three most important women in my life

For my mom, who raised me, my role model and hero

For Sara, who has always marched to the beat of her own drum,
pushed boundaries, and taught me more than she will ever know

and

For Hannah

May you always speak your truth
May you turn over every rock
and go down every rabbit hole
May you question, and create, and explore
May you know and be known

Whoever you are
Whoever you want to be

The world is a
brighter, shinier, and
more possible place
with you in it

I love you.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Modern conceptions of "the all-girls school" frame them as institutions meant to empower girls to be their best selves: to be happy, supported in intellectual and moral growth, and provided with a safe and enriching environment that fosters learning, compassion, and success (McCall, 2014a; Proweller, 1998; Wolff, 2002). Today's girls' schools strive to position girls "as powerful agents of their lives, their bodies, and their futures" (McCall, 2014a). As a subgroup of educational institutions continuing to carve out a space in the larger schooling landscape, the model and purpose of all-girls schools and education are often presented and discussed in uniform ways. Yet, in portraying girls' schools as universal, the nuances and realities of how socioeconomics, race, geography, culture, and history inform such spaces can get lost. In elite, private, independent all-girls schools, for instance, notions of language, privilege, and place are tethered to the histories and traditions of the school in particular ways. In fact, these ties are so deeply bound, they often go unacknowledged and unchallenged because it "has always been that way" (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 225); seamlessly woven into the cultural fabric of the institution (McCall, 2014a; Proweller, 1998); simply regarded as "normal."

There are certain discourses and discursive practices that circulate throughout the halls and within the culture of these all-girls schools. Girls receive constant messages about being independent, unique, and a leader as necessary requirements for success in college, their careers, and their lives as citizens of the world. Ironically, when these

messages become part of an institution's identity—what is expected of and emphasized for all students—it creates a singular narrative, a dominant discourse of sameness, providing narrow conceptions of what success, happiness, and belonging look like to students. I am interested in the identity/ies of young people at independent, elite private all-girls schools in New York City, as well as the identity/ies of the institutions themselves. Based on existing literature, what is missing from the literature, and personal experiences as an alumna of one of the six elite Manhattan girls' schools, I interrogate how images, messages, and expectations of girls and girlhood are constructed and perpetuated in ways that often reinforce privilege and hegemonic notions of empowerment, belonging, and place.

Over the last two decades, the "adolescent girl" has been constructed and portrayed in a range of ways from being insecure and fragile to celebrated for her "girl power" and innate Rosie-the-Riveter-stance on life. A protectionist and panicked stance about girls, school and social stress, and peer pressure arose in the mid-1990s with books like *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (Pipher, 1994), which were met with mixed emotions and critiques of the ways girls were silenced and discounted in the study. A focus on girls and the media emerged as the Internet and Smartphones gained sociocultural traction and popular culture became even more ubiquitous (see Orenstein, 2011; Wiseman, 2002). Throughout the years, the topic of girls and schooling has continued to garner both interest and concern.

Private single-sex education has increasingly received attention in the last 20 years, yet there remains a dearth of research on this particular subset of institutions, especially the six elite independent schools in Manhattan.[1] Nearly 20 years ago, Amira Proweller

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[1]A microcosm of New York City and nucleus of business, society, culture, and wealth in the United States, Manhattan serves as a distinctive landscape for education. The borough harbors extremes of wealth and poverty, which have gradually and increasingly manifested in the school systems throughout the city. In 2014, UCLA's Civil Rights Project released a report that found

noted the need for more studies that create spaces within private single-sex schools for girls to interrupt dominant narratives and reimagine possibilities:

> The private, single-sex school is a critical site for seeing how girls engage discourses that have been presented to them in school as they reposition themselves in relation to pervasive meanings and practices built into the structure of the school and dominant in society. Field-based studies need to pry open spaces where students are actively resisting formal school culture and creating a range of expressive forms that are not as clean and controlled as social institutions have come to expect of and from girls in particular. (Proweller, 1998, p. 208)

Largely missing from the literature is work centered around young people's interpretations of their own realities and environments as they relate to socially constructed ideas of girls, girlhood, belonging, and place. Additionally, the voices and perspectives of girls at single-sex institutions—the individuals centrally located in this study—are oftentimes underrepresented or completely absent from the processes of collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. I wonder: At these elite institutions where girlhood is crucially central to a school's purpose and daily operation, why are girls themselves not asked what they think of and how they read their experiences and environment on a more regular basis? Further research on elite independent single-sex schools is needed to gain a stronger and more comprehensive understanding of the educational landscape in the United States. Moreover, there is a continued need for scholarship that holds elite schools more accountable for acknowledging the power and realities of privilege, and developing better modes of communication, representation, and expression within a school community striving to be authentically inclusive, culturally relevant, and socially just.

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public schools in New York City to be among the most segregated in the country (Kucsera & Orfield, 2014).

Explanation of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how ideations of girls and girlhood are constructed and promoted as part of an institution's identity, and how high school girls in particular understand, navigate, subscribe to, and/or resist dominant narratives of what it means to "be a girl" across the contexts of school and life. I am interested in what girlhood means and how it functions within the ecological makeup of the Clyde School—more specifically, how high school students and school leaders understand the notion of girlhood, how expectations of girls and girlhood are promoted in the school building, and how being a girl and the experiences of girlhood are embedded within Clyde's institutional identity. I take a critical and participatory approach to this case study. Rather than applying a static or established definition of "girlhood" to this place and population, I seek to discover how members of the Clyde community and culture define and operationalize the concept themselves and, in turn, what that means for the school's institutional identity as well as the individual and group identities of the high school girls. Therefore, I entered into this study with a working understanding—a guiding framework—of girlhood that considers the various temporal, ecological, cultural, and discursive storylines that intersect to construct and define the experiences of being a girl, and the places and spaces within which these experiences occur.

My dissertation research builds upon my pilot study project, which took place in the spring of 2015 at the Clyde School. Maxwell (2013) reminds us that pilot studies serve multiple important purposes, one of which is to develop an understanding of the beliefs and practices of your subjects: "People's ideas, meanings, and values are essential parts of the situations and activities you study … if you don't understand these, your theories about what's going on will often be incomplete or mistaken" (p. 67). Framing identity as a sociocultural construction negotiated through available discursive practices, my exploratory study examined how high school students understand themselves and the

school's expectations of them, within the particular context of their school. The pilot study, which I will elaborate on in Chapter III, provided me with an initial set of insights into the culture, systems, and perceptions at the Clyde School and served as the foundation for my dissertation project and my corresponding research questions. For the dissertation, I set out to untangle constructions of girls and girlhood at an elite high school—a place of privilege—at times exploring the topic alongside young people, interrogating how messages about identity and belonging are manifested in the school, how students read and navigate constructions and expectations of being a girl at the school, and how we might begin to re-imagine what girls and notions of girlhood could look like within a more inclusive, authentic, and responsive institution. To begin, I asked,

- RQ1: How are girls and experiences of girlhood institutionally constructed within an elite, private, independent all-girls high school in New York City?
    - How is the school's sociocultural ecology (culture and community) informed by, and how does it inform, constructions and representations of an ideal student?
- RQ2: How do high school students and school leaders read (interpret, perceive) constructions of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City?
    - How do students and school leaders make sense of dominant narratives of girls and girlhood?
    - How do students and school leaders offer counter-stories that resist, challenge, and rewrite dominant representations and school-sanctioned narratives of girlhood?

Approach

For this research study, I used qualitative research methods that included individual and group semi-structured interviews, media-making, participatory social mapping, document and artifact analysis, and participant observations. As this is a case study focused on girls and girlhood, I chose to use participatory research methods such as media-making and social mapping to foreground the viewpoints of the young people involved—their perceptions of the places, spaces, and systems they occupy and navigate on a daily basis. Case study research is the study of a bounded system—an attempt to explain what is going on in a particular setting. Other qualitative methods, such as ethnography, can generate similar findings to case study research given shared methodological orientations of focusing on a particular population, problem, or context and embracing emergent aspects of the research process (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). Unlike ethnography, however, which focuses on exploring and offering thick and rich descriptions of a culture or group primarily through participant observations, case studies aim to analyze an issue, event, or group through a variety of data sources. They can also be descriptive, but focus on the whys of an issue, event, or group and its implications for that group, the literature, and future studies. This critical case study, therefore, employed participant observation at times, but relied more heavily on gathering the voices and perspectives of young people through interviews as well as participatory methods of media-making.

Rationale and Significance

I am a scholar and educator with deep and longstanding commitments to social justice, anti-racist pedagogies, and lifelong identity work; I am a cisgendered, racially and socioeconomically privileged female doing this work; and I am the product of an elite private girls-school education in New York City. With a background in critical

media literacy and sociocultural studies of education, my conceptual framework and literature review, along with my methodology, are informed by a range of theories and ideas from the field of critical studies. Critical theories and methodologies aim to identify and challenge institutional, social, and economic inequalities of power in service of disrupting hegemonic dynamics and emancipating marginalized groups. Historically, critical frameworks have been used to produce groundbreaking scholarship that tackles inequities of power often in relation to people of color in urban areas (Emdin, 2016; Kinloch, 2010; Morrell, 2002).

In educational research, critical theorists have focused on the voices and experiences of youth of color to address and combat embodied and institutionalized privilege in school policy and practice (Morrell, 2009; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2011). Conversely, Proweller (1999) explains that analysis of racial identity and discourse in U.S. schools has "mined the voices and experiences of youth of color while consistently ignoring examinations of how Whiteness, as an identity and cultural system, is embodied and institutionalized in school policy and practice" (p. 777). Other scholars (i.e., Anderson, 1993; McCall, 2014a; 2014b) highlight how discourse and scholarship around all-girls schools have historically framed the benefits of single-sex education around the absence or exclusion of boys, as opposed to focusing on the presence of girls. Anderson (1993), particularly interested in privileged (or elite) all-girls school spaces, offers:

> The lack of attention to the education of economically over-privileged girls constitutes a silence with/in feminist discourse on education. This silence works hand in hand with culture-wide silences on systems of privileging—discouraging a critical examination of how schools inscribe those privileges as well as the ways that girls take up/resist those discourses. From this perspective the study of an elite single-sex schooling environment could offer insights into gendered aspects of schooling, as well as insights into systems of privileging. (p. 31)

The Clyde School—my research site—is an example of an "over-privileged" space. Some might argue that with such high levels of access and opportunities, discussions of identity and place are not as necessary or pressing as they might be amidst other populations or settings. However, similar to the ways that anti-racist scholars note the importance of White people understanding themselves as raced and privileged beings and working alongside people of color to challenge racism (see Michael, 2015; Perry, 2001; Pollock, 2004), I argue that a failure to interrogate language and power dynamics as they relate to identities and literacies in privileged (and predominantly White) spaces can perpetuate systems and structures of exclusivity and fundamentally prohibit the construction of authentically inclusive practices and spaces within an institution. In response to, and in service of, continuing to push for socially just, inclusive educational spaces and embracing disruptive qualitative inquiry practices (Brown, Carducci, & Kuby, 2014), I draw on critical frameworks and methodologies to explore and interrogate identity, literacy, and place as they are constructed and operationalized at a predominantly White elite, private all-girls school in the heart of New York City.

It is my hope that this research contributes to critical studies and research pedagogies (Wissman, Staples, Vasudevan, & Nichols, 2015) surrounding and involving young people. This critical case study is intended to offer insights into and analyses of a particular school space, culture, and community for two significant purposes. The first is to establish a solid framework, methodology, and set of protocols that might be used to explore and compare findings to the other five elite Manhattan girls' schools in future case studies. The second is to provide the Clyde School (and perhaps similar institutions) with a set of critical multimodal perspectives, artifacts, analyses, and interpretations of how girls and girlhood are constructed and understood by various constituents in the school community. As a researcher with an "insider/outsider" perspective, I hope to illustrate how place, literacies and discursive practices, and privilege function and intersect at an elite girls' school to create particular images and messages about who

belongs and what is expected of them. I do this work in service of helping a school community better understand what it means to be a girl today and begin to re-imagine what structures, identities, and places are needed to best support girls, or young people, in the midst of girlhood, whatever that might mean. I hope this study might also contribute to the growing body of anti-racist literature—as it interrogates constructions of girlhood and girls' adolescent identities within a particular, and still understudied, context of an elite all-girls school in New York City—that helps to spark realizations and conversations within privileged spaces about the importance of identity work, recognizing privilege *as* identity, and understanding the power and impact that language and discursive practices can have on creating and sustaining an authentically inclusive school community.

Overview of Chapters

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. This first chapter provided an explanation of the study, my research questions, and my rationale and the significance of the study. In Chapter II, I will offer my conceptual framework and a review of the literature relevant to my study. In Chapter III, I outline my methodology: I first present the methodological frameworks and disciplines informing the design of the study. I then provide a brief explanation of the exploratory study that I conducted at the research site the previous year, as well as discuss my findings and how they helped to inform my dissertation project. This is followed by information about the research site and population, a comprehensive overview of my methods of data collection and analysis, and a discussion about issues of trustworthiness, validity, and the limitations of the study. In Chapter IV, I present my first set of findings in the form of three dominant narratives of the Clyde School that relate to how the school constructs and maintains its institutional identity in regard to girls and girlhood. The narratives touch on physical manifestations of belonging, discursive practices regarding membership and belonging, and image-making

and branding for both current and prospective members of the community. Chapter V then offers three counter-narratives that respond to aspects of the dominant storylines from Chapter IV and extend other storylines into new and important directions. These counter-stories involve students' perspectives on the school culture and community; how they perceive expectations of excellence and ideals; and conversations about issues and topics they are passionate about but do not feel are recognized enough at Clyde. And in Chapter VI, I will first summarize what I set out to do in the dissertation. I will then respond to my research questions with conclusions from my two data chapters, reflect on the research process, and build upon my conclusions with thoughts on the implications of my findings for future research.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examined how notions of girls and girlhood are constructed at an elite, private independent all-girls school in Manhattan. I was particularly curious about how high school girls understand and negotiate their social identities in both in- and out-of-school spaces; about when, where, and why (if ever) girls alter who they are, leave pieces of their lives outside the school building, or conversely, bring their full selves to school everyday. This literature review focuses on three main concepts: identity, literacy, and place. In order to best situate my study, I will first introduce my conceptual framework, which draws on sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and communications literature that frames literacy, identity, and place as constructed, situated, and practiced concepts. I pay particular attention to the work that highlights the importance of context, cultural relevance, and social constructions when it comes to examining how people experience and understand themselves, others, and the world around them. I will then present my review of relevant literature: first, how conceptions of literacy have evolved and expanded over the last 30 years, focusing on critical literacies, multimodality, and storytelling as relevant theories for framing literacy as a socially situated practice. Next, I draw on poststructural, cultural, and critical work that views identity as practiced, positional, and figured in order to establish that identities are produced in socially situated contexts and constructed spaces. And lastly, I consider the recent academic interests in and examinations of the “all-girls school” as a unique social institution as a

frame through which to consider the constructed spaces and sociocultural ecology of the Clyde School.

Conceptual Framework

Research methods scholar Joseph Maxwell (2013) contends that a conceptual framework is something that is "constructed, not found … something that you build, not something that already exists ready-made" (p. 41), as it incorporates a review and critique of the literature combined with the researcher's own experiences and insights (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Again, my conceptual framework draws on sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and communications literature that frames literacy, identity, and place as constructed, situated, and practiced concepts. I pay particular attention to the work that highlights the importance of context, cultural relevance, and social constructions when it comes to examining how people experience and understand themselves, others, and the world around them.

Tangling and Untangling Girlhood

I approach this research embracing the notion that girls' identities and experiences of girlhood are multifaceted, hybridized, and constructed through their ties to various and simultaneous shifting, partial, and social locations (Bettis & Adams, 2009; Zaslow, 2006). Conversely, much of the popular and contemporary literature on girls from the last 30 years not only takes a protectionist stance, focusing on the negative and worrisome aspects of peer culture and adolescence, but also often makes broad claims about "girls" as a monolithic group (e.g., Cohen-Sandler, 2005; Pipher, 1994), failing to account for factors like intersectional identities, and how literacy practices, contexts, and environments inform who they are and who they want to be. In a similar vein, framing girlhood as a universal phenomenon flattens the experience, which, from a critical

standpoint, largely reinforces White, upper-middle class, heteronormative experiences of girls and girlhood as "normal" and/or "typical." It is also important to acknowledge the treatment of "girl" and "girlhood" as words and concepts that are overwhelmingly cisgendered, and often heteronormative, in nature. In response, I do not employ a static or established definition of girlhood in this study; rather, I begin only with a general conception of girlhood as relating to the temporal, spatial, cultural, and discursive storylines that inform the experiences and realities of being a girl in a particular *sociocultural ecology*, or constructed place. "Sociocultural" refers to the set of beliefs, customs, practices, and behaviors that exist among a particular population; and "ecology" refers to the intersecting technical, social, cultural and place-based characteristics of a system. Studying the social and cultural aspects of ecologies is "one way of thinking about the everyday—how and in what ways individuals make meaning in local sites connected to a familiar landscape" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 23).

The purpose of this research is to explore how members of a particular community understand and define girlhood and how it operates within their school culture. At the same time, it is crucial to recognize that my study is situated amidst a larger body of work that tends to portray girls and their experiences in narrow ways; this was not only something that I was acutely aware of as I collected, analyzed, and interpreted my data, but also something that I hoped to productively disrupt.

Expanding Conceptions of Literacy

Over the last few decades, scholars in the fields of communication, sociolinguistics, semiotics, and anthropology have pushed for an expanded "terrain of literacy" (Vasudevan, 2006) that accounts for the dynamic, multimodal, and intertextual ways people engage with and create texts. In the 1980s, the field of New Literacy Studies (NLS) challenged traditional conceptions that narrowly defined literacy as the ability to read and write printed texts (Alvermann, 2007; Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012), as well as a

static, universal, and equitable experience for all (Street, 1993). Building on the work of anthropologist Shirley Brice Heath (1983) and sociolinguist James Gee (1990), Brian Street (1984, 1993) played a seminal role in inciting this turn in literacy studies by conceptualizing literacies as multiple, cultural, and social. The work of NLS frames literacy as a practice that is social and contextual, not as a neutral skill set that is autonomous and universal (Janks, 2010; Morrell, 2002; Pahl & Rowsell, 2012; Street, 1993). In her research on the "multimodal, multisensory, print, visual, linguistic, and cultural" literacy practices of urban youth, Valerie Kinloch (2010) documents the "literacy stories" of two young men of color studying gentrification in Harlem. Using the young men's explorations and analyses of the neighborhood along with their reflective conversations about themselves and their surroundings, Kinloch illustrates how literacies help us make sense of our lives and provide the ability to critique multiple positions and perspectives:

> Literacies involve questioning our roles in the world, assuming multiple identities to consider various perspectives and experience empathy, and interpreting complex meanings of texts that may or may not include our voices, stories, lived experiences, and truths. (p.145)

Framing literacies as multiple, cultural, and socially situated (Street, 1984) opens up pedagogical possibilities for education to be truly relevant to students' lives and enacted in ways that authentically celebrate the different subjectivities, interests, intentions, commitments, and purposes that students bring to learning spaces (Cazden et al., 1996). Recognizing that texts are consumed and produced in diverse social spaces through an array of modes and composition practices, NLS scholars account for various functions, practices, and forms of literacy by using literacies instead of or interchangeably with the singular term (Schachter & Gahlili-Schachter, 2012). I, too, employ the terms interchangeably throughout this chapter under the premise that both "literacy" and "literacies" should effectively account for the multiple dynamic,

constructed, critical, and revolutionary practices and experiences that comprise how we conceive of and engage in reading and writing today.

Sociocultural Views of Identity

In an interview with comedian Mark Maron, President Barack Obama talks about feeling rebellious as a teenager working to understand his racial identity. He describes "trying on" different personas as a young person, negotiating the tensions of being biracial in the United States, in pursuit of figuring out "what kind of African American man he wanted to be" (Shear, 2015). Obama likens his adolescence to the ritual of getting dressed in the morning, positioning his identity as an external wardrobe of items that can be layered, donned, and discarded just as quickly: "I [would try] on a whole bunch of outfits…. Here's how I should act. Here's what it means to be cool. Here's what it means to be a man" (in Shear, 2015). He speaks to both the tangible and intangible aspects of identity that he wrestled with as a young Black man growing up during the 1970s in Chicago, illustrating the work of many sociocultural and sociolinguistic theorists (Gee, 1990, 2000) and social psychologists (Goffman, 1959; Vygotsky, 1978) who contend that adolescence is primarily defined by how we negotiate socio-spatial landscapes. How we understand ourselves and others, Nukkula (2012) argues, is fundamentally shaped by our daily interactions and lived experiences in the places, contexts, and institutions we occupy.

From a sociocultural perspective, identities are "mediated, constrained, and juxtaposed" (Johnson, 2012) with intersecting subjectivities (e.g., race, socioeconomic class, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, ability, etc.) that are socially constructed and institutionally reinforced by forces such as mass media, popular culture, and schools (Collins, 2000; Johnson, 2012). It is also during adolescence that young people begin to situate themselves in local and more global contexts (Noguera, 2012), drawing from the discourses available—behaviors, beliefs, social cues, dress, gestures—to perform and

experiment with identity. Identities offer "different ways of participating" in various sorts of social groups, cultures, and institutions (Gee, 2005) such as a being a "good student," a "star athlete," a "people person," or in the case of this study, a "Clyde Girl." Within a sociocultural framing, identity is both an internal understanding of self as well as a set of practices outwardly expressed through, among other things, literacies. Literacy/ies practices, therefore, become the tools and modes of communication engaged when writing our own identities into being and reading—constructing and deconstructing—the identities of others.

Place, Identity, and Belonging

In an increasingly global and mobile society, conceptions of and connections to place are diverse, expansive, even contested. Place is not "simply a piece of geography, [such as] an established Italian neighborhood in Brooklyn," wherein place lends to knowing an atmosphere or culture; rather, place is an "intricate construct" taken up in psychological and emotional, as well as physical, iterations (Bruner, 1987, p. 31). Harvey (1996, in Conley, 2016) aptly notes that place "has to be one of the most multilayered and multi-purpose keywords in our language," functioning as metaphor, material, and territory (p. 50). McDowell (1999, in Bettis & Adams, 2009) argues that places are "contested, fluid and uncertain. It is socio-spatial practices that define places and these practices result in overlapping and intersecting places with multiple and changing boundaries, constituted and maintained by social relations of power and exclusion" (p. 4). In their work exploring how adolescent girls understand themselves and negotiate material realities and real issues across sites of identity construction, Bettis and Adams (2009) agree: "Places are not neutral; they are gendered as well as raced and classed" (p. 273). Grurenewald (2003, in Tupper, Carson, Johnson, & Mangat, 2008) contends, "If researchers consider that 'places are what people make of them—that people are place makers and that places are a primary artifact of human culture,' then it seems reasonable

that schools 'might play a more active role in the study, care and creation of spaces'" (p. 1066). For instance, Amira Proweller (1998), who studies youth identity production and socialization amongst upper-middle class girls at Best Academy, a historically elite, private, independent high school for girls, finds that as an institution, Best Academy's coherence depends on "building a solid cultural identity" among its students, faculty, and staff, as the school "works to contain differences under the rubric of collective identification with institutional culture" (p. 221).

Charlotte Linde (2009) examines place as it is constructed through the stories, members, and identity of an institution. In a compelling ethnography, Linde traces how a large insurance company "works its past" to construct "a stable narrative of identity … to show that who We are and how We are is consistent with how We have always been" (p. 3). She spends three years examining the structures and narratives within MidWest Insurance, arguing that stories are one of the primary means through which individual and collective identities are negotiated within the institution. Linde views narrative as a discursive unit that gives meaning to past events by helping to determine their present and future significance on members of an institution, be it a family, insurance company, or school. The process of working to construct and determine "who I am" and "who We are" through memory and narrative fundamentally shapes how individuals act, how they think they should act, how the results of their actions may impact membership, how they determine who is in and who is out of the place, and ultimately, "how they use, change or context the past in order to understand the institution as a whole as well as their place in it" (p. 221). There are, Linde argues, a range of modes of remembering that serve different purposes within institutions: human memory (individual and shared); archival and digital storage of documents and data; establishment of standards, policies, and procedures; and physical infrastructure. Linde is concerned with the social and linguistic mechanisms used by members of an institution to construct its collective identity, seeking to tell "an integrated story about stories within institutions: how they are formed,

retained, passed on, changed, and used to affect both the narrators and the institution being narrated" (p. 14). One aspect of the study entails looking at how people tell their own stories within an institution to reveal the "small links and minute traces between individual stories and stories of the institution that indicate how people are inducted into institutional membership and … learn to shape their stories to harmonize with the events and values of the main institutional narratives" (p. 4).

I borrow from Linde's (2009) concept of *working the past* to help highlight the importance of understanding an institution's identity—the context of a school's history, traditions, and discursive practices, and how they inform a collective of individuals in the present—in order to further explore how ideas of girlhood, and subsequently membership and belonging, are disseminated, reinforced, and perceived at the Clyde School.

The Clyde Girl

There are constructed archetypes used so often in popular culture texts, educational narratives, and discursive communities that they begin to function as "revealing windows into a [particular] culture's conventional and dominant conceptions of identity" (Williams, 2011, p. 204). My conceptual framework is also informed by findings from my exploratory study (discussed further in Chapter III) in which I examined how students perceived and negotiated the Clyde Girl identity, an idealized archetype that embodied the most desired and valued characteristics, behaviors, and involvements of a quintessential student at the school. For many students, the archetype was an empowering and comforting label, a force that pushed them toward a higher standard academically, extracurricularly, and socially; it was simply a part of who they were and how they experienced the school. For others, the label held rigid conceptions of what was valued and who belonged at Clyde. Borrowing from Gee's (1990) notion of membership as it relates to 'big-D' Discourse, I understood the Clyde Girl as an archetype that operated as a symbolic representation of belonging at Clyde—the ways of being that were sanctioned

as desirable, respectable, and supported, and in turn granted full access to membership in the discursive community. The idealized archetype held particular values, perceptions, understandings, appreciations, and actions and served as a gatekeeper of "normalcy," which reinforced hegemonic expectations of excellence, empowerment, and belonging. Further untangling, deconstructing, and reimagining this archetype remained a focal point in my research at the Clyde School and therefore serves a necessary role in my conceptual framework.

Review of Relevant Literature

This review of relevant literature draws from recent theoretical and empirical work related to literacy, identity, and place. I first discuss how conceptions of literacy have evolved and expanded over the last 30 years, focusing on critical literacies, multimodality, and storytelling as particularly powerful and relevant theories for framing literacy as a socially situated practice. This body of literature illustrates how the literacy practices of young people today reach far beyond and live in between the words on a page, and helps us consider how young people are reading the word and the world (Freire, 2000) in more nuanced, complex, and multimodal ways than ever before. Next, I draw on poststructural, cultural, and communications literature that views identity as practiced, positional, and figured to establish that identities are not produced in isolation, but rather in relation to and in negotiation with others in socially situated contexts and constructed spaces. The third section traces the recent academic interest in and examinations of the "all-girls school" as a unique social institution and constructed place. Again, borrowing from Linde's (2009) framework of institutional identity, I address what I refer to as a [hidden] ethos of privilege that commonly circulates throughout the structures and cultures of elite private schools, but which I argue manifests in Manhattan's elite, independent private all-girls schools in particular ways, given the

historical, social, and pop cultural contexts in which this specific group of institutions is embedded.

Literacy/ies as Socially Situated Practices

Out of the New Literacy Studies movement, the field of new literacies (along with the fields of multiliteracies, multimodality, and digital literacies) emerged, framing literacies as "dynamic, situationally specific, multimodal, and socially mediated" practices (Greenhow & Gleason, 2012, p. 467). Using expanded notions of literacy from NLS along with the work of critical pedagogues like Paolo Freire (2000), this new wave of literacy scholars began to address educational inequities rooted in dominant conceptions of what counts as literacy and knowledge. Sociolinguist James Gee (1990) argues that framing literacy in its more traditional sense:

> rips literacy out of its sociocultural contexts and treats it as an asocial cognitive skill with little or nothing to do with human relationships. It cloaks literacy's connections to power, to social identity, and to ideologies, often in the service of privileging certain types of literacies and certain types of people. (p. 46)

Attention toward the literacies practices of young people (adolescents) has increased in the last decade as a result of emerging digital and multimodal landscapes, and in response to the trend of doing research on, not with or alongside, young people (Vasudevan & Campano, 2009). Scholars like Wanda Brooks (2006) and Ernest Morrell (2002, 2009) argue that the failure of urban students to develop "academic" literacy skills stems "not from a lack of intelligence but from the inaccessibility of the school curriculum to students who are not in the 'dominant' or 'mainstream' culture" (Morrell, 2002, p. 72). Additionally, teachers are trained to evaluate students' levels of literacy based on criteria that are defined by arbitrary standards and, more importantly, are out of sync with the worlds that youth currently live in and navigate on a daily basis (Vasudevan, 2006). Scholars are turning to and re-working theories and methodological frameworks that account for the reality that young people are constantly engaging in a range of literacies

to make meaning and "to express their sense of becoming" (Wissman et al., 2015, p. 186).

Critical literacies. Placing the word "critical" in front of any field of study "signals a move to question the naturalized assumptions of the discipline, its truths, its discourses and its attendant practices" (Janks, 2010, p. 13). Critical literacy is defined as "the ability not only to read and write, but also to assess texts in order to understand the relationships between power and domination that underlie and inform those texts" (Morrell, 2002, p. 73). The field of critical literacies addresses imbalances of power and, in particular, pays attention to the voices of those less frequently heard (Freire, 2000; Morrell, 2002, 2009; Pahl & Rowsell, 2011). One of the most significant aspects of critical literacy education is that it begins with and remains tightly bound to one's lived experiences (Freire, 2000; Morrell, 2009). Janks (2010) contends:

> To see literacy as a social practice is to recognize that speaking and writing cannot be separated from embodied action (doing), ways of thinking and understandings of truth (believing), and ethics (valuing)…. We bring who we are and where we come from to the processes of production and reception of spoken, written, and visual texts. (p. 58)

Many scholars (Hull & Nelson, 2005; Jewitt, 2005; Vasudevan, 2009) argue that literacy is multimodal—visual, spoken, written, gestural—and critical skills are needed to analyze and understand a range of media such as newspapers, television, film, Internet, radio, and magazines (Hull & Nelson, 2005; Janks, 2010). As a result, they feel that the practice and process of "reading" is deeply situated in social and cultural contexts and, as critical theorist Paolo Freire (2000) posits, consists of learning how to read both the word and the world critically (in Janks, 2010). Many scholars have resultantly worked to illustrate the power—and arguably the necessity—of engaging youth in new literacies practices that account for, value, and revolve around young people's lived experiences and perceptions of the world.

Recent scholarship has challenged conventional notions of literacy by celebrating the unprecedented and fascinating multimodal literacy practices of young people (see Alvermann, 2007; Nixon, 2013; Vasudevan, 2006; Vasudevan, Schultz, & Bateman, 2010), recognizing how non-traditional literacies can provide them with opportunities to share pieces of themselves, their lived experiences, and their perspectives; and can present unprecedented and unique access points to learning, engaging, and creating. Critical literacy practices are meant to foster community building through the creation of dialogues and listening opportunities through which participants work to develop critical stances and authentic voices (Comber, 2010; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Muspratt, Luke, & Freebody, 1997; Rogers, Mosley, & Kramer, 2009). The idea is to create spaces for critical inquiry and analysis, "which opens up new pedagogical spaces through a multimodal approach, and provides a platform for creating action, advocacy, and social change through the process" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011, p. 139).

Embodied literacies. Evolving from the new literacies movement, contemporary scholars of critical literacy continue the push to expand verbo- and logo-centric definitions of literacy to consider the body (Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012) and artifacts (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011) as texts that require critical literate practices to be read, interpreted, judged, analyzed, and negotiated. Embodied literacies practices are personal, political, and rife with assumptions and subjectivities. Kamler (1997, in Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012) understands the body as a text that is "produced by socially circulating norms for gender, race, sexuality, class, age and ability" (p. 35). In this sense, we read our bodies and the bodies of others drawing from personal knowledge, lived experiences, discursive practices, media representations, and so on to make sense of who we are; to determine where we fit into micro and macro social orders; and to communicate particular ways of being through speaking, dressing, or gesturing that can reinforce or challenge social norms and power imbalances. Johnson and Vasudevan (2012) describe how three 10th grade students in an English class embody criticality as they "perform

themselves in various contexts, through interactions with the material, cultural, and discursive texts around them" (p. 39). They contend that young people use their bodies to perform critical literacies "in ways that we [educators, researchers, adults] might not be positioned to see, hear, or acknowledge" (p. 39), as they may fall outside the scope of sanctioned classroom practices and spaces.

Recent research in communication studies (Vasudevan, 2004, 2006), urban education studies (Emdin, 2010, 2016), and English education (Morrell, 2002; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2011) invites us to consider alternative realities: to reimagine the possibilities for pedagogy and education when young people—their lived experiences and their new, critical, and embodied literacies practices—are authentically positioned at the center of both in- and out-of-school learning spaces.

Multimodality. Multimodality is a field of study, a domain of inquiry, "a description of the spaces and the resources which enter into meaning" (Kress, 2011, p. 242), accompanied by an understanding that meaning is distributed across and expressed through various modes, including gestures, gaze, image, sounds, and other non-linguistic formats (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011). As Jewitt (2008), Kress (2000), and Leander and Vasudevan (2009) contend, the theoretical lens of multimodality "calls attention to the design and composing practices involved in the production of meaning through texts" (in Vasudevan, 2010, p. 66). Just as scholars have pushed to expand limited conceptions of literacy over the last 30 years, with the advent of new technologies and new media (Schultz, 2006), more recent research has challenged narrow understandings of writing and composition by highlighting the dynamic and unprecedented aspects of composition in the 21st century (Vasudevan et al., 2010). Multimodality provides a framework for understanding the process of composing and really for "making sense of how multiple texts and modes collectively express a multilayered narrative" (Vasudevan, 2011; see also Pahl & Rowsell, 2011).

Multimodal storytelling. We all have a basic need for story, for "organizing our experiences into tales of important happenings … for shap[ing] and reshap[ing] our lives" (Dyson & Genishi, 1994, p. 2). Storytelling is a "discrete literacy event and composing practice that occurs across space, time, and modes" (Vasudevan et al., 2010, p. 448); it is a practice that fosters creativity and invites young people to reflect on and share pieces of themselves and their lived experiences. In the last 15 years, scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of providing students with opportunities and platforms to engage in meaning-making processes that involve creation, production, and practice (Petchauer, 2009), as they oftentimes result in feelings of empowerment and self-worth (Hobbs, 1998, 2011). In its most literal conception, multimodal storytelling is the practice of narrating stories through a range of print, visual, and audio modalities (Vasudevan et al., 2010). For example, focusing specifically on digital video production as a new type of storytelling and narrative construction, gives dimension to this form of composition:

> [It] is not simply an additive art whereby images, words, and music, by virtue of being juxtaposed, increase the meaning-making potential of a text. Rather…through a process of braiding (Mitchell, 2004) or orchestration (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), a multimodal text can create a different system of signification, one that transcends the collective contribution of its constituent parts. More simply put, multimodality can afford, not just a new way to make meaning, but a different kind of meaning [altogether]. (Hull & Nelson, 2005, p. 2)

Celebrating the multimodal literacies and composition practices of youth can create significant and unique entry points into learning and engagement for both young people and educators. Vasudevan (2010) argues that the relationships between literacies and modalities "profoundly impact and are shaped by the spaces in which they are engaged and the spaces produced through their engagement" (p. 77). As a result, she sees great potential in using multimodality as a framework for literacy theory and pedagogy "in its invitation to shift how and where we direct our gaze onto the spaces of composing" (Vasudevan, 2011, p. 91). The compositional form of storytelling has been increasingly

documented as a platform that provides opportunities for young people to "develop and display different literate identities" (Schultz & Coleman-King, 2012). Using combinations of print, still and moving images, and sound to tell stories not only has the potential to make texts more relevant and engaging (Hobbs, 2011), but opens up entirely] new possibilities for what kinds of meaning can be conveyed (Hull & Nelson, 2005).

Vasudevan et al. (2010) contribute to the literature that explores the possibilities of multimodal composition practices when it comes to young people developing and claiming an authorial stance, "the practice of taking on literate identities and claiming a presence as an author and narrator of one's own experiences" (p. 461). Drawing from Kress (2003), Jewitt and Kress (2003), Siegel (2006), and Vasudevan (2006), they explain, "A multimodal understanding of composing practices widens the lens … to include the modal affordances, identities, participation structures, and social interactions and relationships that shape and are shaped through the engagement of multiple modalities for the production of meaning" (Vasudevan et al., 2010, pp. 446-447). Engaging young people in multimodal composing processes invites individuals to bridge their home, school, and community lives (Johnson & Vasudevan, 2012) in compelling and authentic ways. Simply put, "artifacts give power to meaning makers" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011, p. 56).

Inviting young people to engage in creative composing processes in digitally mediated spaces, what Vasudevan and DeJaynes (2013) refer to as "multimodal play," allows youth to be "recast in a whole new light: presenting themselves as artists, and inviting us to be the audience to their work" (Sealey-Ruiz, 2013, p. 174). Hull and Nelson (2005) describe the nature of multimodality as a "democratizing force, an opening up of what counts as valued communication, and a welcoming of varied channels of expression" (p. 30). Digital storytelling, for instance, is a burgeoning "multiple-media, multiple-modality literacy practice" (Hull & Katz, 2006, p. 43). In their research at DUSTY (Digital Underground Storytelling for Youth) in West Oakland, California, Hull

and Nelson (2005) discuss the powerful affordances of young people's digital stories, arguing that the meanings conveyed through written, visual, aural, and digital modes within a single text foster unique semiotic dimensions and open up new sites of possibility for expression and knowledge of self. Across the country, Valerie Kinloch (2007, 2010) works alongside students in Harlem to document the gentrification happening in their neighborhood using mapping, photography, and video interviews. Throughout this participatory action research project, students engage with multiple modes of meaning-making to critically analyze and reflect on themselves and their environments, constantly questioning aspects of their identities and redefining what literacy means to them.

It is important to note here that multimodal storytelling does not necessarily require digital components. The hip-hop-based practice and platform of spoken word and slam poetry, for example, is a genre of composition "designed to win the hearts and minds of the audience: it tells stories that blend and move between the personal and sociopolitical; it is often urgent, sometimes sexy, and regularly funny, and its language tends to be vernacular and reflect the multilingual contexts of its emergence" (Low, 2011, p. 14). Linda Christensen (2000) contends, "Too often schools don't teach students how to handle the explosive feelings that come with adolescence. By writing and sharing the 'raw core of feelings' that create havoc in their lives, they can practice a more effective way of handling their emotions" (p. 129). The critical literacies practice of composing, editing, practicing, and performing a text like a spoken word poem also lends itself to repositioning ourselves, most importantly for young people, as multimodal beings.

Re-envisioning multimodal selves. In his work exploring how young people use hip-hop as text, pedagogy, and lived practice, the late Greg Dimitriadis (2009) echoes Erving Goffman's sentiments, contending that identity and self-understanding are formed through processes of trial and error performances. He conceptualizes performance as "a key site where social, cultural, and material constructions are put into motion, are

articulated and re-articulated in new and (often) powerful ways" (p. 13). Dimitriadis uses the notion of performance to highlight how texts, in a multimodal sense—symbol systems, lived experiences, archetypes—are constantly interacting with and informing one another: "They contain no essential or inherent meaning but are always given meaning by people, in particular times and in particular places" (p. 13).

Anchored in the understanding that identity is performed (Blackburn, 2001; Butler, 1990; Goffman, 1959), Vasudevan (2011) extends the affordances of multimodality in traditional literacy practices to consider the possibilities of multimodal selves, accounting for "the multiplicity and fluidity of social practices that signify varying cultural affiliations and act as markers of identity that are mediated by and with expressive modalities" (p. 89), such as a Smartphone, a pen, one's voice, or one's body. She explains, "When I discuss adolescents' multimodal selves, I am signaling to the multimodal and multispatial practices through which they are enacting themselves, interacting with their worlds, and communicating for a range of purposes" (p. 89). Youths' lives have become increasingly centralized around pop culture, digital technologies, and social media platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube. Angela Thomas (2007, in Williams, 2011), for instance, views engagement with and creation of multimodal texts using print, image, and sound in online and offline spaces as a "dialectic process of being" in which one authors themselves through the texts they produce. These texts, tools, and spaces provide youth with a unique landscape to "perform various forms of meaning making and identity work" (Hill & Vasudevan, 2008, p. 1).

The concept of *multiliteracies* is therefore required to understand and navigate young people's discourse worlds (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000), which straddle lifeworlds, school-based worlds, and online worlds. First introduced by the New London Group (Cazden et al., 1996), multiliteracies focus on modes of representation that reach far beyond language and traditional conceptions of reading and writing. Multiliteracies are "multiple forms of knowledge and understanding about literacy and social contexts that

enable appropriate and successful performance in all aspects of life" (Antsey & Bull, 2006, p. 28). They are fundamental to and essential in constructing, supporting, and developing young people's multimodal selves.

Identities in Practice

Research on identity formation is often framed through the seminal works of early and mid-20th century developmental psychologists concerned with explorations and formations of self—that is, the factors that influence and determine who we are, who we become, how we behave, and how we learn to see ourselves and others over the course of childhood through adulthood (see Erikson, 1968). Adolescence is understood as a crucial period of time for self-exploration and formulation in one's life; what Erikson calls the "central crisis" or pivotal moment of identity development. The concept of adolescence was first introduced by psychologist G. Stanley Hall in 1904, who identified it as a time of "'storm and stress,'[1] filled with emotional upheaval, sorrow, and rebelliousness" (Henig, 2010, n.p.). Onset typically begins at 12 or 13 and concludes around 18, the age when young people are expected to leave home, start making their own decisions, and provide for themselves (Bettis & Adams, 2009).[2] It is during this time that young people experience physical, mental, and emotional changes and growth; begin to increasingly associate with peers; and experiment in self-expression through dress, gesture, behavior, language, material items, and cultural artifacts (Bettis & Adams, 2009; Pahl & Rowsell, 2011).

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[1]Hall's (1904) book, *Adolescence*, was not without flaw and received criticism, but effectively launched the beginning of the scientific study of adolescence and helped to establish it as a distinct life stage with its own challenges, behaviors, and biological profile (Henig, 2010).

[2]Traditional views of adolescence tend to frame the period as a homogeneous experience amongst all teenagers and that young people are situated within uniform family structures and support networks of parents or guardians that allow them to either be on their own or to leave home, but remain supported financially, emotionally, and physically by their families.

More contemporary poststructural, cultural, and sociological scholars studying identity (e.g., Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Lesko, 2012; Phelan, Davidson, & Yu, 1998) have questioned conventional developmental models of adolescence positing that one does not discover who they are in isolation of the people and places around them; rather, identity production is an engaged, iterative process—a space for negotiation—that occurs between an individual and the world around them through actions and interactions in sociocultural contexts. They work to reconceptualize identity production as a process integrated with culture and socialization, emphasizing how "material conditions, social constraints, interactions and lived realities shape adolescents' identities" (Howard, 2008, p. 232). Nukkula (2012) conceptualizes identity as the "lived experience of an ongoing process … of integrating successes, failures, routines, habits, rituals, novelties, thrills, threats, violations, gratifications, and frustrations into a coherent and evolving interpretation of who we are; [indeed,] it is the embodiment of self-understanding" (p. 11). Apple and Weiss (1983) view identities as conduits that "figuratively combine the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations" (in Holland et al., 1998, p. 5).

Identity Production in School Spaces

Given the amount of time young people spend in school, educational spaces have become increasingly recognized as important contexts that play a "critical role" in identity formation (Nukkula, 2012). It is in the interactions between individuals and their contexts—social settings from the mall, to street corners, to school hallways—that self-understanding occurs, often through processes of experimentation: trying on and enacting different pieces of self through behavior, gesture, language, dress, and other sign systems. Interestingly, it is only in the last few decades that research on school socialization and identity formation processes has broadened the focus beyond boys' school experiences (Proweller, 1998). Amira Proweller, who studies youth identity production and

socialization in school spaces, examines how upper-middle class adolescent girls at Best Academy—a historically elite, private, independent, high school for girls—construct their identities as they work to figure out who they are becoming as raced, classed, and gendered individuals in the context of institutional change and economic, political, and cultural shifts during the first half of the 1990s. Ultimately, she finds that, while the girls at Best Academy are positioned to reflect certain norms, values, and expectations deemed important by the institution, "their unique cultural productions tell the story of gender identities that grow out of their not simply being positioned by dominant meanings and practices but actively repositioning themselves through the lived contradictions of their own lives" (p. 202). Bettis and Adams (2009), who spent a semester in a gym observing two cheerleading classes, quickly noticed that the identity work of becoming a cheerleader reaches far beyond simply wanting to be a cheerleader or auditioning for the role:

> Trying out for cheerleading was … a celebrated route for trying out for womanhood in that the discourse of cheerleading illuminated characteristics of the ideal female in this society. That discourse had powerful implications for girls, particularly for those who were not White and middle class, in their ability to envision themselves in the space of cheerleading. Thus, although the physical place of the gym … identified girls as aspiring to be cheerleaders, the dominant discourse of cheerleading constructed a specific type of girl as cheerleader. (p. 5)

The understood culture and protocol of cheerleading tryouts demonstrate how rules and boundaries of membership are often fundamentally determined by the power relations at work in a given sociocultural context or place. Bettis and Adams (2009) charge those working toward a critical pedagogy of place "to acknowledge that gender is often central in how individuals understand place and that for many adolescent girls, school is not necessarily 'placeless'" (p. 274). In fact, for some teen girls, school is about the process: "What happens throughout each and every school day—academically, socially, and emotionally—becomes a yardstick of their success. Every moment really matters"

(Cohen-Sandler, 2005, p. 5).[3] Lisa Delpit (1993, in Proweller, 1998) argues that schools are "generally schematically organized around a culture of power based on standards of communication and presentation of self, and the ability to succeed in school depends on acquiring and assimilating these codes into daily interactions and routines" (p. 114). In many respects, the power relations operating in a constructed place fundamentally set the rules and boundaries, both social and spatial, as they define who belongs and who is excluded, and determine the location or site of the experience (Bettis & Adams, 2009; Linde, 2009). Bettis and Adams (2009) argue that female adolescent identities are not only informed and constructed by discursive practices, but also by the "different material landscapes that girls inhabit and the various social practices created by girls associated with these landscapes" (p. 10).

The hallway, for example, is a schooling space that is a "dynamic social site where power struggles occur, hierarchies are established, and identity-informing interactions take place, both when the hallways are bustling with bodies and when they are almost empty" (Bettis & Adams, 2009, p. 187). Mitchell (2000) contends that school hallways are places where "social relations intersect with social structures and give the space meaning" (p. 294). Students "actively use this space" to gather information about coolness and popularity (Bettis & Adams, 2009), engaging in discursive practices—how to be and act—that merit acceptance and belonging, as though procuring membership to an exclusive club (Gee, 1990). I intentionally frame hallways through this lens of coolness and popularity to convey that being "cool and popular" is, in fact, the dominant, normative, and coveted positionality that young people are often conditioned to strive for

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[3]Some of the literature on girls' identities and well-being in school spaces from the 1990s and early 2000s not only takes on a protectionist stance, focusing on the dangerous and scary aspects of peer culture and adolescence, but often makes broad claims about girls treating them as a monolithic group, void of diverse experiences and intersectional identities. From a critical stance, framing girls' experiences as universal conflates them as "normal," which, critical race scholars would argue, reinforces Whiteness as normative.

and value; yet, it is important to recognize how this limited scope of possibilities may silence or devalue those who resist or do not "fit in" to more hegemonic constructions of belonging.

Identity and Pop Culture

Over the last three decades, scholars (see Hobbs, 1998; Kellner & Share, 2005; Kilbourne, 1987; Morrell, 2002) have increasingly studied and theorized how mass media and popular culture "play key roles in the structuring of contemporary identity and shaping of thought and behavior" (Kellner, 1995, p. 237). In this sense, the media—popular culture, the news, television, the Internet—function as a conduit to integrate individuals into the social order, often reinforcing and celebrating dominant values, models of thought, and behaviors readily available for imitation by audiences (Kellner, 1995). For instance, girls constantly receive particular images and messages from the media about gender roles, sexuality, beauty, eating and body image, happiness, etc., which frequently perpetuate stereotypes, flatten representations, and produce single narratives in the discourses available to young people. Exploring what "American girls" look like today, Nancy Jo Sales (2016) interviews pre-teen and teenage girls across the country about their online and offline lives and how they navigate images, messages, and pressures from pop culture, social media, their peers, etc. When discussing how girls are represented in popular culture with three teenage girls from New York City, one of the girls explains,

> Stereotypes on TV always show girls being mean. You never see a girl who's nice and smart—she's either bitchy and mean, or smart and a nerd…. Those are the two archetypes—the really mean pretty girl and the ugly serious girl. Oh, and the slut. You never see a girl who's normal and nice, and like, gets B-pluses. (p. 166)

As a social institution, popular culture transmits and reinforces belief systems, hegemonic values, and normative practices that explicitly and covertly shape ways of understanding the world, subsequently influencing who young people think they are, how

they should act, and who they should be. Goffman (1959) uses metaphors of theatre to describe identity as social performance: individuals are actors on stage, choosing props and performing with other actors for an imagined audience in a particular context. Teenagers tend to be easily influenced by their peers, looking to friends for cues about how to speak, act, and dress in order to participate in their age-specific culture (Ito et al., 2010). They also attempt to re-create themselves based on images and ideals depicted in popular culture texts, assessing their aesthetic value and self-worth in relation to others (Rudd & Lennon, 1994). Prominent figures, celebrities, and characters in popular culture are positioned as "icons for emulation" and provide teenage audience members with "countless elements of style, outlook, and value" (Huntemann & Morgan, 2002, p. 312). As individuals "appropriate and reuse popular culture content to display public identities or allegiances to particular social groups" (Williams, 2011, p. 205), this notion of performance is particularly resonant.

It is during adolescence that girls tend to experience a loss of self-confidence, voice, agency, and a sense of efficacy, ambition, empowerment, and uniqueness (Kilbourne, 1999). Scholars in the fields of sociology, women's and gender studies, and psychology (e.g., Engeln-Maddox, 2006; Ferguson, 1983; Kilbourne, 1987, 1999) focus on how mainstream media and popular culture reinforce and perpetuate dominant messages and stereotypical images of beauty, perfection, happiness, and success (Kilbourne, 1999). They are concerned with how these texts influence girls' conceptions of self, and how girls in turn learn to navigate complicated and often conflicting messages and images about who and what society expects them to be.

The "All-Girls School" as Place

The interest in and push for providing women with educational opportunities date back to the 1700s. Girls' schools were the first institutions in the United States to view women's minds in a serious light and provide them with as many opportunities as

possible to learn traditionally male-dominated subjects and gain access to hands-on leadership experiences typically provided to boys (DeBare, 2004; McCall, 2014a). The focus on single-sex education in academic research, however, emerged only recently in the 1980s and 1990s out of scholarship on gender equity (McCall, 2014a). Today, in an age of standardized testing, highly competitive college admissions, and school cultures ubiquitously fueled by pressures to succeed, much of the empirical research on all-girls schools has focused on performance and achievement—how girls in single-sex schools fare academically and socio-emotionally in comparison to boys in single-sex environments and to girls in coeducational settings. Framing the "all-girls school" as having a particular institutional identity and history of constructing girls and single-sex education in particular ways requires a closer look at the historical relationship between girls and all-girls schools. Highlighting the dialogic power of belonging that exists between an institution and its members, Gee (2000) writes:

> When an identity is underwritten and sustained by an institution, that institution works, across time and space, to see to it that certain sorts of discourse, dialogue, and interactions happen often enough [and] in similar enough ways to sustain the identities it underwrites. (p. 105)

All-girls schools, like other social institutions (Linde, 2009), construct institutional identities over time and in relation to their members, producing discourses, or "configuration[s] of knowledge and its habitual forms of expression" (Cazden et al., 1996, p. 75) that reflect particular interests, values, and beliefs. As a result, examining how literacy, identity, and place intersect and operate within a particular context is an important dimension to consider in research about the constructions of girlhood and discourse around expressions of self in single-sex schools.

Some feminist and girlhood scholars have resisted the proclivity to frame performance and achievement as the most desirable outcomes and pressing issues of single-sex schooling (McCall, 2014b). Stephanie McCall (2014a, 2014b), for instance,

identifies a lack of research on how curricular knowledge[4] is constructed in girls' schools. As a result, she takes a critical look at how discourses of female success are constructed and re-contextualized within two girls' high schools (one public, one private) and finds that at both schools curricular knowledge is "saturated with a desire for a particular [kind of] girl," and that discourses of knowledge and success "construct promises" that move girls toward certain opportunities and experiences, like college, that are deemed valuable (McCall, 2014b, p. i). She concludes that hegemonic tendencies of constructing singular ideal female subjects must be challenged and that we have to actively work to provide young women with a range of discursive tools to negotiate and resist dominant discourses of success, empowerment, beauty, happiness, and belonging in both in- and out-of-school spaces.

The literature that focuses on the institutional identities of all-girls schools in the United States is complicated. Girls' schools are often celebrated not only for providing equitable access to education but empowering girls physically, emotionally, and intellectually. For instance, in providing a historical context for the Oakland-based all-girls school she co-founded, DeBare (2004) explains that all-girls schools "typically view their mission as extending beyond academics to address the social and emotional challenges facing girls, such as issues of self-esteem, body image, and sexuality" (p. 309). Similarly, McCall (2014b) finds that the Parker School, an elite, private school for girls, "represents an ordinary world of learning where girls feel smart, special, cared for, and privileged" (p. 178). Like the Clyde School, the Parker School is committed to reaching and supporting every girl and providing "every opportunity" to their students (McCall, 2014b).

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[4]The concept of curricular knowledge is borrowed from Jean Anyon's (1980) work on knowledge construction in which she explores the aspects of knowledge that work to perpetuate dominant ideologies, practices, and privileges constitutive of economic and political structures; and aspects that show possibilities for "fundamental transformation of ideologies and practices" (p. 32).

While single-sex schools may share many commitments and goals to girls' education, they do not necessarily operate in a uniform manner, nor do they exist in dichotomous opposition of one another (DeBare, 2004; McCall, 2014b). While the narratives of encouragement, opportunity, and access in girls' schools may function in supportive and productive ways at times, they also run the risk of conveying essentialized images of institutions and populations in ways that silence inequities and differences, subsequently reinforcing dominant beliefs and hegemonic practices. Citing Deal's (1991) work delineating public schools from private schools, Proweller (1999) explains that, unlike the public school where community is "typically melded through an explicit set of regulatory practices, the private school binds individuals together through a common set of cultural codes that regulate student socialization inside and outside of school" (p. 780). Implying universal experiences across public, private, and parochial "all-girls schools," assigning them to a singular narrative, fails to account for the historical and contextual nuances of the institutions—how factors like race, class, gender, geography, school funding, and so on intersect and impact a school's culture, community, and identity. As Adichie (2009) states, there is a danger in single stories.

The [hidden] ethos of privilege in Manhattan's elite private schools. One of the most significant challenges of conducting research in an elite, private, independent high school for girls lies in the ability to "access and then mine surface forms that embody social relations of privilege, inequalities, and hierarchies that are typically invisible because they have been so thoroughly institutionalized" (Proweller, 1998, p. 221). The silence that surrounded racial and class privilege in my high school is typical of predominantly White schools in the U.S., as many critical Whiteness studies scholars report in their research on race talk and racial literacy at private and public schools across the country (see Lewis, 2003; Michael, 2015; Perry, 2001; Pollock, 2004). By the beginning of the 20th century, private girls' schools "had largely become enclaves of the wealthy and privileged" (DeBare, 2004, p.47). The transformation of private girls'

schools from middle-class into elite institutions really came to fruition between 1880 and 1915.

The early 20th century—America's Gilded Age—was the time after the Civil War when industrialization was at its peak across the country and men such as Rockefeller, Carnegie, Morgan, and Frick made fortunes in the fields of steel, railroads, oil, and banking. In many respects, "those years were [also the] golden era for girls' schools…. They were run by a generation of powerful, entrepreneurial headmistresses who built schools into small empires with wealthy donors, permanent buildings, and organized alumnae groups" (DeBare, 2004, p. 47). The shift of girls' schools in locations like Manhattan into elite institutions was connected to the growth of public school systems that were largely coeducational and more affordable than their private counterparts. "Wealthy people were the ones who could afford to bypass the local public high school if they didn't like it" (p. 51).

A century later, ties between wealth and private schooling remain just as strong. Proweller (1998), for instance, finds that the "fabric of cultural life" at Best Academy is knit together by "social relations of privilege," which are deeply embedded and embodied in the structures and practices of the institution (p. 221). Her work examines how adolescent girls play active roles in shaping who they are on a daily basis, challenging the traditional view of young people as passive recipients of the institutional structures and discourses available to them when it comes to identity formation. She must, however, work through the tensions of utilizing a poststructural framework within an institution steeped in traditional conceptions of success and belonging:

> Full support for academic excellence creates a climate that fosters confidence, independence, and self-reliance among girls because of and not in spite of the fact that they are female. Through a curriculum that promotes values of individualism, academic excellence, moral behavior, and community service, female students are being prepared for their place in the [upper middle-]class continuum. (p. 202)

Sara Lawrence Lightfoot (1983) describes a similar feeling on the campus of St. Paul's, an elite boarding school in New England. She notes the school's "supreme orchestration" of events and people, arguing that only a school with abundance, privilege, and a sense of institutional security can anticipate and coordinate life in this way. The experiences and memories of the institution are rooted in tradition, which seems to influence the present (Linde, 2009). Traditions, Lightfoot (1983) argues, function as active artifacts that reinforce a discourse of "It has always been that way" (p. 225), making it difficult to question or re-examine the relevance and justness of a school's customs.

With few exceptions, educational research addresses a variety of topics regarding the education of affluent students, but "avoids critical investigation of the processes of affluent schooling that reproduce and regenerate privilege" (Howard, 2008, p. 20). Adam Howard identifies a significant gap in the literature, contending that while the topic of privileged schooling and affluent students has been researched, privilege itself frequently goes unexamined and remains unexplored. He explains,

> Privilege … has been understood extrinsically, as something individuals have or possess (that is, as something that can fit into a "knapsack"—invisible or otherwise) or something they experience, rather than as something more intrinsic, as something that reveals who they are or who they have become in a fundamental sense. (p. 23)

Howard goes on to posit that while this work helps us to understand privilege as the "source of the advantage" that some have over others, it has essentially fallen short in providing a more comprehensive framework that positions privilege as identity; as a lens through which individuals understand self and self-in-relation-to-others. In doing so, Howard re-situates privilege from an external to an actively lived experience, an embodied aspect of identity that fundamentally impacts the lens through which one views the world and makes sense of their values, perceptions, appreciations, and actions on a daily basis. In this sense, privilege as identity can also be applied to the identity of an

institution (Linde, 2009) and help us think about the implicit ways that privilege might operate and function as a fundamental component within the structures, practices, and culture of a particular place.

bell hooks (2009) argues that there is little or no discussion of how "the attitudes and values of those from materially privileged classes are imposed upon everyone via biased pedagogical strategies" (p. 136). Critical theorist Peter McLaren (2009) echoes hooks's sentiments when he talks about the hidden curriculum as the "unintended outcomes" of the schooling process: "the tacit ways in which knowledge and behavior get constructed, outside the usual course materials and formally scheduled lessons" (p. 75). Sometimes enacted through discursive practices, the hidden curriculum reinforces social constructions, cultural mores, and expectations and determines who is given access to the opportunities needed to "succeed" in school and in life thereafter. McLaren argues that schooling should be seen as a process of understanding how subjectivities are produced; of examining how we have been constructed by certain ideas, values, and views of the dominant culture. Teachers, therefore, need to encourage students to be self-reflective and to build bridges between their lived experiences outside of school and what is happening in the classroom; teaching should be about a process of inquiry and critique, of constructing, and of possibility.

Pop narratives of Manhattan's elite private schools. It is possible that we know more today about the microcosm of the elite private all-girls schools on the Upper East Side of Manhattan from tween TV shows on the CW network, reality television, and op-eds in the *New York Times* and *New York Magazine* than we do from academic scholarship. That said, there have been various, but narrow, archetypal representations of girls' and all-girls schools on the Upper East Side depicted in mainstream media over the last decade or so. Most are closely related to the creation of *Gossip Girl*, a television show adapted from a series of young adult novels by Cecily von Ziegesar, about the in- and out-of-school lives of "Manhattan's young elite." There was also a short stint of a

Bravo "docudrama" called *NYC Prep*, chronicling the lives of a handful of students from elite private high schools in Manhattan. The show, packaged as the "real life" counterpart to *Gossip Girl*, "worked" by:

> shoving real-life rich kids into the shiny shells of reality television stars. This novel Russian nesting doll effect was meant to infuse the lives of the Upper East Side mini-elite with tried and true reality television magic. Before *NYC Prep*, reality TV stars were sources of entertainment, but never objects of envy or adulation…. Americans have been obsessed with wealth and fascinated by the 1 percent since before Jay Gatsby….
>
> There's nothing more tantalizing than the idea of a window into the hallowed halls of the haughty—and what's more highbrow than NYC elites? Of course, the innate watchability of these socialites is matched only by their elusiveness…. The genius of *NYC Prep* … was the way that it managed to squirrel its way into this world—to buy itself access to a realm of privilege where exposure and braggart behavior is largely frowned upon. In other words, its ability to sink reality television's dirty fingers into the gilded lives of the previously untouchable elite. (Zimmerman, 2014, n.p.)

In a bitingly honest piece, Mike Wolff (2002) critiques the social politics, competition, and stress of getting children into the handful of "good" [read: private] nursery schools in New York City, exploring the "values, mores, and rituals that drive Manhattan's private school world" (n.p.). Admission into the elite, private, independent schools on the Upper East Side (UES) of Manhattan is a social currency, providing access to certain spaces and ways of being and knowing unique to the particular culture. Wolff provides a candid account of the "typical" scene at any one of New York City's elite private schools:

> When you show up at these schools, you can't not be bowled over by the scene. These kids look perfect! Straight from a high-end catalogue. The catalogues imitate these kids—they are the archetype! This is no overnight tradition. They've been working on carriage and posture here for generations—and truly, they don't slouch very much; there really isn't much visible attitude. From the groomed and tended preschool youngsters to the gamine girls … lounging in common rooms and on window seats—there are no sore thumbs. This is incredible packaging. This is what the rich are supposed to look like. And the better the school, the better the packaging. The better the school, the stricter the homogeneity of style and tone and manners. (This is actually the result of a harsh Darwinian process: You have to look or fit the part to get in, and then, if you don't continue to stay in

> character, you're weeded out—indeed, almost no amount of money can keep a misfit or underperformer in). (n.p.)

It is important to note these pop culture representations of elite New York City schools and the students within the institutions as they construct identity and place in particular ways. As previously discussed, the media tend to perpetuate a social order and reinforce hegemonic ideas and values, often depicting White, upper-middle class, cisgendered people as "normal," and therefore everyone outside of those categories as peripheral or "other." In a similar fashion, *Gossip Girl* and *NYC Prep* afforded a voyeur's lens into the world(s) of wealthy teenagers in Manhattan. Regardless of how accurate or exaggerated, fictionalized, or edited these programs were, they still contributed to the flattening of mainstream narratives about wealth, privilege, identity, and school culture in Manhattan. Similarly, while Wolff offers a rather accurate, albeit somewhat melodramatic description of these schools, it is necessary to consider how the story/ies might be interpreted by different people, in varying locations: How might the show's meaning change, how might certain discourses be affected? Critical and multimodal literacies are therefore crucial for young people not only to interrogate and deconstruct limited or problematic pop culture representations, but also to create original media texts that allow them to push back on mainstream narratives and offer alternative perspectives and understandings.

Summary

In conducting this review of literature for my study, particularly the work on adolescent girls' identities in school spaces, it is apparent that far less attention has been paid to the internal cultures and discourses of elite private all-girls schools, particularly those located on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Additionally, the role of institutional forces and school systems is often used to frame research studies, but the focus ultimately rests on the students—how they are shaped by the spaces they occupy or how they learn

to navigate their ways out. These are important contributions that highlight students' perspectives and help us to re-imagine possibilities for change. At the same time, by only placing young people at the center of the conversation, we shift focus away from the institutions where the negotiations are happening; where language plays a significant role in constructing normative and Other practices and behaviors; and where power structures are in play. Further research that holds focus on the institution itself—how it constructs knowledge, meaning, and membership through discursive practices and sociopolitical structures—primarily from the perspectives of young people is needed in order to provide fuller, more contextualized narratives that then allow us to re-imagine the possibilities and potentials for creating and sustaining authentically inclusive school spaces.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This critical case study used qualitative research methodology to explore how notions of girls and girlhood are constructed, understood, and promoted at an elite, private all-girls school and to investigate how high school students perceive, navigate, and investigate constructions of girls and girlhood within their school and life worlds. To restate, I framed "girlhood" as referring to the various temporal, ecological, cultural, and discursive storylines that intersect to construct and define the experiences of "being a girl," and the places and spaces within which these experiences occur. Involving students in some aspects of data collection and analysis, I aimed to emphasize the importance of young people's perspectives when investigating how institutions historically designed to support and empower them are indeed following through or are perhaps falling short. Essentially, I was interested in how teenage girls read and write their realities in a particular environment using multimodal literacies practices. My discussion of literacy, identity, and place in Chapter II helped me establish a framework that positions these concepts as socially situated and constructed practices and, in turn, highlights the centrality of context when considering how individuals and institutions make sense of, interact with, and inform one another.

Below I will review my research questions, outline how they corresponded with my data collection methods in Table 1, and discuss my positionality as the researcher in this project. I will then provide an overview of the dissertation study. Next, I will present

my findings from an exploratory study that informed the development of my research questions. With that background information, I will then offer a description of the research site, population, and participants, followed by an explanation of my data collection methods and recruitment strategies. Afterwards, I will discuss my reasons for using a critical analysis of discourse (CAD), artifact analysis, and thematic coding to analyze my data. And finally, I will consider the limitations of my study.

In my efforts to explore notions of girls and girlhood at the Clyde School, I used a variety of data collection methods. The design of this study was rooted in the belief that research processes are and should be critical, collaborative, and interactive (Conley, 2016). The study consisted of semi-structured interviews; media-making through collage; participatory social mapping; document review and analysis; and participant observations. The analysis of this case study is anchored in CAD, as I worked to make sense of the discursive practices, perceptions, representations, and language that contribute to how girls and girlhood are constructed, promoted, and understood at Clyde. I also used artifact analysis and coding for themes to understand my qualitative data. Table 1 outlines the data collection methods I used and how they corresponded to my research questions. My research questions are again as follows:

- RQ1: How are girls and experiences of girlhood institutionally constructed within an elite, private, independent all-girls high school in New York City?
    - How is the school's sociocultural ecology (culture and community) informed by, and how does it inform, constructions and representations of an ideal student?
- RQ2: How do high school students and school leaders read (interpret, perceive) constructions of girls and girlhood at an elite, private, independent all-girls school in New York City?
    - How do students and school leaders make sense of dominant narratives of girls and girlhood?

- How do students and school leaders offer counter-stories that resist, challenge, and rewrite dominant representations and school-sanctioned narratives of girlhood?

Table 1. Corresponding Data Collection Methods and Research Questions

Methods of Data Collection	Methods of Data Analysis	Research Questions Addressed
Participant Observation	Coding for themes	RQ1, RQ2
Multimodal Identity Inquiries	Critical multimodal artifact analysis, coding for themes	RQ2
Participatory Social Mapping	Critical multimodal artifact analysis, critical analysis of discourse	RQ1
Student Interviews	Critical analysis of discourse, critical artifactual analysis	RQ1, RQ2
School Leaders Interviews	Critical analysis of discourse, coding for themes	RQ1, RQ2
Document Review	Coding for themes	RQ1

Researcher Reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity is the conscious recognition and explanation of one's biases, values, and experiences. Creswell (2013) sees reflexivity as a two-part process: the researcher must first explicitly discuss his or her relationship(s) to and experience(s) with the phenomenon being explored. The researcher should then acknowledge how these past relationships and experiences might shape his or her assumptions and/or interpretations of the data during collection and analysis. That said, and in a commitment to produce my most authentic work, it has been and continues to be important for me to, at times, acknowledge and thread my positional identity and personal experiences in this school system throughout the research process as a function of reflexivity and trustworthiness.

Additionally, in efforts to continue making the familiar strange, I took up routinizing practices such as writing regular research memos and looking across the data every few weeks to reflect on how I was making sense of what was happening based on my positionality and perspective. I also had a small group of peers familiar with the evolution and content of my study who were able to provide outside perspectives and feedback on both the data and my interpretations of the data throughout data collection and analysis.

"How we write is a reflection of our own interpretations based on the cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics that we bring to research" (Creswell, 2013, p. 215). As in many qualitative disciplines, feminist theorists recognize the inevitability that the lived experiences and consciousness of the researcher will be involved in the research process as much as they are in one's everyday life (Alvermann, Commeyras, Young, Randall, & Hinson, 1997). For instance, examining gendered discursive practices, Alvermann et al. wrestle with the critical methodologies challenge of incorporating their own voices and experiences in ways that do not come across as egocentric or feel intrusive in the research process (Lather, 1991). It is therefore crucial that I first acknowledge my positionality—the set of socially constructed aspects of my identity that intersect and inform my privilege and subjectivities (Collins, 2000; Takacs, 2002)—to contextualize myself in ways that strengthen, not take away from, the study.

Positionality and Personal Context

I am a White, upper class, heterosexual, cisgendered female and native of New York City. I grew up on the Lower West Side of Manhattan and have attended predominantly White, private schools from pre-kindergarten through graduate school. I have always had the privilege of choice: where I wanted to go to school, what I wanted to study, what extracurriculars I wanted to pursue, and so on. In 1999, I was admitted and chose to attend one of the six historically elite, private, independent all-girls high schools on the Upper East Side (UES) of Manhattan. If asked in high school to describe the

typical girl at one of these schools, I would have said she was White, skinny, cisgendered, and wealthy. She would live walking distance from the school (and have a second house in the Hamptons). She would be wearing a tailored white button-down shirt and pleated uniform skirt (rolled up, of course), and be equipped with the latest trends in designer jewelry, shoes, and handbags. I realize now that this notion of the typical girl was often treated as synonymous with the ideal girl, covertly reinforcing hegemonic images and messages of what was constructed as normal. While I look like the "quintessential girl," I adamantly maintained that I was not and did not want to be associated with the label. I often found myself unable to relate to the upbringings and perspectives of the majority of my classmates, even though they looked like me. As one of a dozen students entering a K-12 school in ninth grade, I was a "new girl," a label and archetype that often signaled "outsider" and illuminated a tangible social hierarchy amongst students. This was by no means the experience or identity that defined my high school experience, but it is something that has stayed with me all of these years. While I had a very positive high school experience, I have since become more critical of how ideas of perfection, privilege, happiness, and belonging are constructed and reinforced in particular ways within the elite all-girls school culture on Manhattan's UES.

I therefore came to this research site and project from a unique position as an *insider-outsider*. As a former student at one of the all-girls schools, I not only had an intimate knowledge and understanding of the institutional and social cultures at work on the UES; but as an alumna of one of these schools, I received a high level of access to the students, the school building, and the research project that I transparently requested to do at the school site. Simply put, I know things that I could never know and authentically write about without having personally experienced them (Jones & Woglom, 2013). At the same time, I had been away from the school culture—its nuances, routines, practices, traditions—for nearly 15 years. In my return to a neighboring elite all-girls school on the UES to delve deeper into the institutional cultures and social environments specific to

this consortium of schools, my insider-outsider stance proved to be as wonderful as it was challenging. More importantly, it pushed me to constantly check in with myself around my positionality, my biases, and my points and levels of access throughout the research process.

My initial thoughts about the approach and purpose of this research project revolved around dismantling the privileged lives and perspectives of students in the upper school. I had the girls who fit the ideal archetype mold in the forefront of my mind as the young people who were responsible for reinforcing the images, messages, and codes for belonging; they were the individuals who needed to be addressed and critically deconstructed. Over the course of conducting my pilot study and then my dissertation research, however, it became clear that even the most privileged [White] girls who I encountered were acutely aware of their racial and economic privileges; many were committed to social justice efforts and spoke eloquently and critically of the systems that were at work to maintain inequities based on gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, and class. My focus quickly moved away from students' roles in perpetuating certain standards or norms and shifted to the institutional factors—the structures and systems constructing and reinforcing images, messages, and expectations of what girls and girlhood look like, building upon my explorations of empowerment and belonging in my pilot study (which I will discuss further in this chapter). That said, the students remained a fundamental component of the research design, as their perspectives, narratives, and meaning-making processes are positioned as the most important sources of information in this study.

Research Design Overview

This study explored and interrogated how ideas about girls and girlhood are constructed, perceived, and operationalized at the Clyde School and how girls take up

and/or resist the available discourses and dominant narratives of girls and girlhood they receive in both in- and out-of-school spaces. As a single case study, this project was concerned with the particular population of one all-girls school located within a subset of elite, independent single-sex schools in New York City—a group of institutions built on a history of privilege, tradition, and dominant storylines of girls and education. As such, I wanted to explore how and in what ways the sociocultural ecology of the Clyde School affords and/or constrains opportunities for girls to construct and enact counter-stories of girlhood. In order to conduct this research, I examined girls' multimodal expressions of identity and explored how participants negotiate the dominant cultural storylines of girlhood disseminated through the places and spaces they occupy and navigate in school and in their life worlds.

Case Study Research

Case study research is the study of a bounded system (Smith, 1978). Some argue (see Stake, 2005) that case study research is not a methodology, "but a choice of what is to be studied" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Others, like Creswell (2013), who in fact do view it as a methodology, see it as a type of qualitative research design in which the investigator

> explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) … over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual materials, and documents and reports), and [produces] a case description and case themes. (p. 97)

According to Merriam (1998, 2009), Stake (1995), and Wolcott (1995), case studies involve a "detailed description of a setting and its participants, accompanied by an analysis of the data for themes, patterns, and issues" (in Bloomberg & Volpe, 2010, p. 31). More specifically, case study research considers "history, contextual present, culture, and ecologically and critically framed factors that relate to the study topic as it affects or is interpreted by individuals or institutions" (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010,

p. 115). I chose to use case study as my methodology as it facilitates the examination of a particular aspect of a culture or subculture in an attempt, as Nunan (1992, in Kelly, 2016) states, to "provide a portrait of what is going on in a particular setting" (p. 532). Aiming to locate and interpret the situated meanings of girlhood, identity, and belonging within the context of a particular place, using a qualitative approach that focuses on an "intensive description and analysis of a bounded social phenomenon" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 31) and seeks to elicit constructed realities from participants through interviews, participant observations, and artifact analysis, afforded depth and richness to my data collection and analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Doing Research "With and For" Youth

Seeking an authentic understanding of how girls and girlhood are constructed, discussed, perceived, and practiced at Clyde, it was necessary to involve young people—as identities are closely tethered to place—in the research process. Interestingly (though perhaps unsurprising, given the hierarchical system of traditional research methodologies), Ajodhia-Andrews and Berman (2009, in Marshall & Rossman, 2011) note that the practice of including young people in research that directly affects young people, from educational policy to curricular design, is a relatively new concept in social science research. Young people possess the "knowledge and position to shape what counts as education, to reconfigure power dynamics and discourse practices within existing realms of conversation about education" (Cook-Sather, 2002, p. 3), and yet, students are often silenced in conversations about education. Participatory research, Cahill (2004, in Pain, 2004) argues, "is a method for bringing new voices into the academy, not just incorporating a singular voice of 'difference' but interrogating different perspectives and the spaces between them" (p. 654). For Wissman et al. (2015), authentically involving young people in research requires a "decentering of the researcher's gaze, [an] embracing [of] uncertainty and humility" (p. 195). They call for

embracing a "fluidity" in research methods and argue that researchers interested in decentering traditional scholarship practices must make firm commitments to re-seeing young people as indispensable knowledge-holders and creative meaning-makers, and to documenting the literacies practices that young people use to move across spaces and places, negotiating their identities and the world around them.

Wissman et al. present a methodological concept of *research pedagogies* that offers a different approach to research related to adolescent literacies, one that moves away from viewing young people and their literacies practices as static or universal, and rather as anything but predictable. Research pedagogies recognize the various modes, contexts, and media that young people move across, consume, and create to make meaning. There are three dimensions of inquiry and practice that anchor research pedagogies: created spaces, engaged participation, and embodied inquiry with and for youth (Wissman et al., 2015). In service of "revitalizing methodology" (Pain, 2004), I employed participatory research techniques that align with the tenets of research pedagogies. For instance, a component of my data collection was participatory social mapping, "where people's relations with and accounts of space, place, and environment are of central interest … [participatory research] is designed to be context-specific, placing local conditions and local knowledge at the forefront, and producing situated, rich, and layered accounts" (Pain, 2004, p. 653).

The first two phases of the study involved media-making and participatory social mapping with students to explore girlhood through a variety of modes. The purpose of phase one was to gain perceptual information that addressed my research questions, specifically how high school girls perceive and navigate the images and messages they receive about being girls and students at school. Phase two consisted of a brief identity collage activity, intended to prompt students to think about and discuss aspects of their identity/ies through a different set of modes. The third, and most significant, phase of data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with students and school leaders.

The final phase of data collection focused on document review of official school publications such as the biannual school magazine, admissions materials, the high school student handbook, and the student newspaper (Table 2 provides a flow chart to illustrate the research phases; Table 3 provides more detailed information about the data collection process).

Table 2. Research Design Flow Chart

Data Collection—Phase I	Data Collection—Phase II	Data Collection—Phase III	Data Collection—Phase IV
Participatory social mapping of girl/student experience	Identity inquiry collages	Interviews	Document review

Table 3. Activities and Frequency of Activities

Name of activity	# of times the activity occurs	Duration of activity per instance	Total time period of active participation per subject (days, weeks, etc.)	Describe the data collected
Multimodal identity inquiries (Grade 10)	1 time per subject	60 minutes	1 month Once over the course of 1 month 60 minutes	Media texts composed through collage
Participatory social mapping of "girlhood" throughout schoolhouse (Grade 10)	1 time per subject	60 minutes	1 month Once over the course of 1 month 60 minutes	Using a free form model, participants will be asked to create a map of where they see and think stories of girls and girlhood are told/occur at Clyde
Semi-structured interviews with students (individual or group)	1 time per subject	60 - 90 minutes	4 months 1 time over the course of 4 months 60 - 90 minutes	Audio recordings of individual/group interviews with students about their experiences at Clyde and their thoughts about constructions of girls and girlhood at school

Table 3 (continued)

Name of activity	# of times the activity occurs	Duration of activity per instance	Total time period of active participation per subject (days, weeks, etc.)	Describe the data collected
Interviews with school leaders	1 time per subject	60 - 90 minutes	4 months Once over the course of 4 months 60 minutes	Audio-recordings of individual interviews with school leaders on their perceptions of girls and girlhood at Clyde

Total hours of youth participation: ~5 hours
Duration of youth participation: 4 months
Total hours of researcher participant observation: 64 hours
Duration of researcher participant observation: 6 months

Counter-stories

The design of this case study was intended to provide participants with an opportunity to offer stories and, more importantly, counter-stories of girlhood: the representations, pressures, and idealized expectations about who they are and who they are expected to be in the context of the Clyde School, as well as in the landscapes of their life worlds, which might include one's neighborhood, family, and interactions with popular culture and online social networking sites. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) define counter-storytelling as "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (p. 26). It is a component of critical race theory (CRT), a "race-based form of oppositional scholarship" (Love, 2004, p. 227) that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s focused on locating and challenging the role of race and racism in education, and aiming to eliminate subordination and inequity based on race and other intersecting identifiers like gender, class, sexual orientation, language, and ethnicity (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).[1] Counter-storytelling is a tool that CRT scholars use to challenge or

[1]Informed by the work of Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, and Thomas (1995), Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993), Tierney (1993), and Solórzano and Yosso (2002)

contradict master narratives. In this case study, the master narrative is a strong one steeped in a history of well-intentioned traditions of and commitments to girls' education.

Counter-stories provide a space for people to engage in creative reflections of self-expression and self-definition. In this study, students and school leaders helped to construct the dominant narratives and counter-narratives of girls, girlhood, and the student experience at an all-girls school through semi-structured interviews and media-making activities. In this sense, the study takes the form of critical-activist inquiry—research that seeks "not to prove or disprove, but rather to create movement, to displace, to pull apart and allow for resettlement; it is research that seeks what is possible and made manifest when our taken-for-taxonomic certainties are intentionally shaken" (Rolling, 2013, p. 99). Brown and Strega (2005, in Rolling, 2013) explain that critical-activist inquiry "produces resistance narratives—counter-stories to authoritative grand narratives that are critical, indigenous or local, and anti-oppressive. To be critical is to activate new discourse overwriting prior theory and practice" (p. 109). The hope is not necessarily to gather narratives that will stand in direct opposition to the "majoritarian story" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), but rather disrupt the idea that only a single narrative exists—one that compresses experiences and silences the intersectional relationships between young people, institutions, and society. It is in these moments of disruption that we might begin to untangle and re-examine the cultural, discursive, and systemic practices that work to construct place in an all-girls school like Clyde and then collaboratively engage in reimagining what these spaces could look like when multiple narratives are embraced to create authentically inclusive places and spaces.

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understand CRT in education as a framework or "set of basic insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom" (p. 25).

"Not Exactly Clyde Girl Material," an Exploratory Study

For my qualitative exploratory study (see Appendix A for a more detailed overview), I looked at the discursive practices that high school students at Clyde associate with the "Clyde Girl," a discursively constructed idealized archetype that regularly circulates throughout the culture and language of the school. Using a critical analysis of discourse (McCall, 2014a), I examined students' responses to two open-ended survey questions (n=155) about the Clyde Girl ideal, tracing storylines (Søndergaard, 2002) of how the image manifests in students' perceptions of themselves, their peers, and their sense of membership at the school (see Appendix B for survey). The purpose of this study was to better understand how students negotiate the dominant discourses of empowerment and belonging available to them at the Clyde School. I was curious about who feels supported, whose ways of being and knowing are valued, who "fits in," what the implications are for those who perceive themselves to be on the periphery or outside of the "norm" or the "ideal," and how available discourses might be re-imagined as discourses of possibility to foster more authentically inclusive school communities. In an attempt to dig deeper and gain a better understanding of how the archetype functions at Clyde, I asked:

- RQ1: What are the discursive practices that high school students associate with their school's idealized archetype when asked what it means to be a Clyde Girl?
    - What are some of the reasons that girls do or do not identify with the Clyde Girl image?
- RQ2: What is the nature of belonging as it relates to the identity of/identifying with the Clyde Girl archetype?
    - What are some of the ways that membership and belonging circulate discursively at Clyde?

I found that while the Clyde Girl archetype creates a culture of motivation, support, and inclusion for some, it leaves others with little room to engage in their own meaning-making processes about what it means to be a student and a young woman at the school. I categorized the discursive practices associated with the Clyde Girl into two overarching themes: empowerment and belonging. These themes denoted the rules of membership—the ways of knowing, acting, believing, speaking, and valuing—required to identify as, and fit the criteria of, the idealized archetype. Within these themes, I indicated select discursive practices that provide the most significant storylines about the Clyde Girl—dominant narratives that are so seamlessly integrated into the school's language and culture, and hold such shared understandings, that they largely go unnoticed and unchallenged (Proweller, 1998). This is significant within Clyde as it relates to fostering an inclusive and supportive community, as well as in larger ecological and cultural contexts where socially constructed expectations of how girls are supposed to be, act, and look are frequently impressed upon them by dominant institutions and structures. These standards of being reinforce normative beliefs and values about who is appreciated and/or what is expected among students at Clyde. Synthesizing how girls understand the archetype demonstrates a need to continue critically deconstructing and reflecting on the connections between literacy, identity, and place in relation to empowerment and belonging.

My pilot study allowed me to establish a solid conceptual foundation for framing my dissertation research, to forge relationships with various constituencies at the Clyde School, and to re-immerse myself within a school culture that I am so familiar with, yet also so removed from. This was all necessary before beginning my dissertation project at this research site. Furthermore, the findings of my initial study greatly informed the design and methodology of this dissertation project.

Research Site and Population

As previously mentioned, the Clyde School is one of six elite, private, independent K-12 all-girls schools located within a one-mile radius of each other on the Upper East Side (UES) of Manhattan. Coupled with four all-boys schools, also primarily located on the UES and Upper West Side (UWS), these institutions comprise a small network of schools in New York City, all intensely focused on tradition, standards, values, preparation, and community (Wolff, 2002). The UES is one of the most affluent neighborhoods in Manhattan; the tradition, wealth and privilege are omnipresent and tangible. The Clyde School was co-founded by two women in the 1920s. Both longtime educators, the women were committed to instilling the values of truth, friendship, and loyalty and educating both the hearts and the minds of girls and young women (school website[2]). The red brick school building sits tall on a tree-lined street amidst a sprawling row of townhouses, moments away from Central Park, the Guggenheim Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. At the time of this study, there were just over 600 girls enrolled at Clyde, approximately 200 in each division of Lower School, Middle School, and Upper School, and 46 girls per grade. Girls of color comprised about 30% of the student population; and 20% of the faculty were people of color. Tuition at Clyde for the 2016-2017 school year was $46,500, and 20% of the student body received financial aid.

Participants

I interviewed five school leaders: Marc Bennett, Head of School; Julia Hill, Head of Upper School (Grades 9-12); Dr. Tanya Collette, Director of Leadership Programming (Grades K-12); Cooper Martin, Director of Communications; and Kim Thomas, Director of Admissions. And I interviewed 17 students: 5 sophomores, 2 juniors, and 10 seniors. Because this study seeks to amplify the diverse voices, positionalities and identities of the

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[2]The school webpage is not cited to protect anonymity.

student population, I further introduce my student participants below (Table 4), listing their names (pseudonyms), grade levels, and the identifiers they provided during their interviews. Participants shared what they were comfortable with, so some students provided a more comprehensive list than others. I include students' identifiers to provide greater context to their responses in the following chapters. I chose to introduce them here in a list using their own descriptors, as opposed to introducing them individually within the subsections of my data chapters to provide a composite of the students who were generous enough to be a part of this study. The identifiers are meant to inform an understanding of how participants read and negotiate their surroundings through certain lenses. They are not, however, intended to define participants, meaning the identifiers do not provide full accounts of who these young people are, how they see themselves, and how they operate in the world. Nevertheless, it was important to let the students speak for themselves by way of this preliminary introduction.

Table 4. Student Participants' Identifiers

Student	Grade	Identifiers
Raine	Sophomore	Female; speaks French, English, and Italian
Karl	Sophomore	She/her at Clyde (any pronouns for online persona); Chinese-Canadian; upper-middle class; gay; lives two blocks away from Clyde
Olivia	Sophomore	Straight; she/her; White; female; Jew-ish; upper-middle class
Lila	Sophomore	Pansexual; part-Asian, quarter Filipino, part White; cisgendered
Jenny	Sophomore	White; woman; straight; privileged; lives on the Upper East Side
Naomi	Junior	Female; she/her; Black; lower-middle class
Maya	Junior	Black; girl; pansexual; lives in Brooklyn

Table 4 (continued)

Student	Grade	Identifiers
Caroline	Senior	She/her/hers; girl; White; straight; lives on the Upper East Side; Jewish
Annie	Senior	Queer; adopted; female (woman, girl, whatever); Christian; mental health issues; lower-middle class
Maria	Senior	Cisgender; female
Kate	Senior	White; female; not straight
Lucy	Senior	White; upper class; female; straight; Catholic and Jewish
Megan	Senior	White; American; Jewish; she/her/hers; straight
Lauren	Senior	She/her; straight; Irani-American; middle-class; white
Lydia	Senior	White; Armenian and Irish; female; she/her; upper-middle class; lives in diverse neighborhood in Brooklyn
Rachel	Senior	White; female
Simone	Senior	Black

In addition to interviews with students across grade levels, I also spent extra time with the sophomore class for two media-making activities (which I will discuss in greater detail in the section on data collection). I mention them here under "participants" because I spent about a month doing data collection with this grade, but did not have in-depth interactions outside of the designated media-making activities that I was present for (aside from the five sophomores that participated in a semi-structured interview). I do, however, use the artifacts that they created as part of my data analysis.

Ethical Concerns

This research involved minimal risks for participants. Participation in this study was solely voluntary, and there was no monetary compensation or gift incentive for

participating. If participants decided they did not want to participate at any time, they were not penalized. Pseudonyms are used for the names of all participants. Data were kept confidential and stored on my password-protected personal computer and on an external hard drive in password-protected folders. Physical artifacts were stored and transported safely in a locked bag.

All participants received either an informed consent form (if they were over 18) (see Appendix F) or assent form (if they were under 18) (see Appendix H), which was signed by the participant in addition to an informed consent form signed by a parent or guardian reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). I ensured that participants agreed to being audio-recorded by asking them to sign a second "Informed Consent" document and to verbally give their consent at the beginning of their interview. I used pseudonyms for participants in all of my researcher's notes and memos to further protect confidentiality. For the single group interview, I recognized that there was a certain inherent risk given that participants knew each other and would be sharing personal opinions and information. Therefore, in addition to the "Informed Consent" form, I asked that students also sign a "Safe Space/Confidentiality Agreement" (see Appendix F) acknowledging the importance of respecting ourselves and others by not sharing anything discussed outside of the focus group interview. If a participant felt uncomfortable during any of the events, they could choose to end their involvement at any time. It was explained to participants that the benefits of participating in the study were indirect in nature: that the study may provide the opportunity for participants to have their "voice" heard; that their responses will contribute to greater understandings of the literacies practices that young people use to negotiate and convey their identities and navigate processes of meaning-making in both in- and out-of-school spaces; and that it may contribute to recommendations for how to further strengthen inclusivity at Clyde.

Methods of Data Collection

My exploratory pilot study, "I Am [Not] a 'Clyde Girl': Exploring the Relationship Between Students' Perceptions and Institutional Perceptions of an Elite New York City Private School's Idealized Archetype" (IRB Approval number 15-307), was approved on May 12, 2015. Following my pilot study and in preparation for my dissertation proposal, I continued collecting data with a pre-dissertation IRB protocol (16-235), "Further Explorations of the Clyde Girl Archetype" (approved March 3, 2016), in which I held two focus group interviews with high school students at the Clyde School to refine the parameters of my dissertation study and narrow down my research questions. The IRB protocol for my dissertation project (IRB approval number 17-037), "Un/tangling the Clyde Girl: A Case Study on the Constructions, Perceptions, and Counter-stories of Girls and Girlhood at an Elite, Private Independent All-girls School in New York City," was approved on October 20, 2016. Gaining access and approval through IRB over the course of more than two years allowed me to notice differences and patterns and get deeply familiar with my research site from the period of the pilot study through the dissertation project.

In the following subsections, I will describe my data collection methods in detail. Although the set of semi-structured interviews yielded the richest and most substantial data, to maintain consistency and flow, I discuss the methods in the order that the phases of research took place. Therefore, I will first give an overview of the media-making that 10th grade students engaged in as part of their leadership class, which produced a set of artifacts to analyze. I will then discuss the series of semi-structured interviews I conducted, followed by the participant observations I engaged in throughout the duration of the study. I will conclude with an explanation of the document review and analysis of official school publications, such as the biannual school magazine, admissions materials, and the student newspaper.

Multimodal Media-Making

I began data collection with 10th grade students in their leadership class. Taught by Dr. Collette, the Director of Connections (a schoolwide leadership programming initiative), the course is designed to help students explore "not only how language gives form to individual and group identities, to social justice movements, and to unexpected sites of collaboration and creativity, but also to when and how language can be limited, harmful, and even destructive" (school website). As Dr. Collette explained to me, "Girls at Clyde are already being set up for leadership in key/core ways, but [it's necessary] to explain why exactly there needs to be intentional leadership programming—that in fact the leadership programming is intentional because of their privilege" (Field notes, 8/2/16). Students have opportunities to strengthen their leadership and communication skills by facilitating dialogues about the topics at hand in pairs, small groups, and whole-class discussions. Dr. Collette opened her class space for me to first engage in participant observations and then facilitate a participatory social mapping activity in the second half of the semester.

As part of my pilot study and pre-dissertation data collection, I had spent time doing participant observations with these students as 9th graders in their health and wellness class the prior year, so I was comfortable beginning my research with this group. Working with Dr. Collette, we designed two media-making activities—identity collages and participatory social mapping—that not only touched on my research questions but also offered potential for strengthening leadership skills like self-exploration and communication, which justified the afforded time and space in the class.

As discussed in Chapter II, critical and multimodal literacies practices can help foster conversations about social issues and provide a creative agentive outlet for young people to be heard (Muspratt et al., 1997). In this research study, multimodality not only functioned as a mode of inquiry and analysis but is also considered a cultural realm of resources, a space for sense-making. Kress (2011) notes that a "potent point" to

multimodality is that "'language' is just one among the resources for making meaning; and that all such resources available in one social group and its cultures at a particular moment ought to be considered as constituting one coherent domain, an integral field of nevertheless distinct resources for making meaning" (p. 242). In understanding literacies as critical, embodied, and multimodal, they can be used to forge connections between individuals and the texts they create. When people create artifacts such as drawings, photographs, and collages, it can be seen as a "process by which identities are sedimented into texts" (Pahl & Rowsell, 2011, p. 76), which can afford different access points to conversations and inquiries with young people.

Identity collages. Students created identity collages to reflect on who they are, how they see themselves, and what is important to them. On one side of a piece of paper, students were invited to flesh out the components of their identities using a concept map format. Dr. Collette and I demonstrated what an identity concept map might look like by each drawing our own versions on the whiteboard. Students had about five minutes to brainstorm and create their own maps:

> They began by putting their name in a bubble in the middle of the paper and branched out from there with their identity markers, characteristics, interests, etc.—everything from "Netflix junkie" to "daughter" to "lover of the outdoors" to "foodie." They then came to the floor to get their collaging materials: magazines and other clippings, scissors, markers, pencils, etc. and returned to their seats. I explained to the girls that the images on their collages did not necessarily have to be literal or explicit, I also encouraged them to draw if they couldn't find something in a magazine. With about 15 minutes left, we asked the students to present their collages to the class. (Field notes, 11/28/16)

Rooted in the sociocultural understanding that literacies, identity, and place are tightly bound, engaging students in identity concept maps and collages followed by a participatory social mapping activity, I was interested in how students went about reading, writing, and communicating pieces of themselves within the context of their student experience at school.

Participatory social mapping. Participatory social mapping is a humanizing research method, one that involves "the building of relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness raising for both researchers and participants" (Paris & Winn, 2014). Participatory mapping is often used to illuminate issues of access and inequality in studies concerning social, economic, and environmental aspects of communities such as literacy (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010) and health and well-being (Conley, 2016). This method of data collection can add a rich layer to qualitative studies in that it provides the researcher with an on-the-ground perspective of an insider, someone with personal ties and knowledge of a particular place or ecology. Taking an ecological perspective to map communities, Pahl and Rowsell (2010) argue, "offers researchers a thicker, comparative frame in which to look at material and situated properties within a common text" (p. 22).

The social mapping also took place in all four sections of the 10th grade leadership class. I co-facilitated the activity with Dr. Collette. The purpose of the activity was to collaboratively explore how girls and girlhood were represented and conveyed in spaces throughout the Clyde school building. To warm up for the activity, we brainstormed as a whole class to generate ideas about what it means to "be a girl" and how students think about and define "girlhood." As we prepared to send students out in pairs (each pair was assigned to one of the eight floors of the school building), we invited them to jot down notes, draw rough sketches, or take photos and/or video with their iPads (each student has a personal iPad) of their designated floor. They were asked to pay close attention to layout and structures, the placement and content of artwork, photographs, and plaques, among any other notable artifacts helping to articulate Clyde's visions of girlhood. They were also asked, if applicable, to map the social geography of the school (i.e., who hangs out where) to "thicken" their descriptions of place (Geertz, 1994). Students had approximately 15 minutes to explore their floor. When we reconvened, they plotted their findings on a collective map of the schoolhouse. I will discuss the participatory maps in more detail in Chapter V.

From the planning and data collection perspective, the social mapping activity was iterative and responsive to students' reactions, feedback, and engagement. For instance, after doing the mapping activity with the first section of students, I noted:

> For next session: Frame/ask girls to brainstorm about defining/thinking about the Every Girl and/or the Clyde Girl (not what it means to be a "girl"—too broad for this conversation, can be discussed during individual interviews) and then to word associate with "girlhood." Also: Rephrase prompt before students head out to map their floors: What story is this floor telling about Clyde? About students? About girls? What do you notice? What stands out? Who is represented? (Field notes, 11/1/17)

While the iterative nature of the activity may have altered the experience across the four sections of the class, it could also be argued that there would be variation based on factors such as student dynamics in each section regardless of minor modifications based on student responses. Ultimately, the benefits of refining the prompts outweighed the need for strict consistency across all four sections.

Semi-structured Interviews

The next, and most substantial, method of data collection for this study consisted of semi-structured interviews. Interviews took place from December 2016 through April 2017 and were audio-recorded. I interviewed two populations: students and school leaders. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 17 students: 5 Grade 10 students, 2 Grade 11 students, and 10 Grade 12 students (see Appendices C and D for student interview protocols). In the spirit of doing research with and for youth, I wanted to provide participants with the option of doing an individual or a group interview.[3] Ultimately, based on scheduling, two seniors participated in a group interview; the remaining 15 participated in individual interviews.

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[3]I did include a caveat that students' requests for a particular type of interview would be honored to the best of my ability, but would ultimately be determined by scheduling—particularly group interviews, which would depend on multiple people from the same grade requesting this format.

I used a combination of theoretical and quota sampling methods to recruit student participants based on a variety of access points and personal relationships that I had to students. Theoretical, or theory-based, sampling entails examining individuals "who can contribute to the evolving theory" of your study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 104). The senior and sophomore classes were the grades I had immediate access to—Grade 10 because of my relationship with Dr. Collette and the time I spent with the grade for the media-making activities, and Grade 12 because they were the students that I most wanted to speak with, given their tenure (whether it was their fourth or thirteenth year at the school, they would have the greatest longitudinal perspective as they prepared to graduate). The seniors were sophomores when I began informal observations and pilot study research at Clyde, so I was a familiar face, which I hoped would help to facilitate my recruitment of participants. I worked with the Grade 12 dean, whom I had gotten to know (and who had become familiar with my research) over the course of my three years at Clyde, to find time to speak with the seniors. She arranged for me to have 15 minutes with the grade on November 17, 2016. I provided an overview of my background and the study and shared how I thought they were essential to this work given their experiences and perspectives as they begin reflecting on their four (or more) years at the school. I also prefaced my invitation to participate with a disclaimer that I knew college applications were due in the following weeks, followed by mid-terms in January, and so I just wanted to introduce myself and get a sense of initial interest, explaining that I would not reach out to them about scheduling an interview until early February. At the end of our time together, I put a piece of paper and pen on the table at the front of the classroom and waited. Ultimately, 19 students provided their names and email addresses for future contact. As promised, I reached out to those who expressed interest in late February with the following email:

> Dear _____,
>
> I hope your spring semester is off to a great start! I came to speak to your class in November, describing my dissertation research at Clyde and explaining that I'm interviewing seniors (along with sophomores, school leaders, and alum) to get their perspectives on life at Clyde, specifically about what it means to be a "girl" and a "student" at the school.
>
> I'm writing today because you expressed interest in participating in an interview for my research. So, thank you! I want to confirm that you are indeed still interested in participating and see what your schedule is like in the next month or so.
>
> The interviews will either be individual or with a small group (3-5 students), depending on availability, and should last for about an hour (or a class period, depending on when we meet). My schedule is flexible and I could meet before or after school, during a free period, lunch, whatever works best.
>
> Please confirm that you're interested in interviewing and I'll then send a form for you to fill out your availability along with consent forms for you and your parent(s)/guardian(s) to sign.
>
> As always, please let me know if you have any questions! Looking forward to speaking with you! (Email communication, 2/23/17)

Out of 19 seniors, I ultimately conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 students: Caroline, Annie, Maria, Kate, Lucy, Megan, Lauren, Lydia, Rachel, and Simone. Despite multiple communication attempts, I never got responses from 6 students and was unable to interview the remaining 3 due to a series of scheduling conflicts throughout the spring semester.

Recruitment efforts for Grade 10 participants happened electronically in early March. Following an in-class announcement by Dr. Collette, in which she reminded students about the media-making activities I had engaged in with them and notified them that I would be following up with an email inviting them to have a further conversation about the activities and more generally their experiences at Clyde, I put a Google Form together inquiring about their interest in participating and their availability. Out of 45 students, I heard back from 8 and ultimately interviewed 5—Raine, Karl, Olivia, Lila,

and Jenny—3 students had multiple scheduling conflicts, and we were unable to find a time to meet.[4] These interviews were also semi-structured, but the protocol had an additional section of questions about the media-making activities (Appendix D).

The two juniors that I interviewed, Naomi and Maya, were the students I had known the longest from my three years of on-and-off research at the school. I met both of them through somewhat regular attendance of the diversity club meetings during the 2014-2015 school year (at the time of the interviews, one of them was the co-head of the club, the other a very active member). Based on my relationships with them and their involvement in social justice work at Clyde, I thought they would both offer something valuable to the project. Ultimately, I did not interview any 9th grade students. Had there been more time for fostering relationships and recruiting participants, I would have liked to include them but was unable to for this project.

For the school leader interviews, I used a purposive sampling method, where: "particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions and goals, and that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 97). Specifically, I interviewed the Head of School, the Head of the Upper School (Grades 9-12), the Director of Communications, the Director of Admissions, and the Director of Connections (a new school-wide leadership and empowerment programming initiative). These interviews were semi-structured to allow for the conversations to go in potentially unanticipated directions (see Appendix E for school leader interview protocol), as the purpose was not only to learn more about how these individuals understand and discuss issues related to girls and

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[4]In retrospect, I realize that there was significant lag time between my participant observations and interactions (November 2016) and my recruitment efforts for interviews (March 2017). I now recognize that I could have done more in the months in between to keep up communication and face time with the sophomores and perhaps would have gotten more responses for interviews.

girlhood, but also the role that their offices or positions play in crafting narratives about girls and the student experience at Clyde for both internal and external audiences.

I rarely jotted down notes during interviews. If I did, it was mainly to annotate or modify a question on the interview protocol, for instance, if it felt like a question was not flowing or being received well or if the students brought up a topic that I did not already have a question about but wanted to remember to ask future participants, I would make a note. For me, it was important to be present in the one-on-one conversations, to consciously connect with the participants, as I would only be doing one interview with each person. It was important for me to connect with them, for them to (hopefully) feel like I was actively listening to what they had to say. Reflecting on this decision in my research journal, I wrote:

> I think this was rooted in the feedback that I got following the two pre-dissertation focus groups that I ran in spring 2016 where, at the end of one of the focus group, more than one student offered that they really appreciated the fact that they were finally being asked how and what they thought about things happening at Clyde, and that they in turn didn't realize how much they had to say about everything. That alone was validation and a reminder that one of the most crucial aspects and purposes of this dissertation project is/was to have students feel like they had a voice and on my end, that meant being fully attentive and listening during interviews, not writing notes. (Research journal, 5/14/17)

Participant Observation

Throughout my six-month study, I employed participant observation methods in classrooms, hallways, the Upper School Commons on the 3rd floor (described in detail in Chapter IV), the student center (dining hall), and the lobby. From November 2016 through April 2017, I spent anywhere from 1 to 6 hours on an almost weekly basis at Clyde as a participant observer talking with teachers and students, hanging out in social spaces like the student center and Commons, and meeting with participants. I would on occasion take photographs to document student artwork, or a poster in the stairwell that

caught my attention. Photographs were taken on my iPhone 7 and were later analyzed as part of my field notes.

Additionally, as the new adjacent school building opened in the fall of 2017, Clyde commenced a strategic planning process intended to chart out the school's path for the next few years (leading up to a significant anniversary of the school's founding). As part of the effort, the school formed a Research and Action Committee that held focus group meetings with members of the school community throughout the fall. These groups included parents of lower school, middle school, and high school students, and alumnae. I observed one session with alumnae, which helped to contribute to my understanding of the sociocultural ecological system at work within Clyde.

Altogether, I spent three years doing research and building rapport at the Clyde School: during the first year, I conducted my pilot study; in year two, as I designed my dissertation study, I sat in on classes, attended after-school club meetings, and strengthened relationships with faculty and students; and year three was spent collecting data for this project. In this time, I established a solid rapport with various constituents across all divisions of the school community, including school leaders, faculty, staff, and students. For instance, in April 2017, I went on a tour of the school with a student tour guide in an attempt to see the school through yet another lens. Although I was intimately familiar with much of the building, I had not seen the new spaces that came with the renovation (i.e., the black box theater, the greenhouse, the new lower school library, etc.), nor had I spent time on all of the floors during my data collection. I was also curious about the ways in which a tour guide, volunteering their time on behalf of the admissions office, had been trained and also adapted their own script for how to show and tell about the school.

> About five minutes into the tour, I had already seen multiple people that I knew, a teacher and a few students, who waved and said hello. This happened a few more times before we'd even gotten through the first floor of the tour, so I requested an "abridged" version of a tour to my guide: "Pretend

> I've never been here, but know everyone," I said half-jokingly; she also laughed and totally obliged. Doing the tour was actually a pretty amazing experience—I realized going through the school, not only seeing teachers and administrators who knew me, but more importantly students. When I saw Lila (an interview participant) in the new fitness room, she was like, "Hey! Can I email you later? I have a question for you." Another student, getting ready to use a new TRX machine, gave me a huge wave and smile from across the room. It was just a reminder that I have made some solid connections with a number of students. The girls who have interviewed with me now give me big hellos when I see them in the hallways or in the student center; some come over to chat, and I'm also comfortable going over to them. (Field notes, 4/8/17)

I include this field note here because the tour was a testament to the time I had spent at my research site not only since November, but for the past three years. Doing qualitative research that requires you to become familiar with and a part of a site's culture, population, and physical spaces can be intimidating and difficult to know if and when you have "succeeded." The feeling that I had while walking through the school building is hard to describe, but it reminded me of the time and work I had put in over the course of three years to build relationships and trust with various factions of the school community. That said, as a researcher close to their research site, I also had to actively and frequently reflect on my simultaneous roles as participant and observer in my field notes, knowing that researcher reflexivity was an important ethical stance to take up and maintain throughout the duration of my study.

Document Review and Analysis

I also reviewed and analyzed recent school publications, such as the last few issues of Clyde's biannual magazine and the student newspaper, as well as current documents from the communications office and the admissions office, to explore if, how, when, and where girls and students are described and school culture is discussed. Analyzing the documents was not only about tracing patterns linearly over time, but about critically examining the language, images, messages, and assumptions found across the various "genres" of documents. Tracing storylines of girls and girlhood through these documents

provided a different mode and perspective through which to think about representations, constructions, and perceptions of the school community and culture; about Clyde's institutional identity—how the school and its community collectively remember and construct their story (Linde, 2009).

Methods of Data Analysis

Critical Analysis of Discourse

The primary method of data analysis for this study was a critical analysis of discourse (CAD). Ideas and practices related to discourse range from simple conceptions of communication to more challenging and nuanced understandings of what it means to be human. Discourses, as conceptualized by Michel Foucault (1970, 1980, in Janks, 2010), refer to ways of being and acting that convey certain "regimes of truth." Sociolinguist James Paul Gee (1990, 2005) differentiates between "little-d" discourse, referring to more traditional meanings of written or spoken communication, and "big-D" Discourse, which functions through a combination of language, practice, and making sense of ways of being in the world. Big-D Discourse allows us to consider how language operates within social, symbolic, and material contexts; how people take on and enact recognizable or "appropriate" identities in particular situations. Positioning Discourse as a "club with tacit rules and conventions" (Gee, 1990) about behavior, gesture, interaction, and understanding that determine membership—who is in or out based on if and how individuals successfully take up recognizable and valued identities in a given community—discursive practices, then, provide an active stance, an operational lens to explore the Discourses at work within a particular context.

Discursive practices are the "spoken and unspoken rules and conventions that govern how individuals learn to think, act and speak" in the social positions they occupy in their lives (Alvermann et al., 1997, p. 74), such as student, girl, athlete, New Yorker,

etc. As Gee (2005) describes, they "crucially involve ways of acting-interacting-feeling-emoting-valuing-gesturing-posturing-dressing-thinking-believing-knowing-speaking-listening" that signify specific and recognizable social identities (p. 33). Discursive practices provide an active stance through which to explore Discourses, allowing us to consider how the knowledge, rules, and meanings of a particular situation or context are instilled within us. The meanings, Linde (2009) contends, associated with the identity of an individual or a group in the context of an institution are important, as they shape how members act, how they think they should act, how they determine who belongs, and how they find their own place as part of the organization.

> Within social languages, words do not have general meanings…. Rather, they have meanings that are specific and situated in the actual contexts of their use. Context refers to an ever-widening set of factors that accompany language in use: the material setting, the people present (and what they know and believe), the language that comes before and after a given utterance, the social relationships of the people involved, and their ethnic, gendered, and sexual identities, as well as cultural, historical, and institutional factors. (Gee, 2001, p. 10)

Rooted in Foucault's work on language and power, the methodology of critical discourse analysis (CDA) examines patterns of language use with a degree of detail and explicitness, but in ways that "reconnect instances of local discourse with salient political, economic, and cultural formation" (McCall, 2014b, p. 11). McCall (2014b) emphasizes "the centrality of discursive practices in relation to larger social structures" to demonstrate how a gendered social order is maintained at both of her field sites (p. 118). For my initial exploratory research study during the 2014-2015 academic year and continuing into this dissertation project, this meant trying to understand the concept and archetype of a Clyde Girl as what McCall (2014b) calls a "stable signifier" within a particular discourse community. While she uses CDA as an analytical foundation, she ultimately breaks away from the traditional form and instead describes her method as more of a critical analysis of discourse. She explains:

> I read the data critically to examine patterns, breaks with patterns, and contradictions in patterns with an emphasis on texts and discourses related to the construction of gender categories and ideas about knowledge…. I analyzed my data for assumptions and ideologies of gender, and paid specific attention to the production of gender codes, which have a constitutive potential for creating fictions and fantasies about normative and gendered behaviors of "success" and "risk." (p. 119)

For McCall, CAD serves as a productive approach in helping her to identify storylines (Søndergaard, 2002), "a condensed version of a naturalized and conventional cultural narrative, one that is often used as the explanatory framework of one's own and other's practices and sequences of action" (McCall, 2014b, p. 191). Storylines function as lenses through which to consider how an idea is constructed and subsequently how it conveys how to be and what to do in a given setting or circumstance.

Ultimately, my interests revolved around the discourses—the language, beliefs, values, practices—that collectively work to construct ideas and promote expectations of girls and girlhood at the Clyde School. In my exploratory study, I determined that empowerment, belonging, happiness, success, and privilege are the predominant discourses that circulate throughout the school. In this dissertation study, I build upon my initial findings and consider how these discursive strands work to weave greater narratives of an all-girls school as a particular constructed place and particular constructed experience. Continuing the use of a critical analysis of discourse, I analyzed the ways in which participants, namely, students, talk about and make sense of themselves, their experiences as students and girls, and their school surroundings through semi-structured interviews and through a set of media artifacts created by 10th grade students. For my interviews with school leaders, CAD helped me to trace storylines of institutional identity and discourses of girls, girlhood, and the student experience from the adult perspective.

Artifact Analysis of Multimodal Texts

I used artifact analysis to examine students' identity collages and participatory social maps. I initially looked to Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) conception of narrative inquiry as a guide for analyzing the media texts, or artifacts, that students created. Their framework, however, is limited in that it does not consider or offer suggestions about using original multimodal artifacts created by participants themselves as field texts. The authors legitimate family stories, photographs, memory boxes, and other "personal-family-social artifacts" as important data, but narrowly focus on existing texts—items that have gathered histories, memories, and significance over time. I wondered about the possibilities and affordances of original texts created by participants during the research process—what insights might "new" artifacts provide about a particular place and space at this particular moment in time?

Subsequently, I analyzed students' artifacts from a more holistic perspective—one that accounted for the texts, the space in which the texts were constructed, and the process of creating them. Applying a multimodal framing to my analysis of the students' artifacts enabled me to consider the texts within context, as "artistic endeavors themselves are spaces in which to cultivate the self, to establish relationships with others, and to experience various forms of belonging" (Vasudevan & DeJaynes, 2013, p. 4). In this case, the experience of making, the discursive practices that informed and emerged throughout the composition process, and the interpretations and negotiations of the spaces and places of belonging all proved to be as important as the artifacts themselves.

Coding for Themes

In case study research, thematic analysis is "not for purposes of generalizing beyond the case but rather for rich description of the case in order to understand the complexity thereof" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 31). I engaged the data in two rounds of coding. For the initial round of coding, I used Nvivo software and took a blended approach of grounded and theoretical coding for the interviews, looking for recurring

themes, patterns, and issues that were aligned with my research questions and conceptual framework. As a novice Nvivo user, learning how to use the computer program while also trying to code 22 interviews proved to be both time-consuming and rewarding. After spending most of the summer with my data in Nvivo (see Figure 1 for examples of initial codes), I was overwhelmed with the number of codes I had generated and unsure of what exactly was emerging from my data. As Robert Yin (2009) reminds us, "the software will not do the finished analysis on its own, but it may serve as an able assistant and reliable tool … you must still be prepared to be the main analyst and to direct the tools; they are the assistant, not you" (pp. 134-135).

Figure 1. Initial Nvivo etic codes

Throughout the initial round of coding, however, I kept a running document in my research journal (I used the electronic writing software, Scrivener) that tracked my thoughts and rationales for certain codes as well as how I was differentiating between codes. For instance,

> I'm understanding the code "institutional identity" as referring to what the school/culture is like facing outward, related to reputation and external perceptions; whereas "school culture" describes a more inward-facing perspective, how what goes on within the environment and building of the school affects its members internally. (Data analysis memo, 6/20/17)

I also used the document to keep track of any patterns that I was seeing emerge across interviews, such as this observation between two school leader interviews:

> Both Marc Bennett and Julia Hill talk about the "injustices" and inequalities that still exist for girls/females in the real world as part of why all-girls schools are still relevant/important. I coded this as "school discourse" in Julia's interview; maybe go back and code it as this in Marc's interview as well? (Data analysis memo, 7/1/17)

Keeping a mindful account of how I was playing with and understanding my data was immensely helpful when transitioning from the first to the second round of coding, which I conducted by hand. I printed out my 22 interview transcripts and used colored highlighters and corresponding Post-it page marker stickies to index the codes for quick and easy reference. The second round of coding was also theoretical and grounded, but I applied a more zoomed out analytical lens, drawing from my conceptual framework, specifically around tracing storylines through discursive practices—identifying both master narratives of the school's institutional identity and the counter-narratives, or counter-stories, of individual members of the community that offered striations or fundamentally disrupted and challenged the status quo. Below is a detailed explanation of my codes.

"Dominant narrative," coded in green, identified ideal and normative constructions of girls, girlhood, and the student experience, along with ideal aspects/components of Clyde as an institution: traditions, mission statement, the storylines that work to construct the image/persona of the school that is communicated to the outside world and that is also described/referred to within the school building as a way of unifying, building up, rallying, and creating community. "Aligned perspectives," coded in yellow, identified the perspectives, experiences, and opinions of participants that closely or directly aligned with or fit into the dominant narrative; participants who have benefitted from or feel included within the dominant narrative; and/or participants who celebrate components of the dominant narrative. "Inconsistent perspectives," coded in pink, identified the

perspectives, experiences, and opinions that support or fit aspects of the dominant narrative but question or challenge those aspects or offer a more critical read of the situation, issue, reality, practice, etc. The purpose was not to identify inconsistencies within individual participants but rather to illustrate the complicated nature of the dominant narrative(s). "Disruptive perspectives," coded in blue, identified the perspectives, experiences, and opinions that deeply challenged, rejected, or opposed the dominant narrative; that offered other possibilities on how the dominant narratives should be reconsidered or rewritten. As discussed in my research design, these counter-stories are not meant to stand in direct opposition to the master or dominant narratives, but to expose some of the more substantial schisms between the dominant narratives and students' lived realities and experiences. The final code, "Policies, Programs, and Positions," coded in orange, identified the official policies, programs, and positions that the school has institutionalized, but that did not fit in the "dominant narrative" code; they felt more external and perhaps more tangible than the implicit aspects of the dominant narratives.

Each round of coding afforded invaluable insights into my data. The first and more detailed round helped me identify the significant themes that would become the various sections and subsections of my data chapters, whereas the second and more basic round of coding provided me with a way to structure and present my data in the form of two chapters.

Trustworthiness and Limitations of the Study

Wendy Luttrell (2000) notes, "Many things influence how a researcher shapes her or his social art form—one's research questions, study design, and theoretical-explanatory approaches, coupled with one's particular temperament, personality, and intended audience" (p. 517)—all play a role in how one's research develops and the form

it ultimately takes. In her work, Proweller (1998) discloses that she comes from a professional middle-class family and is a product of public elementary and high schools, subsequently identifying as a researcher *studying up*: "investigating those from family backgrounds with materially more power than myself" (p. 221). The benefit of being an "outsider," she explains, is that you have access to the inside and the ability to process what you see, hear, and do from a wider contextual vantage point. Those who possess "insider" status benefit from high levels of access to and familiarity with a particular community, context, and setting, making it easier to "decode structures that frame cultural production" within a particular institution (p. 221). As mentioned, I consider myself to be an "insider-outsider." My relationship to this particular school system and familiarity with the school and social culture of the Upper East Side provided me a rare level of access throughout this experience. Having attended one of the six elite all-girls schools on the Upper East Side, and graduating approximately 15 years ago, I was in an interesting position at the time of the research project. Given my personal experiences as a former student at one of these schools, my insider-outsider status and stance, required me to recognize first and foremost that my responsibilities as a researcher were to be even more critical, aware, and transparent with the reflexive aspects of this work—in my role as researcher as well as my interpretations, assumptions, and subjectivities.

In her dissertation, McCall (2014b) insists that she critique her study just as she critiques the content of her data—as a social and political project, one in which the researcher decides "which knowledge gets selected, organized, presented, transmitted and evaluated" (p. 125). Throughout the research process, particularly during the analysis and interpretation phases of my study, I recorded memos with insights, questions, and speculations about the data and research process, using the space to also be reflexive about how my biases as a former all-girls school student might be affecting my synthesis of the information I was gathering. It would be unproductive to claim objectivity in this work; rather, my aim was to manage and funnel my subjectivities into an authentic

insider-outsider account of the institutional, cultural, and discursive practices informing girls and girlhood within a particular community.

In considering validity threat—a way I might be wrong (Maxwell, 2013)—using multiple methods to collect data helps a researcher to corroborate the evidence and subsequent conclusions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). As I intended for this study to be participatory in nature, member checks—which "ensure that the researcher's own biases do not influence how participants' perspectives are portrayed, and to determine the accuracy of the findings" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 113)—played a role in the collection and analysis of data.

In a commitment to engaging in critical and socioculturally responsive research practices, I think it is crucial to note that pieces of the research design and data collection emerged and evolved as the study progressed with input from participants and adaptations to the research site and context. For instance, girls in Grade 10 were invited to engage in early stages of data analysis regarding the social mapping and identity collages, and all participants were invited to engage in member checks of their interview transcripts, although not all responded to my queries sent via Google Doc comments. The feedback and interpretations I did receive from participants provided interesting and invaluable insights that further helped to guide my understandings of the culture and context of my research site. At the same time, there are always potential limitations in choosing to conduct a study in a school, as it requires flexibility on the part of the researcher and the ensuing research project. A school—as an institution, a culture, a community—is a living organism that is both constantly constructing and adapting to its environment. Schedules can change, new opportunities or access points for data collection can arise, just as tangential class discussions can derail lesson plans but result in important conversations about life. This was a particularly salient point given that a significant focus of this study was on the ecological dynamics of the Clyde School.

I am reminded of Luttrell's (2000) notion of "good enough" methods, where researchers view their fieldwork as a set of "ongoing realizations that lead to complex choices and decision making" (p. 500). She argues that a good enough researcher is aware that she "has personal stakes and investments in research relationships … does not shy away from frustrations, anxieties, and disappointments that are part of any relationship; [and] … accept[s] rather than defend[s] against healthy tensions in field work" (p. 515). Taking cues from those questioning traditional notions of scholarship (e.g., Dyson & Genishi, 2005; Luttrell, 2000; Vasudevan, 2011), I am increasingly appreciative of the imperfections and messiness of qualitative research, and the inevitability of limitations, which I view as necessary evolution and emergence. You have to allow the research to breathe.

Because this research project is a single case study and not a comprehensive exploration across multiple sites, my intention is not to represent or make broad claims about the experiences, perspectives, and identities of the girls at the six elite private all-girls schools in New York City. The goal of case study research is not generalizability, but rather transferability: "how (if at all) and in what ways understanding and knowledge can be applied in similar contexts and settings" (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012, p. 31). I did consider doing either a multi-site case study: treating the six elite all-girls schools as a subculture of schools within the larger Manhattan private school landscape; or a multiple case study: collecting data at a few of the girls' schools as a form of triangulation. Conducting a single case study, however, allowed me to spend more time in a particular culture and community, develop deeper relationships with members of that community, and ultimately offer findings and recommendations that are specific to a population and institution.

Additionally, I hope this work continues to grow past this dissertation study. If able, I would at some point, like to conduct similar case studies at the neighboring all-girls schools to further refine my instruments for data collection and use the findings

from Clyde as a baseline for comparison. This would allow me to continue to strengthen and evolve my instruments and theories over time, layering findings from other institutions atop this initial study, and thickening understandings of constructions of girls and girlhood at Manhattan's elite all-girls schools. The prospect of continuing to build out this project has been and continues to be a strong motivating factor of this research. I do not take that for granted.

Presentation of the Study

The findings of this case study are presented in the next two chapters. Chapter IV introduces a set of dominant narratives that establish the ways in which girls and girlhood are constructed through place, discursive practices, and language at an institutional level and serve as components of Clyde's institutional identity. In Chapter V, three counter-narratives are presented—some respond to the dominant narratives in Chapter IV, while others offer different and important perspectives that take us in new directions. You will notice that I often include large excerpts from interviews, sometimes in succession from multiple participants. There are two reasons for this: the first is to establish expectations early that these data chapters are meant to center the voices of participants. I try to serve as a conduit through which to communicate their stories and opinions, and I do not aim to speak for the participants. The second is to present data in a way that the fullness of participants' ideas and perspectives exist as primary texts; that they are not inferior to my analysis, but rather exist alongside the analysis. The interpretations and discussions I have around the excerpts therefore assume that the reader has thoroughly read the them. Because some excerpts are long, in most cases, if there is a key sentence or two that I really want to emphasize within an excerpt (but felt that the entire paragraph was necessary for context and nuance), I will present it in a bold font. To denote distinctions between the type of texts gathered and analyzed (interview transcripts, student artifacts,

and school publications), all official school materials that are quoted are presented in italics. Additionally, while my study took place during the 2016-2017 school year, there are some situations and phenomena that, to the best of my knowledge, continue today. Throughout my analysis, there are places where I indicate trends and patterns that remain a part of Clyde's traditions and practices in the present, and therefore I discuss them in present tense, but write about the majority of my findings in the past tense.

Following the two chapters of data findings, a final chapter presents my conclusions and a discussion of possible implications for practice, theory, and future research directions.

Chapter IV

CONSTRUCTING GIRLHOOD: THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE(S) OF THE CLYDE SCHOOL

We came to school just yesterday not knowing what we'd find
An open door, an open book, a voice, a heart, a mind
We learned to answer and to ask, to seek the joy in every task
For Clyde we sing this song with minds and hearts and voices strong.

Today, when teachers cherish who we are and what we dream
When friends know secrets, fears, and hopes, and everything between
When what we love is what we share within these walls and everywhere
It's Clyde where we belong with minds and hearts and voices strong.

Tomorrow, when we're older, we will look back and recall
The little steps, the longer strides, the laughter in the hall
The big blue doors that held the key to who we were and who we'd be
For Clyde will last as long as voices, minds, and hearts are strong.

- Clyde School Song (1977)

Introduction: The Work of an Institutional Identity

Borrowing from Charlotte Linde's (2009) notion of institutional identity—the context of an institution's history, traditions, and discursive practices constructed in the past and how they inform a collective of individuals in the present—I set out to understand the discursive and cultural practices that work to inform and construct notions of "girlhood" at the Clyde School on a daily basis. In the process and context of my research, I have come to conceptualize institutional identity as the ways in which a school

thinks of and presents itself to those within the institution while also constantly considering the institution's status and reputation—how it communicates with and is read by those on the outside. The Clyde School song, which opens this chapter, illustrates the argument that Linde makes about how an institution remembers and perpetuates its identity, often through artifacts.

In this chapter, I address my first research question: *How are girls and experiences of girlhood institutionally constructed within an elite, private, independent all-girls high school in New York City?* And more specifically, *how is the school's sociocultural ecology [culture and community] informed by, and how does it inform, constructions and representations of an ideal student?* Within Linde's framework, I understand the school leaders—representing various factions of the school—as some of the individuals who possess "storytelling rights" to speak for the institution. This group provides "paradigmatic narratives" about Clyde—which, as Linde (2009) argues, present the institution's model of "ordinary success." She explains, "These are stories not of heroic and unusual accomplishment but of the success that can be accomplished with ordinary aptitudes and perseverance" (p. 141). Yet, as I will discuss in Chapter V, many students interpreted and internalized Clyde's institutional stories as, in fact, placing great value on *significant* accomplishments and *extra*-ordinary aptitudes and drive, but they have been normalized to seem unusual and ordinary. Linde's explanation speaks to the model of success and expectations, as well as the messaging that creates and sustains a particular branding of a school and therefore particular expectations for its members.

As aforementioned, this project was anchored in a commitment to emancipatory research practices (see Mohanty, 2003), intended to liberate and amplify historically marginalized voices (in this case, the voices of young people) and disrupt traditional methodologies that position findings in a top-down, hierarchical fashion (i.e., centering those in authority). At the same time, I intentionally begin with the stories and perspectives that belong primarily to the school leaders—the grownups—with the

storytelling rights to frame the institution as a protagonist (and at times an antagonist). This chapter seeks to provide a composite of the master narratives of the Clyde School; offering strands of dominant storylines that construct particular images and messages about the school and its culture, community, and commitments. Granted, the students are, by far, the most important characters and storytellers in this case study, but it is also crucial to situate their stories and experiences within the larger ecology—and dominant narratives—of the school. Lastly, it is important to acknowledge that I, too, carry some storytelling rights as an alumna of one of the all-girls schools in this Upper East Side consortium. While realities, practices, and behaviors within any organization or institution evolve day to day, there is also a universality of one's membership in these schools. While I hold pieces of stories and knowledge from a certain time, there are implicit understandings that get woven into one's sense of self, which get woven into broader experiences of adolescence, and therefore enable connections and insights about school culture and community that were true when I was a student and remain true today. In conducting research in a familiar institutional setting, I "worked the past" (Linde, 2009) alongside my participants, pulling from a wealth of shared knowledge to understand how the present relates to the past and might inform the future.

It is also necessary to restate the rationale for my use of "girl" and "girlhood," most notably in the titles of Chapters IV, V and VI (*Constructing Girlhood*; *Performing and Troubling Girlhood*; and *(Re)imagining Girlhood*), despite the fact that notions of girls and girlhood were repeatedly challenged and disrupted throughout this study. The decision to use the phrase and concept is both intentional and political, as it is what I set out to explore and, in truth, expected to dismantle. Yet, over the course of data collection, it began to emerge that this study was just as much, if not more, about what it means to be a student at the Clyde School and a member of its particular community and culture. It became clear early on in the research process that gender constructions and gender identities are important to this group of young people, but restricting the conversation to

what it means to "be a girl" does not encompass the depth and breadth of their perspectives and experiences. I therefore try to use "student" or "participant" in my synthesis and discussion throughout Chapters IV, V, and VI to balance the use of "girl" and "girls" in interview excerpts.

As I am concerned with the discursive practices that are named and used in the construction of girls and girlhood within the school spaces of Clyde, I present three dominant narratives about the school concerning prominent aspects of the setting, practices, and rules and beliefs communicated through the institution and taken up by its members. I lean heavily on text from school publications, along with excerpts from school leaders and some students, to first introduce the statements and perspectives that establish or contribute to the school's institutional identity, its set of master storylines. The first dominant narrative is about the places and spaces that girls occupy and in which experiences of girlhood occur at Clyde; the second narrative is about the expectations set for girls; and the third narrative is about how the school communicates its institutional identity to a wider audience, how the school makes their commitments to girls known.

Dominant Narrative 1: Manifestations of Membership and Belonging

> From the moment a girl walks through the [front] doors, she enters a community that honors her curiosity, empowers her to speak her mind, and challenges her to expand her horizons. (Every Girl campaign mailing, 2016)

To restate, I borrow from Pahl and Rowsell's (2011) argument for studying the social and cultural aspects of an ecology—how people make meaning in familiar landscapes—to begin to examine how girls and girlhood are constructed at Clyde. A sociocultural ecology refers to the beliefs, customs, practices, and behaviors of a particular population that operate in a system through a series of intersecting technical, social, cultural, and place-based characteristics. Essentially, it supplies me with a way of examining Clyde's school climate: the tangible and intangible aspects that inform an

institution's identity, community, and culture. The following set of excerpts provide a range of examples that illustrate how students *feel* at Clyde—the social, cultural, and place-based characteristics they associate with the school environment.

> **The Clyde-iest thing about Clyde** is that there is **such a strong sense of community, kindness, and togetherness between these girls** […] they really care about each other. There's so little mean girl-ing stuff happening it's shocking to me…. Some of that, I imagine, is due to small class size … That's kind of the Clyde thing: **even if somebody isn't your bestie, you're still building relationships that are grounded on mutual respect and on kindness**. And I do think that is special. (Dr. Collette, Interview, 12/15/16)

> I know it's kind of cliché, but **Clyde is a friendly school**. When I first [got here], everyone was really nice to me and **I could just come up and sit with anyone at lunch and I wouldn't be like, judged** for it as in other schools … everyone's just really open to meeting new people, making new friends … I think that's a really nice part of the Clyde culture. (Olivia, Interview, 3/8/17)

Although Clyde was not initially on Lila's radar when she was applying to high schools, she "immediately fell in love" when she arrived for an interview and tour of the school. Lila explained how she had since taken advantage of the affordances of a welcoming student body and small-school feel:

> Um, the community is amazing. I [have] had a … kind of resolution since starting at Clyde that I would make friends from older grades and younger grades, which is really cool and amazing because now I see anybody in this building and I hopefully know most of their names kind-of-thing.… **That's how the community works for me. Like, if I'm involved with them, if I know them, then it makes it all the better**. (Interview, 3/8/17)

Lauren had a similar experience when she came to Clyde for her accepted students visit: "Clyde just had like, the nicest students. I like, enjoyed being with them and also the community was just really nice. I just really liked the environment here" (Interview, 3/6/17). And Lydia, a senior, noted a specialness amongst the student body in terms of providing support for one another: "It's incredible to see what classmates do, even if you aren't friends with them, to see the amazing things they can do" (Interview, 3/8/17). The

recognition and support that students provided one another was unique, as Dr. Collette observed, and was felt whether it was during a student's presentation at a school assembly or when a group of girls excitedly crowded around someone's art project on display on the second floor. This support also seemed to stem from various opportunities and experiences students had access to as well as the construction of an environment that encouraged students to experiment, dabble, and explore. Mr. Bennett, the head of school, explained:

> I think that the size of our school distinguishes us within our peer group … our program, in terms of what we offer, is similar to our peer schools, but the number of girls we have is smaller so that means that girls always have to be trying new aspects of who they are in order for us to have a volleyball team and a fall play and advanced level courses. Girls have to be playing multiple roles. So all of that distinguishes us. And … **the culture of the school indicates that you can have both high expectations and a sense of joy. And that those two things don't need to be in competition. And I don't think that that's the case at many schools**. So that is my biased opinion. (Mr. Bennett, Interview, 1/24/17)

Karl, for example, had recently garnered a lot of attention and excitement from both the faculty and student body over her extracurricular project. In the summer before her sophomore year, Karl became interested in Claymation. Her mother bought her the necessary equipment and, using YouTube video tutorials, Karl taught herself how to create stop-motion videos using characters made of clay. She now has a six-part "stop-motion animated musical" on YouTube voiced by herself and her group of friends with thousands and thousands of views. In many ways, Karl attributed the project to how positive and supportive her overall experience at Clyde had been:

> I *love* it!… Clyde has offered me so many opportunities and I know it sounds cliché, but it's so true!… My advisor shares this interest in musical theater and it's just been great to have her … and I now have this group of friends who are super nice … and they voice most of the characters [in my video series] … it's so nice to have such a dedicated group of friends. (Interview, 3/13/17)

Some students talked about how Clyde embodies a welcome-ness that is felt both in and out of the classroom:

> …I've gotten a great education, which is such a privilege, so I'm really happy I was able to go here and I feel like they've really prepared me for college.… I feel like it's a very nice place and I think that while we … a lot of us voice our concerns, generally, like, it's a really nice place to be. **I feel very safe here**. (Kate, Interview, 3/15/17)

> Clyde's really great at bringing in the idea like, **you can have fun in your classes, you can be relaxed in class, and you can still get through everything**.… I think the culture is very fun. Like fun-loving and fun-acknowledging, while also making sure that you're getting all your work done…. (Maria, Interview, 3/6/17)

> I've become very normalized with Clyde. Um, it's kind of just like second nature to me, like I wake up every morning, I go to school, I just like have a normal school day … obviously I love Clyde. **I like, consider this place one of my homes, like I'm so comfortable here**…. I do think that I've been able to really like become a strong academic student here … it's really helped me … to articulate my ideas, like think more clearly, and just succeed in life overall. (Jenny, Interview, 3/15/17)

As evidenced in the excerpts above, these feelings at, of, and about the school provide insights into how Clyde's sociocultural ecology operates as a fundamental component of its institutional identity, fostering sentiments of membership, belonging and support. As an ecology deals with organisms as they relate to one another and to their physical surroundings, in the following section, I discuss the layout and features of the school to illustrate the physical manifestations of membership and belonging and consider how they contribute to the construction of girlhood at Clyde.

The School Setting

> [S]tudents at the Clyde School are encouraged to be joyful learners, creative thinkers, and courageous leaders. From the hallways to the classrooms, the labs to the studios, and the stage to the fields, Clyde is alive with girls eager to discover their passions. Through transformative educational experiences and authentic relationships with faculty, we seek to reveal and develop each girl's potential to live a life of purpose and meaning. (Annual Giving mailing, September 2017)

Noting the affordances of various school spaces are a hallmark feature of how Clyde celebrates and shares its identity with current and prospective members of the community. As demonstrated in the last section, both student and school leader participants talked about a feeling they got in the building and as a part of the community, one that made them feel welcome, safe, and accepted; that they belonged. As opposed to a sprawling school campus that one might find at a boarding school or a public school in a suburban area, schools in Manhattan tend to be bound by sidewalk grids and cluttered real estate. As a result, much of Clyde's institutional identity is rooted in its single schoolhouse model, which places great value on the school being contained to one (albeit large) building. The school is comprised of seven floors in addition to a lower lobby at the basement level, as well as a recent expansion into a four-story townhouse next door.

To get to the front desk and lobby of the school building, you must first walk through two sets of double doors: the first set, finished in a deep cerulean, is a signature feature of the building. Every morning at 8:00 a.m., Mr. Bennett, the head of school, stands in front of one of the blue doors, propped open, to greet and shake the hand of each student, guardian, and staff member entering the building, acknowledging most individuals by their names. The morning greeting from the Head of School is a longstanding tradition. This act of fostering a sense of community is "spearheaded by routine rituals that punctuate daily life, reminding students of the specific educational project driving private school instruction" (Proweller, 1998, p. 24). Through the blue doors, you enter a brightly lit vestibule. One wall is lined with a series of engraved plaques depicting the names of girls who have served as president of student council, and those who have received the various distinguished school awards given to exemplary students in academics, service, and leadership.

Across the way stands a second set of doors, embedded in a glass wall that looks into the school lobby. The wall and doors are a relatively new feature, installed a few

years ago when the school decided to increase safety and security measures. These double doors are always locked—you have to be buzzed in by the receptionist or security guard at the front desk—except during morning arrival. The receptionist has been at the school for more than 20 years. She, too, seems to know every student (and most parents and guardians) by name. Students check into and out of the school building using magnetized ID cards that they press to a sensor on the front desk. Many of the younger students keep their IDs in the outside pocket of their bulging book bags and have perfected the art of swinging their bags around their bodies and onto the sensor in one swift motion, barely waiting for the confirmation beep, before they replace the bags on their backs and prepare to climb the stairs up to the lower school on the fourth floor. Older students can leave the school building throughout the day during lunch and free periods, so most of them carry their IDs in their wallets or phone cases, often leaving their backpacks and shoulder bags by their lockers on the third floor. The students seem largely unfazed that checking in and out is in fact a security measure; it is simply a part of their daily routine. Behind the front desk is a large television screen mounted high on the wall that displays a rotating slideshow of the day's schedule along with upcoming events like parent breakfasts, outside speakers, and student performances; sprinkled throughout the rotation are photographs depicting daily life at Clyde.

The main offices—head of school, admissions, development, etc.—are located on the first floor, along with the music and theater departments and a few classrooms. The admissions office is in the middle of the hallway. There are two benches across from the entrance to the office, hugging a table with an array of materials for prospective families to look through (the admissions viewbook, yearbooks, school magazines). The walls of the first floor are lined with 8"x10" photographs of students in the fall plays and spring musicals, along with rotating student artwork from all three divisions. The development office (consisting of annual giving, communications and marketing, and institutional

advancement) is located at the end of the hallway in one wing, mirrored by the offices of the head of school and assistant head of school in an adjacent wing.

The library is located on the second floor, across from the dining hall. It is a welcoming space filled with natural light from two-story windows that look out onto the street. In the center of the room are five rows of two long tables. The perimeter of the room is lined with books, but it feels like the main purpose of the space is for quiet study. There are a few standing desktop computers available to students for research and printing and a series of small, soundproof study rooms in the back that students can reserve to work on group projects or have a space where talk is sanctioned. Many students spend their free periods and lunch periods either in the library or the student center (dining hall) across the way.

I spent most of my time in the student center and in various spaces on the third floor, which houses the Upper School (Grades 9-12). The dining hall is perhaps the most social space in the building, functioning not only as a lunch space for all 13 grades and the faculty, but also as a site for early morning extra help sessions with teachers, advisor meetings between students and faculty, and a respite for students to grab a snack and decompress with friends throughout the day. The large space is brightly lit from skylights that run along the far wall. There are two-top tables under the skylights that also run the length of the wall; the rest of the room is filled with large round tables that seat anywhere from 8 to 12 students depending on the lunch period, the friend group, and the day. Upper school and middle school students occupy the same seating area, and lower school students have long bench tables at one end of the room. Faculty and staff have an alcove at the other end, offering a slight demarcation of space from students, with a seating area and small private kitchen. Faculty and staff across divisions and disciplines regularly eat lunch together, and Mr. Bennett, the head of school, is often seen sitting amongst his faculty and staff. While there is a clear boundary around this designated space for adults, the barrier is low. Teachers are constantly waving at students, and students will just as

frequently walk over to one of their teachers to say hello or ask a quick question about homework or what they are doing in class that day.

Meals are included in the tuition. There is almost always food available for students. In addition to vending machines, there are bagels and cereal out for breakfast every morning before the first bell; extensive high-quality and healthy options for lunch; and cookies, fruit, milk, and juice offered as a mid-morning snack every day. The cold lunch bar has a large selection of fresh vegetables as well as prepared salads with superfoods like quinoa, farro, arugula, and kale. There's also a featured sandwich, wrap, or avocado toast every day. The hot lunch menu—displayed on large flat screen TVs behind the counter—might be pasta and meatballs, salmon and roasted vegetables, or paninis from around the world (Cuban, caprese, ham and cheese) grilled-to-order. One of the most popular recent additions is a large dispenser of agua fresca (iced water infused with fruit) that changes flavors daily. The options and constant availability of food stand out in contrast to other school settings where students either bring lunch, pay à la carte, or receive subsidized meals.

For me, the dining hall was a neutral territory—a place where I felt I could blend in rather seamlessly because of its communal nature and, at the same time, gain greater exposure and visibility amongst a larger school population. It was where I would type up my field notes, check email, and meet informally with both students and teachers.

The third floor houses the high school. Mr. Bennett is quoted in a recent issue of the school magazine saying, "The Upper School promotes—and celebrates—our students' growing independence, and all aspects of our third floor give the girls every indication that they are the drivers of their own education" (School Magazine, Fall 2016). The four homerooms line one side of the hallway. The dean of 9th and 10th grades' office, centrally located in the middle of the hall, usually has the lights off (whether she is in there or not), but the door is always open. At the end of the hallway is the college

counselor's office, the head of the upper school's office, and the dean of 11th and 12th grades' office, as well as a new gathering space for students, the Commons:

> The Upper School Commons is a center of activity, filled with girls planning their next club meeting, strategizing on a group assignment, or meeting with their advisors. The Commons and two classrooms—a university-style public speaking theater and a seminar room—are open to the hallways via glass walls, illuminating the third floor with natural light and giving visible access to the teaching and learning that is central to this community. (School magazine, Fall 2016)

Mrs. Hill reflected on the affordances of various physical spaces on the 3rd floor:

> I think the sense of belonging comes from like, you know in the Upper School, we're all on the same floor, there's a student commons, when the weather's nice there's this wonderful outside area [where students can hang out], there's glass classrooms, right? So there's a kind of openness and fluidity to different grade levels, but we're all on the 3rd floor together? And that feels like there's a divisional identity from space that I think is inclusive. And that's a really nice thing, [something] that other schools that are a little bigger can't do. So I think … the space, I think supports belonging … like, the one schoolhouse, everyone on this floor, and the Commons. (Interview, 1/26/17)

The glass classrooms and student Commons on the third floor are just some of the new features of the school house, which underwent a massive renovation in 2016. In addition to remodeled classrooms, the library was entirely redesigned, and the school expanded into the townhouse next door, adding a separate lower school library, additional classrooms and studios, and innovative new spaces, such as a greenhouse, black box theater, and fitness center:

> Reconfigured classrooms in each division are easily adaptable to different modes of instruction and learning. New art studios, science labs, and a rooftop greenhouse honor our commitment to STEAM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics). Beautifully redesigned libraries will cultivate a love of reading, as well as modern research skills. The new fitness center will help girls strike a healthy mind-body balance, and the black box theater and public speaking room reinforce our commitment to helping every girl find and develop her voice. (Every Girl campaign mailing, 2016)

The renovations were made possible through the Every Girl capital campaign (discussed further later in this chapter), which not only enhanced existing spaces, but created new spaces "that encourage discourse, exploration, and innovation … ensuring that every Clyde girl—no matter what she wants to say—will have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to say it" (Every Girl campaign mailing, 2016). The language used, particularly in official publications like the examples above, to describe and explain both existing and new school spaces explicitly connects physical spaces to girls' voices. It also implicitly assumes that there is a certain level of comfort, acceptance, and belonging felt by students that allows them to cultivate and share their opinions.

I have gone into greater depth in descriptions of the first four floors of the building here because that is where the upper school students spend most of their time and, therefore, where I spent most of mine. The floors described above and the remainder of the building will be discussed from the students' perspectives in Chapter V, but I will end here with a brief explanation of the remaining floors to provide a comprehensive idea of the layout. The lower school is housed on the 4th floor; the 5th floor is a cross-divisional floor occupied by science labs and art studios; the middle school is on the 6th floor; and the gym and athletic department are located on the 7th floor. On most of the floors, there are backpacks lining the halls, and often clusters of student bodies. The hallways are equally transitional as they are social spaces.

Both the design of the new building—the thoughtfully imagined and curated spaces that have been modified by technology and new demands—along with the vestiges of traditional design of the original school house are physical manifestations of the mission of the school. As the Clyde viewbook states, "Our schoolhouse is a visionary place—a testament to Clyde's promise that every girl will have every chance—at every moment, in every space—to find the best version of herself" (p. 31). The buildings are a representation that works to communicate certain values, priorities, and ideations of

student life and school operations. In the next section, the mission of the school is introduced and synthesized as an integral layer of Clyde's institutional identity.

The Mission of the School

A mission statement allows an organization or institution to explicitly outline its aims and values not only for the members of the institution, but for those on the outside as well, whether they are prospective members (new students and parents, faculty, and staff) or peer institutions. A mission statement states promises and commitments and sets a standard for achievement.

> The mission of the Clyde School is to educate the minds and the hearts of its students in a challenging, vibrant, community that prizes academic excellence.
>
> […] Clyde is an independent K-12 girls' school that provides a classical curriculum to motivated students of varied backgrounds, interests, and talents. What they share is a demanding academic environment in which their teachers inspire them to love learning and to embrace curiosity, creativity, and hard work. Providing structure and a strong foundation from the start, the curriculum allows for increasing independence as students move through the Lower, Middle, and Upper Schools. In each division, small classes permit teachers to find their students' strengths and insist on their best efforts. Our commitment to the success of every girl is absolute.
>
> At the same time, we believe that success comes in many forms. Through the arts and athletics, ample leadership opportunities, extracurricular activities, and community service, Clyde students are encouraged to discover and to demonstrate that the mind and heart are equally important, and that one is empty without the other.

Clyde’s statement conveys the school’s dedication to enriching students in challenging ways while upholding and celebrating academic greatness. The language not only communicates the hopes, expectations, and standards that Clyde has for itself as an institution and for its students; it also clearly outlines the type of girl the school values and strives to construct.

> Bringing individuals together under the umbrella of a common mission, rituals create culture through shared meanings that have the effect of

> strengthening identification with and commitment to the school as a community. As they pass the norms and values of the official school culture on, rituals create and refashion cultural ties that link the past with the present and carry the school as a unified whole into the future. (Proweller, 1998, p. 24)

Both Mrs. Hill, the head of the upper school, and Mr. Bennett, the head of school, framed their understandings of the school mission, and therefore the purpose of Clyde, through the affordances of all-girls schools in terms of the opportunities they present to disrupt traditional gender roles in everything from leadership positions to enrollment in STEM classes. Hill shared, "We don't want to just replicate the injustices that are in the world outside of Clyde … and that's often what happens in co-ed schools, right?" (Interview, 1/26/17). Mr. Bennett believes that all-girls schools are still relevant and needed because:

> […] the world is still not fair to women and there are cultural biases that impact opportunities for women so, as a result, girls that attend a girls' school, we're able to be counter-cultural and create programming that is designed specifically out of what we perceive to be the girls' best interests. So until there is confidence … that the world is indeed just to women and girls, there is a place for girls' schools.... (Interview, 1/24/17)

From the perspective of the Director of Admissions, Mrs. Thomas felt the purpose of an all-girls school, such as Clyde, is to empower girls:

> to realize they can be whomever they want. And they can do whatever they want. And it starts from a very young age. And I think that they realize, um, just because they're girls doesn't mean that they're any less capable of anything in life…. I think that naturally, girls are more caretakers, shall we say. And they want to give back a little. Um, and I think they're still able to, but I think we help them realize that they can do that in different ways and not necessarily becoming nurses or what[ever]…there's so many different ways…. (Interview, 4/18/17)

Thomas's response brings up an interesting paradigm: all-girls schools can help girls and young women see what they are capable of and know that they can do anything, helping them break out of traditional gender roles; yet, at the same time, the institutional approach is still constrained by a limited definition of what it means to be a girl and what is expected of girls as a gender role. Dr. Collette framed the school's approach

differently. She noted a certain level of universality to Clyde's mission in terms of institutional aims:

> I think certainly, institutionally we're very committed to what I think ultimately any girls' school would tell you they were doing, which is empowering young women; acknowledging gender, not as a barrier but as a fact; [and] encouraging young women to fight against some of those socially constructed and, as a result, received notions of gender. Whether that's something like a strong focus on leadership [or] public speaking and debate, some of these things that Clyde does really, really well. I think we've invested our energy in that work because we want every student in this building to feel like they have a voice and to know how to use it. That said, show me a girls' school that wouldn't say that, right? I think that is the mission of girls' schools. And certainly of Clyde. (Dr. Collette, Interview, 12/15/16)

Interestingly, Collette noted the attention that Clyde places on harnessing student voice as a form of empowerment, yet there is no explicit reference to the importance or impact of student voice in the school's mission, which focuses mainly on the commitments to and expectations of academic rigor. This is important when considering the role language plays in communicating an institution's priorities and values to its members as well as to those on the outside.

Lucy, a senior and the president of student council, thought that Clyde "does a pretty good job" of living up to its mission in terms of educating the hearts and minds of students. "Like, we have a good balance between things. I feel like people here have a pretty good sense of what they like to do and what they can do and stuff […] we have a pretty strong value system I think by the time we leave" (Interview, 3/3/17).

Although the primary goal of the school is to empower girls, which some students perceive to be "working," another component of the mission and commitment to girls is providing solidarity through policies and practices around diversity and inclusion, an area that is less defined and in need of reevaluation.

Diversity and Inclusivity: A Work in Progress

There are two other institutional components related to the mission of the school—the school's current stances on diversity and the inevitability of creating a policy around transgender students—that are relevant in understanding what the current climate around inclusion looks like at Clyde. In addition to the mission statement, Clyde also has a diversity statement. I include it here because a formal stance on matters of "diversity" is another crucial piece of an institution's identity—how the institution is remembered, how it exists today, and how it communicates its role and purpose to those outside the school building. It will also serve as an interesting comparative text for participants' perspectives on matters of diversity and inclusion in Chapter V.

> The Clyde School is committed to diversity in an educational environment of responsibility, mutual respect, and empathy. We value individuals whose differences include, but are not limited to, age, ethnicity, family structure, gender, learning style, physical ability, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Fulfilling this mission is an ongoing process requiring active participation and frequent dialogue.
>
> All members of the Clyde community—students past and present, faculty and staff, administrators, parents, and trustees—are expected to keep their minds and hearts open to difference as a source of strength and a means of growth.

Besides stating the school's commitment to diversity, it is unclear how the statement is operationalized on a daily basis. Clyde last had someone in a designated position for diversity and inclusion work nearly a decade ago. When the Director of Community Life and Diversity left Clyde in 2010, the school never refilled the position. At the time of my data collection, there was a Diversity Committee in place comprised of members of the Leadership Team. The challenge with the committee model, however, was that there was no point person heading up the group, making it difficult to set and accomplish goals. Mr. Martin, a member of the Diversity Committee, shared,

> … the goals and the mission of the group are undefined. I think each member may have a different answer if you ask them, "What is the purpose of this Diversity…." I keep saying, "Diversity Team," "Diversity

> Committee," it changes. We don't really have a name, and the leadership has changed several times over the last 24 months. (Interview, 2/1/17)

There were mixed opinions and feelings about the structure of the team, namely, concern about a "kind of diffusion of responsibility" that comes with a committee as opposed to having a designated individual in a full-time position (Mrs. Hill, Interview, 1/26/17). Mrs. Hill wondered how the administration might move the school's diversity initiatives forward "in a way that's coherent, that has trajectory, and that is also like a model of diversity education or community education that the girls know is current" (Interview, 1/26/17). Clyde's diversity programming currently consists mainly of student clubs that include one around cultural awareness; one for LGBTQ+ issues; and another for women's rights. Talking to Dr. Collette about "diversity" and inclusivity at Clyde, she shared her perspective on what Clyde needs to work on and also echoed Mrs. Hill's comment about the crucial importance of measuring up to the expectations of students and meeting them where they are, which always tends to be ahead of the adults when it comes to these issues.

> I think we have some real growth areas when it comes to inclusion in the sense of inclusivity. **I think it will come as no surprise to hear that the girls are light years ahead of everyone else. And I think they're hungry for it. I think they crave having conversations about identity, about structures of power, about systemic inequality**.… And I think even the ones who that's not like the thing they're super into…recognize the importance of those conversations, and engage in them very actively. And I think it's something we need to be doing more of as a school. I think it's something we are actively thinking about how to do more of, but we are not … **we are certainly not at the level that I think the students would like to see us at**. (Dr. Collette, Interview, 12/15/16)

The school aims to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to the needs of students, such as mental health and wellness. Mr. Bennett explained, "Instead of just being reactive and helping girls when they're having a hard time, we want to be at the front end of it." He expressed a similar sentiment about the inevitability of creating a policy around transgender students, something he "never thought would be part of [his] tenure." He went on to say, "About a third of girls' schools have either had a student or applicant

where they have had to make decisions [about what to do] on the fly, so Clyde's approach in this case is to be in front of it. And to have the thought and the planning down in front. I think girls' schools will be all over the place on this" (Interview, 1/24/17). While Clyde had not yet had a student come out as transgender, Mr. Bennett, along with the rest of the administration and the Board of Trustees, had been thinking a lot about the inevitability that something will happen in the future. He provided his current stance on the situation:

> One is that I'm committed to Clyde being a girls' school and I think girls' schools are unique and distinct and still have a place in this world. Two, that part of our charge is to take care of the person that's in front of us, and so we will commit to doing that. And three, I'm learning alongside everyone else. Because it is, **in comparison to other social movements, because of social media, because of the age of acceleration that we live in, this has been so rapid**. So the school is having a task force on the topic and the board has already been trained, the faculty have been trained, and now we're engaging with parents on it. But ultimately, we'll either have a position statement, probably a position statement, maybe a policy around gender. And then well-articulated processes about how we approach the many questions around admissions, around retention and supporting current students, our use of pronouns, how we talk to girls about being a girl, so.... (Interview, 1/24/17)

> We have committees working on it, we have the Board working on it.… Personally, **I'm still trying to wrap my head around the whole issue** and process it.… I think everyone's getting help from their Board [of Trustees] in terms of how it's gonna be represented. Um, I mean, **I think every girls' school is gonna support any girl they have in her transition to whatever.**… I know everyone has a consultant and everyone's working on it. And I think that's where we are. (Mrs. Thomas, Interview, 4/18/17)

> Yeah! It's super complicated in a girls' school. I mean, it's wonderfully complicated. **It should be this complicated. If things aren't, they're not interesting and important, right?** I think girls' schools just like women's colleges, are really grappling with this thought and conversation, you know. **We're certainly having it a lot here**…. (Mrs. Hill, Interview, 1/26/17)

To restate, the work of the mission statement, the diversity statement, and the early conversations happening about a school stance and/or policy for transgender students are all in service of making promises and commitments to a school community. They are

attempts to reach and include every girl, or student. But, like any organization or institution, there is always room for improvement and visions of what could be. With that in mind, in the next section, participants share some of their thoughts about what an all-girls school ideally looks like.

Situating Clyde in a Broader Context

> Clyde is a community of individuals bound by a commitment to one another and to the promise of a broad-based liberal arts education. We are dedicated to single-sex education and proud of our long history of graduating poised, confident, and engaged young women. (Every Girl campaign mailing, 2016)

"At its best, an all-girls school is [fill in the blank]." I posed this question to students and school leaders during our interviews. I was curious as to how participants might articulate the affordances of all-girls schools and how they would take up the notion of an "ideal" all-girls school. At its best, an all-girls school is: "a space where everyone feels comfortable to reach their fullest potential" (Karl, Interview, 3/13/17); for Raine it was "inclusive" (Interview, 3/15/17). All-girls schools "can be really superb like, academically.… I think it also can be really intimate. Everyone knows each other and like, we're not afraid to become like, best friends. Or like, we call each other sisters so … you really get to know the people you're with" (Jenny, Interview, 3/15/17). Maria shared,

> I think it just, it'd really be a place where, I don't know, I don't want to make it sound too much like Clyde. I think it'd just be like a **really open place**. Like, you wouldn't be scared or like really dreading going in every day.… It'd be really just fun … you wouldn't hate going to class every morning, kind of like walking in and being like, "Oh, I'm here."… **When you really love where you're going** [to school] you're gonna have fun, you're gonna want to, um, participate and commit and **really do everything you can to better the community, to better yourself**. (Interview, 3/6/17)

Simone first noted the affordances that this type of space can provide, but then offered a more critical perspective on the functions of a private girls' school like Clyde:

> At its best, I think an all-girls school is **a place where it's easy to be brave** … [but] I think all-girls schools are also inherently inaccessible. So

> they're not indicative of like the population outside of its neighborhood or whatever. So I think at its best, an all-girls school is a place where people get into good colleges and like, live formulaically, but also it should ideally like, I don't know, be a safe space. At its best, an all-girls' school is a safe space against sort of like male belligerence and um, I don't know. It's a hard question.... (Interview, 4/12/17)

Kate, a senior, did not explicitly answer my question, but shared that she had recently been questioning the need for and benefit of all-girls schools today:

> In some ways they're needed and useful because like, they're teaching you how to live in the world as a woman and like, how to push yourself forward and the challenges you might face, but I also think that **sometimes it feels like we're being sheltered in a way, that we're being treated differently** than [all-boys schools] would treat their students. (Interview, 3/15/17)

Maya, a junior, saw an all-girls school as a particular experience and also wondered about their relevance in the educational landscape with growing discussions about people who might not identify only as a girl or as a girl at all. She found it interesting that an all-girls school could also be more than an all-girls school:

> I think it's complicated, because in my point of view, like, **girls' schools are kind of outdated.** Especially because it's becoming harder with people … being allowed to express their gender, **you can't really fit everyone into a box in an all-girls school**. That's just more dangerous for them I feel. (Interview, 4/10/17).

Dr. Collette and Mr. Martin also shared candid opinions on the potential values and challenges of all-girls schools. Through their reflections, they both offer a series of important questions that get to the foundational purpose of this study:

> Personally, I'm conflicted about it.… I go back and forth on what I think is gained through single-sex education and what I think maybe is lost.… Clyde does not, for what it's worth, have affinity spaces. It's not a practice we engage in, but it's one we have debated and thought about and continue to think about.… But in my mind, **a girls' school is already an affinity space**. And like any form of affinity space, it allows for different kinds of conversations to be possible. **It means that the question of gender is always at the forefront of everything we are doing, whether or not that is conscious, whether or not that is intentional, it is inescapable**.… But it also means that there are certain drawbacks to it, right? Like any affinity space, it is exclusive even if it's intention is to be inclusive and like any

> affinity space, it poses challenges about the very definition of where the boundary belongs on that space and I think in a world, and **this is again something that Clyde is really just starting to think about, in a world where we're increasingly looking at gender diversity as the next real forefront, that cuts to the very mission of an all-girls school, it begs the question of how are we defining "girl"?** (Dr. Collette, Interview, 12/15/16)

> I think at their best, they actually can challenge gender stereotypes and gender norms. At the same time, at their worst, they can just reinforce [them]. So, you know, I have no illusions that in 2017 we are not a gender-equitable society, right? There are lots of ways that the world tells girls, particularly, what roles they should fill. What they're good at. What they should try. How they should act. How they should speak. And I think the **most basic way that an all-girls school can disrupt that is when students look around and they see themselves reflected in positions of student leadership, you know, raising their hands in classes, speaking first, pursuing interests** that they want to pursue because it's an interest, **not because they're expected to**. So that to me, is the real benefit and the role that a single-gender institution has to play in the modern day United States. (Mr. Martin, Interview, 2/1/17)

As substantiated above, participants were conflicted about the role, purpose, and future of all-girls schools. The students' responses predominantly focused on place—I imagine they were picturing Clyde, or a similar school setting, when they answered my question—what they thought or imagined an ideal all-girls school to *feel* like, relating back to the physical manifestations of belonging discussed earlier in this chapter. Dr. Collette and Mr. Martin both took a more macro approach to their conceptions and interrogations of an ideal girls' school. They both considered how a school like Clyde fits into a larger educational context and even broader social, cultural, and political landscapes, which will be discussed further in Chapter V. The following narrative explores how students are known and supported at Clyde, both through academics and conceptions of girls and girlhood as they are situated in the context of a single-sex school.

Dominant Narrative 2: To Know and Be Known

"I think parents send their daughters to girls' schools so that they don't have to hide any parts of who they are" (Mr. Bennett, Interview, 1/24/17). When I asked Mr. Bennett how Clyde supports girls to be their fullest selves and what that statement meant to him, he framed his response through the findings from recent survey data culled from the school's strategic planning committee, which found that across all school constituencies, the primary value at Clyde is relationships. He believed that Clyde creates a culture where girls feel a sense of belonging and, in order to do that, they need to feel connections across the school:

> When you compare other schools [going through] similar [climate survey] exercises, they may reveal that their primary value is social justice or safety or achievement, but at Clyde the primary value is relationships. I think it's important in all schools, but [for] girls in particular, the capacity to, as we say, "know and be known," is so critically important…. (Interview, 1/24/17)

Mr. Bennett recognized that asking or expecting all girls to bring their full selves is an ideal and it would be naïve to think that students would want to do so at all moments: "You have to sort of understand social context and understand when you can lean into certain identifying factors and when not to" (Interview, 1/24/17). Nevertheless, much of the Clyde rhetoric revolves around a continued commitment to encouraging all girls to be known by bringing their full selves to Clyde every day.

Academic Promises and Supports

As a highly competitive college preparatory school, Clyde's institutional identity is largely defined by promises of and commitments to academics and knowledge; to a certain rigor, intellectuality, and curiosity.

> [W]hen Clyde girls go to college, they are consistently the leaders in class discussions and the strongest writers. No matter what field they pursue, from media to medicine to academia, they are the ones who have the ability to express their ideas dynamically in person and in writing. (Admissions viewbook, p. 7)

> As a parent, you can only imagine what your daughter will want to do in life. But with a Clyde education—with an analytical, poetic, searching, and daring mind and heart—she will be ready to become the woman she wants to be. (Academics, school website)

> Well, obviously, the foundation [for academics] is set in the lower school. And I think we provide structure for them. In admissions, I talk about how in the lower school **we have a scaffolding that we put around each girl**. And it allows her to kind of take stock of how she approaches learning and what kind of learner she is. And understand that there is a structure to life and to learning. And we approach things in a lot of different ways in the lower school so no matter what kind of learner you are, you should be successful. Then as they get a little older they take the pieces of the scaffolding away, … we're there to help them figure out who they are in lower school and then solidify that in the middle school and the upper school. **[The scaffolding] is still there … and there are so many different sets of eyes on them, that if someone's stumbling, teachers will watch and she'll be helped whether she realizes it or not.** (Mrs. Thomas, Interview, 4/18/17)

The metaphor of placing a scaffolding around students from the time they are young powerfully illustrates the type of environment Clyde strives to create and believes it does create for girls. In the upper school student handbook, Clyde explicitly lays out expectations of academic performance, behavior, and contributions as members of the school community:

> In order to become an intellectually curious and self-reliant young woman, a Clyde student must develop a strong academic foundation and critical thinking skills.… As part of the Clyde School community, a student is expected to:
>
> 1. Take responsibility for her own work.
> 2. Adjust to different teachers' styles and expectations.
> 3. Learn to face challenges and to overcome obstacles that come with building a strong academic foundation.
> 4. Discover who she is and learn to cultivate her strengths and talents.
> 5. Respect both the academic and personal interests of her fellow students.
> 6. Participate actively in the wider community life of the school

I asked students if they ever felt pressures or expectations to do well or perform at a certain level. Karl told me, "I feel like Clyde does prepare us in terms of academics and things like that because, I don't know, just like, my confidence really built up from my

career at Clyde…. I just feel so much more out there and able to like act and sing confidently" (Interview, 3/13/17).

> I personally have never felt pressure 'cause like, I feel like a lot of times pressure like comes from your parents and my parents have never pressured me to do like super well in school. Like, **they just want me to try my best**. But I also feel like because Clyde's a very expensive school, and people work really hard to be able to send you here, that alone makes people wanna do well. (Megan, Interview, 3/6/17)

> I feel like it's expected that we're like, nice and respectful to everyone, [but] I feel like there's **not a lot of like academic expectations**. And like I mean, you do your homework, but I feel like however well you want to do is like, up to you. And personally, I'm someone that values like, my academic career so I work hard and like, I do have expectations for myself. Um, I feel like even my parents don't really, they kinda say the same thing. They're like, **"You can do however well you want to do, just know like, you do have a great education, you should take advantage of it."** And I feel like that's how … like I set expectations for myself. (Jenny, Interview, 3/15/17)

Similarly, Maria reported that her stress was largely self-inflicted, "never community-inflicted" (Interview, 3/6/17). While many participants did not feel that issues and challenges related to mental health and wellness were addressed in meaningful and productive ways at Clyde (discussed further in Chapter V), Maria felt that the school community was very open about stress and talking about stress. When her grandfather passed away right before her mid-term exams, she felt incredibly supported by the school and not rushed to get her work done: "I could have put off finals until February [if I wanted to], so it's like, there's never a stress to like, follow the rules and get them done, like perfectly … there's always room for flexibility" (Interview, 3/6/17). As Lucy and Caroline, both seniors, prepared for graduation, they reflected on how much they had grown throughout the course of their time at Clyde:

> …I think most about that [being really shy when I was younger] and how like **I've really grown into a very confident, like too confident person**…. I'm like so happy I'm not that quiet anymore…. And feeling like I could talk to anyone … I am a very opinionated person and I like that about myself. And I can constantly share my views.… I'm also president of the school so I feel like sometimes I am put into situations where I'm supposed

> to speak for everybody. And I feel like I … I do a lot of public speaking and it doesn't scare me at all. And I'm kind of thinking like the quiet person versus the person who speaks all the time. And so that's been like **probably the most transformative** and that's what **I really kind of grant Clyde with the credit of like creating this person in me**. (Lucy, Interview, 3/13/17)

> … Something that really has stuck with me through Clyde's promotional stuff is that you bring your full self to school everyday. I feel like Clyde has a really comfortable environment where I really do feel comfortable bringing myself to school everyday. I feel like I kind of exude positivity and bring positivity wherever I go, and I feel like Clyde's environment allows me to do that.… I just feel like whatever I do, I mean personally, **I feel like my kind of life motto or mantra is that whatever I do, I'm all in and Clyde has really done a great job of instilling those values in me**. I feel like anything I take on, even if it's foreign or new, I do it with gusto and I do it with confidence and I feel like only a school like Clyde can prepare students to do those sorts of things, both inside of the classroom and outside of the classroom. (Caroline, Interview, 3/6/17)

For these students, they have found support and encouragement in their academic careers and as all-around students; their experiences largely align with the goals of the institution. We will hear from students whose experiences are not as aligned with this dominant narrative in Chapter V.

Conceptions of "Girls" and "Girlhood"

As stated in Chapter I, I began this study with a working understanding, as opposed to a firm definition, of "girlhood," which I conceptualize as the various temporal, ecological, cultural, and discursive storylines that intersect to construct and define the experiences of being a girl, and the places and spaces within which these experiences occur. While a component of this research project was to identify how members of Clyde construct girlhood by examining their discursive practices, I was also curious what participants might say when asked directly to define "girls" and "girlhood." Their conceptions provide insight into girls and girlhood as identities, as discursive practices, and as belonging within the social context of an all-girls school; how young people at Clyde come to know and be known as students and young adults. Similar ideations also often come to fruition in the form of two constructed ideal archetypes that circulate

throughout the Clyde community and culture, serving as embodiments of girlhood, which will be discussed in depth in the next section of this second dominant narrative.

Maria, a senior, described herself as a "very stereotypical girl" who loves One Direction, is a ballet dancer, and was a princess for Halloween every year until she was 11 years old; she thought that her conceptions about being a girl largely came from popular culture. For her, Clyde encourages students to be as loud as they want; to be the loudest person in the room, not to "sit down and be quiet." In her perspective, girlhood was "kind of synonymous" with sisterhood:

> In the senior class we joke that we're a class of 44 sisters […] it feels very central to the Upper East Side all-girls schools. I've talked to girls at other all-girls schools, I think they feel very similar. So I definitely relate girlhood with kind of sisterhood and solidarity and really being like, for [the] betterment of all girls … like every definition of like what being a girl means. (Interview, 3/6/17)

Simone, on the other hand, felt removed from the words because of her age and experiences: "… I have this mentality … I feel like I have grown a lot at Clyde so I feel like when they're like, [girl] … I'm like, um, I'm a woman.… So I feel like girlhood is something, I think about it but it's something that doesn't apply to me anymore" (Interview, 4/12/17). Caroline, also a senior, provided a complicated perspective and understanding of what it means to be a girl in the context of Clyde. She noted that the definition of what it is to be a girl in the world today is changing because of "various issues" (though she did not name any specifically) and how one's different identifiers intersect. She thought Clyde "does a really good job of stressing that being a girl, you can't be confined to one definition with stereotypes, but that identifying as a girl brings in all of your attributes…" (Interview, 3/6/17). Lauren offered that being a girl is "however you define it for yourself. I guess I was just always like, told I was a girl and like, I identify as a girl, too. But yeah, I don't really know what would define being a girl…" (Interview, 3/6/17). Caroline and Maria had also always identified as girls, so they acknowledged that they have not experienced Clyde's definition of a girl from a different

perspective. “It’s hard to like, distinguish what being a girl at Clyde is versus like, what being a girl out in the world is, ‘cause I feel like here … they always say like, ‘every girl’ whatever, you don’t have to think about being a girl ‘cause like everybody … or like, most people here are, so…” (Megan, Interview, 3/6/17). While Caroline credited Clyde with not enforcing a specific image of what it means to be a girl, she also talked about receiving a limited construction of girlhood when she was a lower school student; she then circled back to wondering how much progress Clyde has actually made in its conceptions of girls:

> I've grown up with a very strict definition of what it is to be a girl, but I feel like in lower school there are definitely, I mean, I [was] in lower school with Mrs. Sheppard [the former head of the lower school] and I feel like **she had a very set definition of what it is to be a girl and I mean, I don't know what the consequences would be if you deviated from that norm under her administration**, but I do … I feel like, again, we're moving towards a more neutral take … at Clyde, I feel like we're kind of still in that place where there is that definition of a girl. And **ideally, we'd like to say that yes, we accept people of all different backgrounds and identities** and whatever. But, at the same time, **I feel like at Clyde it kind of still exists**…. (Interview, 3/6/17)

Caroline brought up an interesting point about the messages students in the lower grades receive about gender and being a girl. Unfortunately, given the scope of this research project, I was not able to dig into the lower school culture with the same depth and attention as the upper school. But Caroline’s comment serves as an important reminder that students begin receiving gendered (as well as raced and classed) messages at early ages. What do those images, messages, and conversations look like with younger students? How does it affect their perspectives about themselves, their peers, and being a part of an all-girls school as they grow older?

Using the term “girl” is, according to Mrs. Hill, the head of the upper school, often just “a part of the air we breathe, really.” She went on to explain:

> **I feel worried a little bit … when the word “girl” is something that we can’t use**, only because I feel like when I think about girls, it’s the most

> expanded understanding of what it is to be a girl that's not about biological sex, that's about identity and gender and all of that. And I think that because girls don't have access and women don't have access to education in the same way that boys and men do in our country and around the world, and certainly in leadership positions and equality and all of that, educating girls specifically really matters and has political intention around that. (Interview, 1/26/17)

As a result, Mrs. Hill still used "girls" when addressing students, whether it was in the hallways or in an email, but, she noted, she says it with more intention and thought than she used to. In terms of defining girlhood, she understood it as the experience of being a girl: "The longevity experience of being a girl and the developmental experience of being a girl … and the societal understanding of what it is to be a girl" (Interview, 1/26/17).

Mr. Martin spoke candidly about the conception and construction of "girlhood," from both the perspective of the Director of Communications as well as someone with a background in critical studies and identity work:

> So, girlhood for me, my immediate association was sort of, culture. So, **girlhood is the ways we teach people to be a girl. The ways that we allow girls to participate in the world. The expectations that we set for female identified bodies. The messages that we send about how to be a girl**…. So, when I think about, "what does girlhood mean, what does girlhood mean in the world," it is the way that we construct this idea of "girl" and the way that we all are involved in that process. A girl, then, I guess, is somebody who identifies with that notion of girlhood. And I guess there would be many different ways and avenues towards that….
>
> … What it means here at Clyde...has a lot to do with our, sort of, expectations, you know, we've talked a lot about dress code, that's certainly a part of it. But even our language, **the way that we talk about what it means to be a good student or, you know, the possibility and how to present yourself, the images that we use in our printed materials, and you know, the images that are hanging around the school building, the books that we have in our curriculum, I think that's how we construct girlhood here?** I've never had a conversation with anyone about what our aims and our goals for all of that are, I think it just sort of happens and we all fall into the same rhythm. I certainly know that that's true because you don't notice it until somebody is going in the opposite direction and everybody freaks out. "That's not what we mean!" [laughing] "No, no, no, no!" [laughing]. So…. (Interview, 2/1/17)

When I asked Dr. Collette to define girlhood, she first requested that I narrow the scope of this very broad question. She responded that it is one of those terms in our cultural vernacular that is "so vague and imprecise [it] almost begs the question of its own existence" (Interview, 12/15/16).

> What is useful about the term "girlhood"? **What does it allow us to access that we could not access simply by just saying "childhood"? Or "adolescence"?**… I think the answer is a gendered experience for sure. But beyond that … we can say "girlhood" and "boyhood" but **we don't have a term for what it is to grow up Black … what about rich versus poor?** We don't have a way of distinguishing a class experience of childhood or adolescence…. (Interview, 12/15/16)

How Dr. Collette grappled with the term and what it represents is an important reminder about the social politics and power of language.

It was clear that the school leaders I interviewed sincerely believed in the work they were doing and were invested in the benefit and potential of all-girls education. In the midst of discussing the importance of empowering girls and young women to use their voices, to be leaders, and to speak out against injustices, however, there were a few moments when some of the school leaders made generalized comments about students exhibiting "typical teenager behavior," acting immaturely or questioning authority.

> … we're there to help them figure out who they are in lower school and then solidify that in the middle school and the upper school. [The scaffolding they get in lower school is] still there but they don't really … **they think that they're completely independent and these mature young women when we all know they're not**.… (Mrs. Thomas, Interview, 4/18/17)

> … I think there's definitely a very…friendly vibe here and I think that's welcoming.… Although, you know, **whenever you're with teenagers, there's the friendly warm vibe and then there's also the questioning vibe and then the prove-to-me-that-you're-right vibe** and, you know, we feel that too. But I sort of think that's developmentally great and appropriate. (Mrs. Hill, Interview, 1/26/17)

> … Because adolescents, it's in **part their job to sort of look at adults as hypocrites, or whatever, and challenge**…**They clearly know it**. They know that that's our mission now [our promise to reach every girl] … it's a great starting point for conversation. (Mr. Bennett, Interview, 1/24/17)

While these comments may have had truth to them from the adults' perspectives, the syntax of the statements stood out in opposition to the dominant storyline of encouraging empowerment and outspokenness amongst the student body. These excerpts are examples of the potential disconnection between the theory and practice, or the mission and reality, of a school. Clyde is an institution committed to cultivating strong, powerful, and vocal young women, but when they are reduced to a stereotype or singular conception of a teenager by an authority figure, it is crucial to consider the impact it might have on a school's culture, climate, and on the student body.

The Ideal Archetypes

One of the most consistent and significant strands woven throughout the last three and a half years of my research at the Clyde School was the ideal archetype of the Clyde Girl. It is in the makeup of the school's history, traditions, and everyday practices, and, as this research is concerned with sociocultural constructions of identity/ies, it remains a focal point in this study. The manufacturing of an ideal archetype is likely a signature component of most (if not all) private, independent single-sex schools on the Upper East Side, and I am sure it is present (and potentially problematic) at single-sex and co-ed schools across the country. In fact, something similar probably exists in public schools—perhaps even in workplaces like law firms, investment companies, or at Google. In its simplest form, "the Clyde Girl" ideal functions as a conduit for institutionally-sanctioned expectations around behavior, performance, and membership meant to motivate and encourage students to do and be their best. The label, archetype, and ideal have been constructed over time and woven so seamlessly into the narrative of the institution that they simply become part of who the school is, part of the traditions and history (Lightfoot, 1983; Linde, 2009). While it might be common to have this type of expectation in the form of an imagined ideal at an elite school, it is crucial to question or examine the factors that contribute to its construction. Failing to do so allows the

ideations of the ideal, or quintessential, student to go unchallenged and continue on as an integral piece of a dominant narrative. As I have mentioned throughout this study, it is a label, an archetype, an ideal that has stayed with me for nearly 15 years, one that students interrogate with me below.

The quintessential Clyde Girl. As previously discussed in the overview of my pilot study, the Clyde Girl is an idealized archetype that embodies the most desired and valued characteristics, behaviors, and involvements of a quintessential student at the school. The data in my pilot study revealed that for many students, the archetype was an empowering and comforting label, a force that pushed them toward a higher standard academically, extracurricularly, and socially; it was simply a part of who they were and how they experienced the school. For others, the label held rigid conceptions of what was valued and who belonged at Clyde (which will be explained further in Chapter V). Below, a few students note their understandings and associations of the Clyde Girl as representing the ultimate student:

> I feel like more than a typical girl at Clyde, there's definitely an archetype of a student and I feel like that's **someone who strives for excellence, both inside and outside of the classroom, in academic relationships and in social relationships**. Yeah, **strives for excellence in whatever endeavor she takes on**—taking a test, a taking a quiz, but also in like social justice, because that's an up-and-coming interest, I guess, that more Clyde students are pursuing outside of the classroom. (Caroline, Interview, 3/6/17)

> I think they're misconstruing it a little bit because the Clyde Girl just like shows that any girl that goes to this school has this like basic, um, value. That they're all at Clyde, **they're all being educated with their hearts and minds and like all of their phrases and stuff**. (Jenny, Interview, 3/15/17)

> When I came into Clyde I had a whole precursor thing of *Gossip Girl*. [But] I think if there's any stereotype that Clyde may push it's kind of being, like, the **all-around student. All-around athlete. Kind of like the quintessential Clyde Girl idea**…. Um, but I've never felt, it's never been pressure from teachers and principals where you have to do, like … take this class and this class or anything. It's been, like, me personally, like taking the

> idea of the quintessential Clyde Girl and kind of, putting it onto myself. (Maria, Interview, 3/6/17)

Interestingly, at the time of my dissertation data collection, some participants reported that they felt as though the phrase "the Clyde Girl" or "the quintessential Clyde Girl" was not used as often anymore and, if it was used, it was by the adults in the building, not the students. "The Clyde Girl used to be a thing, I don't know if it's still used as much, but I hear the faculty use that one still quite a bit, less from the students" (Dr. Collette, Interview, 12/15/16). Even if the Clyde Girl phrase has become largely relegated to adult use, its continued presence in the school rhetoric is noteworthy, as it contributes to the maintenance of ideal expectations upholstered within the school culture.

The promise to "Every Girl." The "Every Girl" capital campaign ran from 2012 to 2016 with a goal of raising $45 million to renovate parts of the existing school building and expand into a townhouse adjacent to Clyde. This campaign and endeavor allowed Clyde "to reimagine the entirety of its schoolhouse and design a twenty-first century learning environment that maintains its unique focus on the hearts and minds of every girl" (Every Girl campaign mailing, 2015). This statement was made with the following request: "At this transformational moment in our school's history, we invite you to join us in support of this ambitious project that will keep Clyde at the forefront of girls' education for years to come" (Every Girl campaign mailing, 2015). The campaign "builds on our guiding principles and secures our unique strength: the promise that every girl will have every chance—at every moment, in every space—to become the best version of herself" (Every Girl Campaign mailing, 2015). In the three excerpts below, school leaders comment on the intentions and commitments of the Every Girl campaign and phrase:

> [I think what] Every Girl is meant to capture is this idea [that] **there is not a single kid in this building who is not known, who doesn't have adults who are trusted people who they can go to—colleagues, friends, peers, who she can go to**. And that the entirety of the school is deeply

> invested in each and every kid's well-being. I think that's what the phrase is meant to capture. (Dr. Collette, Interview, 12/15/16)
>
> I think it's about belonging, it's about individualized attention, it's about relationships, it's about knowing that when you step into Clyde, that it is your school. And I thought that it was a unique, **sort of what we call a promise statement, that a school makes to girls and the parents that we commit to every girl here at Clyde**. And it's interesting because initially, when I used ... when I sort of highlighted that aspect of Clyde, it was very well-received, and since then, I think that the girls are sort of having a reaction to it, calling it a mantra, or saying, "What does it really mean?" So, it will be interesting to see whether in the next iteration of our mission statement, which will come soon after our strategic plan, whether "Every Girl" will be a part of it. (Mr. Bennett, Interview, 1/24/17)
>
> I think we do a really good job of supporting each girl where she is and making sure she becomes the best version of her…you know, to coin a phrase, which isn't our thing but, becoming the best version of herself. I think our girls are very different. Um, you know, we like to say we have 604 very different girls…. Um, so that they're not, **they don't feel pressure to become a certain type of girl.… And we'll ensure that. We'll make sure that each girl has that Every Girl experience.** (Mrs. Thomas, Interview, 4/18/17)

From the student perspective, Maria and Caroline both saw the Every Girl as a positive model and addition to the rhetoric of the school:

> When I heard it [the phrase "Every Girl"] I really thought it was all-inclusive, like something that really like **pulled me into the school on my tour** [as a prospective student] was this idea that **every type of girl was accepted, like whether you're the loudest in the room or the quietest in the room** … any girl was really taken in.… I think there are definitely some people in the community who think of it as a point to raise money … but I've always seen it, and I continue to see it, as a really great idea that's been used throughout the school. (Maria, Interview, 3/6/17)
>
> I think ideally the administration would like to say yes [that Clyde does support every girl], I feel like there are certain circumstances where girls might not necessarily feel supported. But I do feel, though, that the **administration is doing a better job of making sure that girls of all different backgrounds**—socioeconomic, class, race--that they do feel supported in this community. I mean, I don't, I don't feel like I'm necessarily in a minority I guess and racially, that sort of thing, but I feel like those topics are definitely of great concern. I do feel like the administration is definitely addressing them and working harder to meet the needs of every girl. (Caroline, Interview, 3/6/17)

The Every Girl phrase had also been met with substantial pushback from the students during the 2016-2017 school year, which will be discussed in further detail in Chapter V. In the next section, I shift perspectives to those of communications and admissions to consider how the school constructs and shares its institutional identity with people outside the institution.

Dominant Narrative 3: Image-Making and Branding

The third dominant narrative is concerned with the storylines that are communicated outwardly to the public about the school's institutional identity; it provides a look at how the school makes its commitments to girls known. In this case study (and I imagine at most private schools), the offices of admissions and communications are, in many respects, the most tightly bound to and the most reliant on the successful construction and operation of an institutional identity. Many of my conversations about communications and admissions efforts were tied to technology and the affordances of digital communications. I end this chapter with a brief, but important, dominant narrative regarding institutional communications and the construction of meaning.

"When marketing aligns with the reality of a school, it becomes storytelling," Dr. Collette remarked during one of our de-brief sessions in November following a school mapping activity (discussed in Chapter V) with her 10th grade leadership class (field notes, 11/7/16). I took a moment to reflect on her statement, feeling both the gravity and simplicity of it. The role of the offices of communications and admissions is to effectively and strategically construct narratives about a school and its members—to accurately reflect and tell the story of an institution. In the admissions viewbook (2016) for prospective students, Mr. Bennett is quoted, "Central to the Clyde experience is a bold promise: we will educate the mind and the heart in equal measure, and we will make

an absolute commitment to the success of every girl. This has been true since our founding and will remain so well into our future" (n.p.). Both Cooper Martin, Director of Communications, and Kim Thomas, Director of Admissions, spoke directly to the challenges and realities of representing the institutional identity of and student experience at the Clyde School to the outside world, namely, to prospective families. As the Director of Communications, Mr. Martin often found himself struggling with how to strike a balance between communicating authentic and aspirational narratives of the school through images and messages on the website, social media, and in official school publications. For instance, he had been thinking a lot about representation:

> … Are we posting only pictures of little White students, and what does that mean? And it goes back to the balance again of **aspirational versus descriptive**. You know, most of our lower school is [comprised of] little White students, so it's authentic, it is who we are, but how do we talk about that?
>
> … We want, in our printed materials to families, to show as much representation as possible, **as much diversity as possible, because we want potential families to be able to see themselves** like, literally see themselves, and their daughters as members of our community. So, if you look through our view book, or if you look at our website, **you may get the sense that there's a rich racial diversity at our school**.
>
> … When you visit Clyde, and you walk through the halls, **you will notice that we are a predominantly White institution**. We need to be able to talk about both of those things, honestly. In my view. So **we need to present where we want to be and be honest about where we are** and how we, what plans are in place to get us to that aspirational place. I have not thought enough about what that means to a student. My focus has always been on prospective families and prospective donors. So I'm not sure how that's affecting the ... students here and their formation of this idea of girlhood at Clyde. (Interview, 2/1/17)

This was an interesting and powerful example of the tensions that can exist between constructing and maintaining an institution's identity while constructing and supporting the identities and realities of members of the institution. Martin acknowledged that the

narratives conveyed in school publications did not necessarily match the realities of everyday life at Clyde, particularly in regard to representation.

From an admissions perspective, the school website was the most important source of information for prospective families (Mrs. Thomas, Interview, 4/18/17). Increasingly, families were applying to Clyde without having had any contact with the school outside of the website. Mrs. Thomas explained, "In terms of admissions, the website is definitely the driver of everything." Thomas was not necessarily happy with the current state of the school website, which felt stagnant compared to other schools' sites that were more dynamic and "have a lot of video" (Interview, 4/18/17).

In the 2016-2017 school year, Mr. Martin and his communications team created an Instagram account for the school as a way to provide snapshots of "everyday life" in the schoolhouse. Mr. Martin had "always been excited about the ability of social media to communicate the story of an organization.… At its best, that's what social media can do: It can give you a sense of experience. So Instagram seemed like the natural place to do that because it's very visual, people are already there" (Interview, 2/1/17). Martin's initial idea was to align the account's purpose with the Every Girl campaign and have every student take a picture and post it on Instagram over the course of the school year. He quickly realized that students were busy and unreliable and that younger students may require more scaffolding and support than what the communications staff was able to provide at the time. Instead, they were able to hire an additional person whose primary job is to run the social media accounts. Now, according to Mr. Martin, when you go onto the school's account:

> … you see images of lessons, field trips, sporting events, it really is becoming a **visual representation of the daily life** of the school.… We want our posts to be based in the mission of the school and to really communicate the mission of the school and/or the curriculum. And so we take time and think about, **we choose which image, we choose which caption, we're very intentional about that**.

When considering composition practices, the intentionality that Mr. Martin referred to is a paramount component of storytelling, one that highlights the power and impact of particular choices. From a critical and media literacy perspective, it calls attention to the need to recognize that all media messages are constructed from a particular viewpoint, created for a particular reason, and most importantly, only tell one piece of a story (requiring consideration of what is omitted). Mr. Martin continued:

> That's the driving force behind being on social media as an organization and as a school that it's **an opportunity for us to tell our story again and again and again** and reinforce this idea of "our mission is to do this: to educate girls in a challenging academic environment that balances a focus on the academic and the emotional." (Interview, 2/1/17)

As seen with many social media platforms, hashtags are used to aggregate posts in a designated place as a way to collect and craft a record of the stories of a person, group, movement, or institution. The other piece of Mr. Martin's argument in favor of the Instagram account was to "demonstrate to students that social media can be used in a responsible way and that you can use social media to own your own narrative and construct your own narrative in a way that presents a healthy and positive image" (Interview, 2/1/17). Martin's anecdotes are a testament to the reality that social media use at the institutional level is still evolving and each institution and industry is going to have different motivations and needs for using online platforms to communicate and interact with current and prospective members as well as other external groups.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced three dominant narratives that work to define the school's institutional identity and provide the parameters for my exploration of girlhood at Clyde. Through a discussion of the physical layout of the building, the mission statement, and participants' thoughts on what an ideal all-girls school looks like, I presented the perceived physical and theoretical affordances of the school. The second

narrative addressed the school's implicit and explicit expectations for students through conversations about girls and girlhood as well as the ideal archetypes of the Clyde Girl and the Every Girl. And I finished thinking not only about the construction but the maintenance of an institutional identity from the views of admissions and communications. The purpose of these three narratives is to introduce the Clyde School as a main character in this larger story; to convey what Clyde looks and feels like for the people, practices, and perspectives that fit neatly into the roles, spaces, and identity of the institution. In the next chapter, we will hear from participants about their experiences and perspectives that do not necessarily "fit" within the purview of the dominant narratives and consider what that means for a school culture and community striving to see and include every student in every moment and every space.

Chapter V

PERFORMING AND TROUBLING GIRLHOOD: COUNTER-NARRATIVES OF THE CLYDE SCHOOL

Introduction: Reconciling and Honoring Messy Relationships

In Chapter IV, I traced three major storylines of Clyde's institutional identity—manifestations of membership and belonging, idealized expectations, and processes of image-making—that contributed to the construction of ideas around girls and girlhood at the school. In this chapter, I address my second research question, "How do high school students and school leaders read (interpret, perceive) constructions of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City?" along with the sub-questions, "How do students and school leaders make sense of dominant narratives of girls and girlhood?" and "How do students and school leaders offer counter-stories that resist, challenge, and rewrite dominant representations and school-sanctioned narratives of girlhood?" This chapter examines the discursive practices that participants use to interpret the images and messages about girls and girlhood embedded within the school's community and culture. It largely centers students' voices and perspectives in service of illustrating their lived experiences at Clyde, a place they care for deeply and want to be the most inclusive, authentic, and welcoming school possible. Their perspectives are critical, astute, and occasionally snarky. Their words are honest and fascinating and make a strong argument for the ongoing need to place a higher value on the voices of young people in the institutions meant to serve them.

The intentions behind my two data chapters are not to construct a false binary between the dominant narratives and the counter-narratives at Clyde, but rather to draw out how these narratives exist and operate in relation to one another. The purpose of Chapter V is to illustrate the nuanced, complex counter-stories held and lived by members of the school community, reminding us that there is and should be more than a single narrative at work in educational settings. One of the most interesting and complicated components of this chapter is the wonderfully contradictory nature of many of the students' experiences and perspectives. You will notice that in many of the excerpts students will offer anecdotes of amazing experiences and then, what feels like in the same breath, share a critical opinion of a time when they did not feel heard or supported. While at times this proved to be a challenging aspect of my data analysis, it speaks powerfully to the fundamental messiness of the relationships between institutions and their members. In truth, I would be concerned if participants' responses were either fully aligned with, or entirely pitted against, the school and its dominant narratives. The mixed feelings are a reminder that some of the healthiest relationships are the ones where all parties are in constant conversation, filled with strengths and shortcomings and always with room for growth and improvement. The inconsistencies help to illustrate how students operate within and navigate complicated relationships with each other, their teachers, the administration, and the school on a daily basis.

Counter-Narrative 1: Rules of Being and Knowing

The first counter-narrative addresses the manifestations of girls and girlhood in the physical spaces, places, and images of the Clyde School. It begins with a discussion about the demarcations that students see between Clyde's school culture and its community. It then provides students' insights into how they perceive their physical surroundings in the school building, spaces and places that have been carefully and

thoughtfully constructed for them. And it concludes with a discussion about Clyde's image and reputation outside of the school building according to students and what it means to and for them.

"Us" and "Them": School Community *versus* School Culture

Borrowing from Phillips (1996), I understand school culture to consist of the "beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors which characterize a school" (p. 1). A school's culture is abstract and also tightly bound to notions of physical space. For instance, Clyde's atmosphere is described in the glossy pages of the admissions office viewbook for the prospective student as: "a place where she can learn to speak her mind and her heart—a place where she can gain the knowledge and insight to have something to say and the confidence and courage to say it" (p. 4). At Clyde, place represents not only the physical spaces, but what students are able to do in them. McDowell (1999) argues that "places are made through power relations which construct the rules which define the boundaries. These boundaries are both social and spatial—they define who belongs to a place and who may be excluded, as well as the location or site of the experience" (quoted in Bettis & Adams, 2005, p. 5). This is important to note when considering the affordances of a school building, along with its community and culture. Mollie Blackburn (2001) understands *space* as a dialogic *between* place and people; space refers to "people within a place and the ways in which that place brings people to life" (p. 64). She goes on to say that if a space does not allow for particular articulations or expressions of self, then that space stops being a space for that particular performance of identity. Considerations of the affordances of space(s), therefore, are important when young people talk about how they situate themselves within larger narratives at school. This point is particularly salient in regard to how students differentiated between the Clyde culture and the Clyde community.

Like the school culture, the school community at Clyde had both tangible and intangible aspects to it. The tangible aspects refer to the people within the institution who participate in, engage with, and help create and maintain the culture; the intangible refer to a sense or feeling of being part of a collective within a bounded system—the institution. While there was some relation between the school culture and school community, many students talked about them as largely unique and separate entities. At times, when speaking with students, the "school culture" seemed less accessible and relevant to them than the "school community," but both clearly played critically central roles in their everyday experiences and perspectives of belonging at Clyde. Students overwhelmingly understood the school community as consisting primarily of their friends and peers as well as their teachers and advisors; the community was a source of support and acceptance. The administration was very rarely, if ever, included in students' explanations of community; yet, when discussing school culture, students often personified the school culture as "they," referring to the administration who, in their eyes, was largely synonymous with the construction and (re)production of the culture. The school culture was largely associated with the dominant narratives of the school, as discussed in Chapter IV, including the language and discursive practices used to communicate institutional expectations of and commitments to representation, performance, and behavior amongst members of Clyde.

As mentioned above, many students equated the school community with their friends, peers, and teachers. When I asked Lila to clarify who came to mind first when she thought about her school community, without hesitation she responded, "My friends. Definitely. For me, it's the students who create the community, it's the students who do that" (Interview, 3/8/17). Maya told me that the bonding that happens among students across grade levels is real and strong and, in her experience, had been one of the most prominent aspects of the school community (Interview, 4/10/17). Citing the work of Noddings (1988), Gilligan (1990), and Riordan (1990), Proweller (1998) finds,

> The culture of a single-sex school encourages students to build close relationships with teachers and peers based on an ethic of care, not unlike research findings that support girls' tendencies towards relational and communal styles of learning and social interaction. (p. 48)

For the most part, students felt the school community was supportive, positive, and inclusive, but they also offered some critical thoughts on what was in need of attention and improvement, as evidenced in the following set of excerpts:

> I think it's a well-knit community and everyone is very supportive, and a lot of people love Clyde and it's this big like, within Clyde it's a safe community and that's what we've been told. But I think my own experience is kind of different because I don't necessarily fit into the normal like, Clyde Girl, Every Girl-type thing. And so, like, a lot of my friends would agree with me, I think, that **Clyde's a very safe and comforting community if you fit this little, like, mold, I guess.** And it's been challenging kind of to navigate, because no one's gonna be like, "No, you're gonna be out, an outcast or whatever." But there's this underlying kind of feeling that's definitely present. (Annie, Interview, 4/18/17)

> … We have a strong sense of community here. I think that in some ways it kind of splits off … the students are definitely one community but sometimes when it comes to administration … it kind of changed this year, but it used to be more of like a student versus administration community … **we like thinking of ourselves as very tolerant and accepting** and I think that like recently the question's been posed, like **how accepting are we really? Um, but other than that, I feel like we have a good community and like it's pretty open.** (Lucy, Interview, 3/13/17)

> I think [Clyde reaches and supports] some of them, but no, not every girl. 'Cause I know there are a lot of girls that feel left out by, especially from the panel [discussion with students who identify as LGBTQ+], that just opened me up to like, how much like, girls don't feel that like, included in the Clyde community.… **People talk about them and their gender identities behind their backs.… I mean, I did know that happens, but … I didn't know it was that bad.** (Olivia, Interview, 3/8/17)

> Clyde is such an open, like, very inclusive community, but I feel like there's a lot of work to do … in terms of like, creating the diverse, um, inclusive community that we talk about a lot…. Like, **every girl kind of supports each other, but sometimes we don't acknowledge, like, each other's differences**.… I guess from the admissions standpoint, [the Clyde culture is] like, every girl's supported, um, every girl has a voice, and we want to hear it. Um, but then the culture within **Clyde is … very much geared to the experience of … a girl**. And sometimes that can get a little bit weird … because not every girl chose the same experience. And so,

> **sometimes the culture can be a little bit uniform**…. (Rachel, Interview, 5/2/17)

The comments above illustrate the contradictory aspects of the school community that students grappled with every day. Even though they spoke highly and fondly of the school community, for some people, there were conditions and stipulations that determined how safe and welcoming it truly was for them (or their peers) on a deeper level. The excerpts above allude to the mold or set of criteria one has to meet in order to receive the full level of acceptance and known-ness from the school.

> I think I go back and forth with like, Clyde 'cause … everyone's gonna have such completely different experiences. **It's why you're doing this project, it's 'cause an institution can have its intentions and it not actually play out that way.** But I've gained a lot of things from Clyde that I didn't think I was going to get like … I thought it was gonna be like tight sisterhood and it's not that and I'm okay with that.… Just 'cause we're a small school doesn't mean I have to be friends with [everyone]. So I think it's good to just be able to know how to work with people…. (Lydia, Interview, 3/8/17)

While Lydia discussed her disillusionment about the Clyde community not being the sisterhood she expected it to be, she had found value in the lack thereof, framing the reality as a type of life lesson. Her recognition of the purpose of my dissertation project also served as a testament to the continued need for research on the inner-workings of institutions and how ideations of identity, culture, and community can have real impacts on students' experiences and perceptions of school.

When students spoke about what was happening at the school—usually about events, issues, or practices that were causing a point of contention between the students and the administration—they personified the school as "they" and conflated "the school" with the administration, as a kind of faceless entity. To reiterate, because the young people positioned the administration *as* school, I therefore understand the school culture to be largely defined by the institution, and therefore the school leaders. While students often spoke highly of the adults in the building—their teachers, their advisors, the upper school deans—there was a distance felt between students and the administration. For

instance, student participants reported feeling a lack of transparency between the two groups: “There’s a lot of decision-making that goes on that we the students don’t really know that much about and it often feels like the conversations that I have with students are very different than the ones that I have with people in the administration” (Kate, Interview, 3/15/17).

Annie, a senior, understood Clyde’s school culture as largely defined by the people in the majority, referring to dominant aspects of identity (i.e., White, wealthy, cisgendered, heterosexual, etc.). She explained, “If you don't fit into that culture, you're pushed even more … there's a greater divide” (Interview, 4/18/17). Annie’s perspective relates to Howard’s (2008) notion of privilege as identity, resituating privilege from an external to an actively lived experience; an embodied aspect of identity that fundamentally impacts the lens through which one views the world and makes sense of their values, perceptions, and actions.

> … It’s definitely here every day and whether or not you see it, or you’re part of, like, feeling that or witnessing that, it’s definitely here. And [that’s life] but like, people in the majority are usually unaware of the difference between cultures and like, the divide that they’re creating. (Annie, Interview, 4/18/17)

For Lila, the school culture and school community were positioned as a binary. As she understood it, the culture was rooted in history, traditions, and operated as an intangible aspect of the school’s identity and operation; the community was active, current, and personified as a united collective that was evolving in rich and important ways. She said:

> The [school] culture is … [laughs] not as amazing [as the school community]. I guess the culture is more built from an older time rather than the community? It’s students who shape the community, which means we keep it modern, we keep it on top of everything. The culture at Clyde, a lot less so. I guess, I’ve been having a lot of arguments saying how some of **the ideals that we have at Clyde just … no longer match who is at Clyde anymore**…. (Interview, 3/8/17)

Students were also critical of the politeness and niceness that circulated within Clyde's school culture, as they questioned how at times it might impede or mask conversations about important and uncomfortable topics and situations:

> Clyde tries to be very PC because they don't want to offend anyone and it's like, by doing that you're not getting ... you're too afraid to say anything or to make a mistake that you're not really making any progress. And I think it's a thing like, you don't have to include everyone. Let them be honest about it. Like, I think there's a difference between being like, 'We include everyone,' but then not doing it or saying like, let's be real, "we can't include everyone, so we're not going to." (Lydia, Interview, 3/8/17)

> Clyde is "too politically correct" to be racially insensitive, but **the school is reluctant to expand its discourse into the greater questions and debates of race inside and outside of the classroom. She says that "we are experts at only telling part of the story**, often either omitting or confining the history and literature of people of color." She believes that "the fact that black literature is confined to the Harlem Renaissance unit in 9th grade is notable and ought to be changed." (student quoted in the school newspaper, May 2017)

Caroline felt that there had been more conversations happening about these issues in the upper school and that Clyde was working harder to support girls from different identities and backgrounds. She saw a parallel between the school climate and how the world at large is changing and felt that, in order to get the whole human experience, there needed to be greater acceptance of all people. She noted that she had not personally experienced any sort of adversity (so she understood this aspect of the school culture from a privileged positionality) but was aware that not everyone was experiencing the culture in the same way:

> I just feel like we've created a culture of politeness where, I mean, it's almost inappropriate to sort of [push back against the administration].… I just don't want to make any false assumptions about the ways that other girls experience Clyde culture. I know that I've had conversations where girls feel like their voices aren't being heard on issues of race and sexual orientation, sexual identity, and that sort of thing. (Interview, 3/6/17)

As a student of color, Simone viewed the school culture through a different lens than Caroline. Simone talked about her personal experience of fielding microaggressions[1] from peers about her academic performance at Clyde. For example, when she was awarded the History Award in 9th grade, a White classmate said to her, "Oh yeah, Clyde really tries to like have this diverse image so of course they would want a Black person to win this award." Looking back, she realized how naïve she had been up until that point because in that moment she realized that girls at Clyde are "low-key competitive," that they care about appearance and who gets awards and who does not. I asked Simone if this realization weighed on her, to which she responded:

> I think it does. I think that after … do you want to make me cry? (laughs) I think that people obviously work very hard too and don't just get everything handed to them, well, that happens sometimes, but I feel like **if people think that I'm only getting something because I'm Black … yeah, fuck yeah, it's going to weigh on me. Like, I don't belong here in that sense**.
>
> … So like, even as I'm talking right now, I realize that the reason I chose Clyde was for its like, quote, "warm environment."… But I feel like, in some ways, it's kind of like the Stanford Duck Syndrome[2] or something where like … it like looks nice on the outside and then once you, like, spend several years there it's like, it's so good like you have academic experiences, good things, but I feel, after speaking at a diversity panel recently, I was like, "Oh yeah, **that's my experience, like, admitted but not accepted**." (Interview, 4/12/17)

Simone's experience as a person of color in a predominantly White school space is common (see Bettis & Adams, 2005; Proweller, 1998). Simone also touched on the

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[1]Sue et al. (2007) explain: "Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color" (p. 271).

[2]The "duck syndrome" comes out of psychologists' work at Stanford which characterizes how some people deal with stress: on the surface, they appear to be happy, floating and calm, but underneath the water, they are frantically paddling their feet (Scelfo, 2015).

politics of representation at Clyde, providing an anecdote from her junior year when she decided to run for the position of vice president of the student council:

> I ran because I could see myself being good at [it] and I've had people who looked like me [people of color] in this position.… But I think being the school president was off the table. Like, if I want to win an election, I might as well do something that I have a good shot at getting … [so] it's notable that I won the election and that [I] was running against like a girl from the Upper East Side and a girl who has a parent working here and is very well-liked … so it's not insignificant … and I take my position very seriously, but I think that like, **the school president is always White; has been here since kindergarten preferably … is probably not on financial aid.… I would rather have a White president and a Black or Asian whatever vice president than have both of the people be White**, even though that's still something that's like definitely a trend. (Interview, 4/12/17)

While Simone felt confident and empowered to run for vice president, she understood that there were certain unspoken boundaries, or discursive practices, in place within the school culture that dissuaded her from running for a higher position. Simone's last sentiment about how she would rather be vice president as a person of color than have two White people in the positions is both valiant and heartbreaking. In a school that promises equal opportunities to each student and seeks to reach every girl, this reality does not live up to the mission.

Jenny, who had been at Clyde since kindergarten and considered the school to be a second home, offered an entirely different perspective than her peers about the school culture: "I don't know if there is a culture to Clyde really.… I wouldn't be able to name a specific culture. I feel like every class is sort of different. I feel like there's more [grade] cultures instead and like individual cultures not … I wouldn't necessarily say there's a school culture" (Jenny, Interview, 3/15/17). Jenny's response poses an interesting contrast to Simone and Lydia's perspectives and serves as an example of what Annie talked about regarding the school culture being defined by the majority. Perhaps Jenny does not feel or see Clyde's culture because she falls into the majority and therefore has not had to consider what exactly defines the culture (see Perry, 2001).

The next section presents data findings on the physical manifestations of the school culture as examined multimodally by students.

Mapping the School

As discussed in Chapter III, the first phase of data collection consisted of a participatory mapping activity involving the sophomore class as an exercise in their required leadership course, run by Dr. Collette. The mapping activity, which took place over the course of one class period for each of the four class sections, was intended to provide students with a different kind of opportunity to share what they noticed and how they made sense of the various physical spaces that comprise the schoolhouse. Tupper et al. (2008) offer,

> A school's visual culture contributes to the many ways in which students move through, occupy, and feel about particular school spaces … a school's visual culture [is] revealed through both the physical aesthetics of the school building and how particular spaces [are] organized and occupied. These spaces are not neutral and how they are interpreted depends very much on an individual's lived experiences in relation to particular spaces as identities are constructed and citizenship [is] negotiated. (p. 1067)

The class sections were introduced to the activity with the following prompts: *What story is this floor telling about Clyde? About students? About girls? What do you notice? What stands out? Who is represented?* In groups of two or three, students were assigned a particular floor to examine. They were given approximately 15 minutes to observe and sketch their floor. While the students were out exploring, I drew a rough sketch of the school house (essentially, seven long lines with their corresponding floor number, see Figure 3 for example) on the white board.

Figure 2. Image of the lobby, taken on a student's iPad

When students returned to class, they transferred their findings onto the shared map. We then spent the remaining 20 minutes or so of class discussing the maps, each pair or trio presenting the findings from their assigned floor. In addition to images of the collaborative maps created by each of the four 10th grade classes, I next present a composite of students' findings and analyses (largely in their own words), noting their observations of and visceral reactions to each floor. I offer my own analysis at the end in service of allowing students' interpretations to stand and speak for themselves.

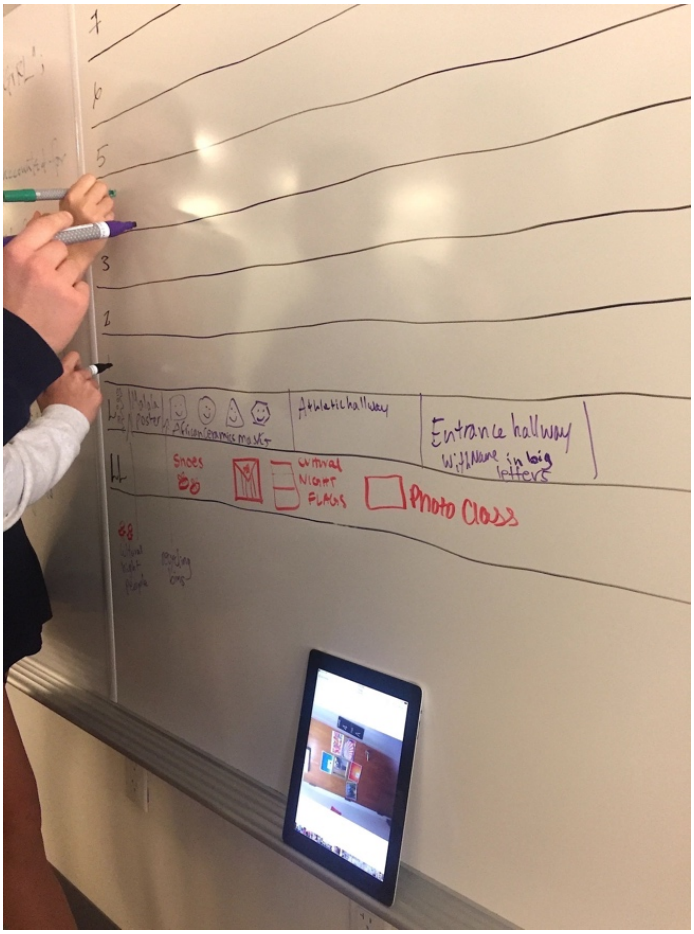

Figure 3. Students use photos taken on their iPads of their assigned floor to draw map

The Clyde School: A Collaborative, Composite Analysis

The gym, located at the top of the building on the 7th floor, is full of displays of Clyde pride. There are trophies, banners, and a super hero poster. It feels like it's showing off certain girls. One student pair noticed there were only two girls of color in a P.E. Class.

On the 6th floor, which houses the middle school, students noticed a display of female leaders on a section of the hallway wall and reported that feelings of happiness, support, and community were tangible.

The 5th floor is where the science labs and art studios are located. There was one display of female scientists. One pair of students thought the floor's main story was around empowerment.

The walls of the lower school, located on the 4th floor, were overwhelmingly described as colorful. One student remarked, "It looks like an arts and crafts store threw up on the walls!"(Field notes, 11/3/16). One

display in the hallway was a "cultural garden" of girls' heritages, but upon closer observation, it was about how old they were, the things they enjoy doing, etc. not really about their backgrounds. Another display was for International Day of the Girl:

"That was a big thing with tons of faces of women and one of the things I noticed was that almost half, if not 75% of the women were White. It was a lot of White women, but there was ah, Malala and Beyoncé too." (Lila, Interview, 3/8/17)

There was also a poster of past students hanging in the hallway, the majority of the students were White and made one pair of mappers uncomfortable. Students also noticed very few girls of color walking down the hall.

Stress was felt on the 3rd floor, the high school. The majority of the items hanging throughout the hallway have to do with various leadership boards, clubs, student activities, and school rules. There was a sign-up sheet to sign an ally pledge still hanging from Ally Week, students noticed the sheet was largely unsigned. They noted the presence of college, namely pennants of different schools hanging outside the college counselor's office. Mappers also noted the space of the Student Commons. "It's really fun to hang out if you want to play a board game or you want to meet a teacher. I just go there and sit on the couches, do some homework, if I don't have anything to do, I'll play Connect Four with some random person. It's very relaxed and nice" (Raine, Interview, 3/15/17). Raine shared that she wished the Commons was bigger so that it could better accommodate her large friend group, which consisted of 11 people, making it difficult for them all to hang out in that space.

The 2nd floor houses the library and the Student Center (dining hall). There is a lot of student art on this floor. There is also a display of publications and books by faculty and alumni. Some students thought this floor's main narrative was also about empowerment.

The 1st floor is where the admissions office is located, most notably, it is where prospective families spend a lot of time. The head of school's office, the office of development and communications, as well as the music rooms are also on this floor. There is student art and photographs hanging outside the admissions office—one student wondered if the school is attempting to give the impression that Clyde is a particularly "artistic school". The floor represents money and wealth. Girls of color are featured prominently, which is true of the calendar too and other school publications.

The Lobby is the first thing people see when they enter the building, the school wants to make a good impression. There's no art from lower school students, but rather outside artists' paintings. In the lobby, students noted the

plaques with the names of the student body presidents hanging right inside the front doors of the school. They also described it as a space that works to convey messages about inclusion, arts, and sports. For instance, students noted the African masks made by the 7th grade on display (Figure 4) for Clyde's Cultural Night.[3] During her interview, Raine, reflected on this aspect of her mapping of the lobby:

> [It's] probably changed now because they change up the art all the time, but I remember at the entrance and on the left, facing the elevators, there was this glass case filled with African masks and I remember we were pretty upset about that, I can't remember exactly the reason why, I think it was cultural appropriation? I think it was about that like, they didn't really teach what was behind, what was the reason for the African masks. They kind of just, yeah, took it as their own and made it their own, which I understand, it's a cool idea to get inspired by that, but showing that like, "Oh, we do African masks so we're accepting of all culture," and I feel like that was not a very good choice of them to do it. I feel like they should have just done pots and stuff, that would have been nicer. (Interview, 3/15/17)

Looking over the maps, Karl also noticed students' notes about Cultural Night:

> "[…] it goes to show like […] how hard Clyde tries to be a safe space and like, is that the right way to become a safe space? By just telling everyone you're a safe space and being like, 'Diversity!'? And like, 'Let's travel the world together!' It's so cliché." (Interview, 3/13/17)

The Lower Lobby is all about art and dance. There is a dance studio, the photography lab, and the main entrance to the school's auditorium. The auditorium is where a lot of the tough or important conversations about uncomfortable issues happen (Olivia, Interview, 3/8/17).

Students are still getting used to the features and functions of the new building:

> When we heard about the new building we were all really excited because like, "Oh, it's a new part of the school, we're going to get new classrooms, we're going to have like a black box [theater], a greenhouse, and honestly, I think we definitely needed something new, like it was time for a little upgrade and [to] have new things. I mean, I've only been here for three years, but from what I heard it was time to have a new space. They've been trying to get that space for ages, so it was all really exciting and nice you know, a breath of fresh air. (Raine, Interview, 3/15/17)

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[3]Cultural Night is one of the school's most popular annual events that celebrates diversity within the school community (Diversity, school website)

Figure 4. Display of African Masks by Grade 7

> Students expressed frustration about some of the new spaces like the greenhouse, which was being underutilized at the time. From the students' perspective, they were promised this new space but not allowed to be in it; only lower school students had gotten to use the greenhouse at the time of my interviews. From the administration's perspective, they were still working on programming and curriculum for the greenhouse and therefore were not ready to open it up to the middle and upper school students, but it did not seem as though this rationale had been effectively communicated to the students (field notes, 3/8/17). The black box theater and fitness room were used more significantly.

Reflecting on the mapping activity, Dr. Collette shared, "[The students] love this building. They like being in this building…. It feels comfortable, they have their little spots they like to hang out, they like being here … I was really taken with that and I think it's really lovely" (Interview, 12/15/16). At the same time, she was struck by the students' very different relationship to the new building, "how disconnected they seem to feel from it. I would have never known that if we had not done this activity" (Interview, 12/15/16). Students' readings of the school building revealed their high levels of

awareness as to how the school uses various spaces to communicate its identity both to current members of the community as well as prospective families. They also overwhelmingly made note of how each space made them feel, harkening back to the discussion of how messages of belonging were found in the physical manifestations of the building in Chapter IV.

The most significant limitation of this activity was time. Because of scheduling as well as school holidays and breaks, students only had one class period to engage in the mapping. I initially planned to have a follow-up time allotted to digging deeper into the school maps and recruiting a small number of volunteers to do some mapping of the surrounding neighborhood during a free period, lunch, or after school. But again, there were multiple scheduling conflicts before winter break, and when students returned from winter break, they had their mid-term exams and I was at that point in the thick of Phase 3 of data collection (interviews), which took up the remainder of my time at the school from February through April. If I were to run this activity again, it would be interesting to have students map their assigned floors for a day or perhaps a week—to observe how the spaces change over a period of time; what the hallways look like in between classes or at the beginning or end of the day; how people gather and disperse; recording bits and pieces of conversations to note how discourse functions by floor. Additionally, engaging the same students in a participatory mapping activity of the surrounding neighborhood would yield an even more layered and nuanced contextual analysis.

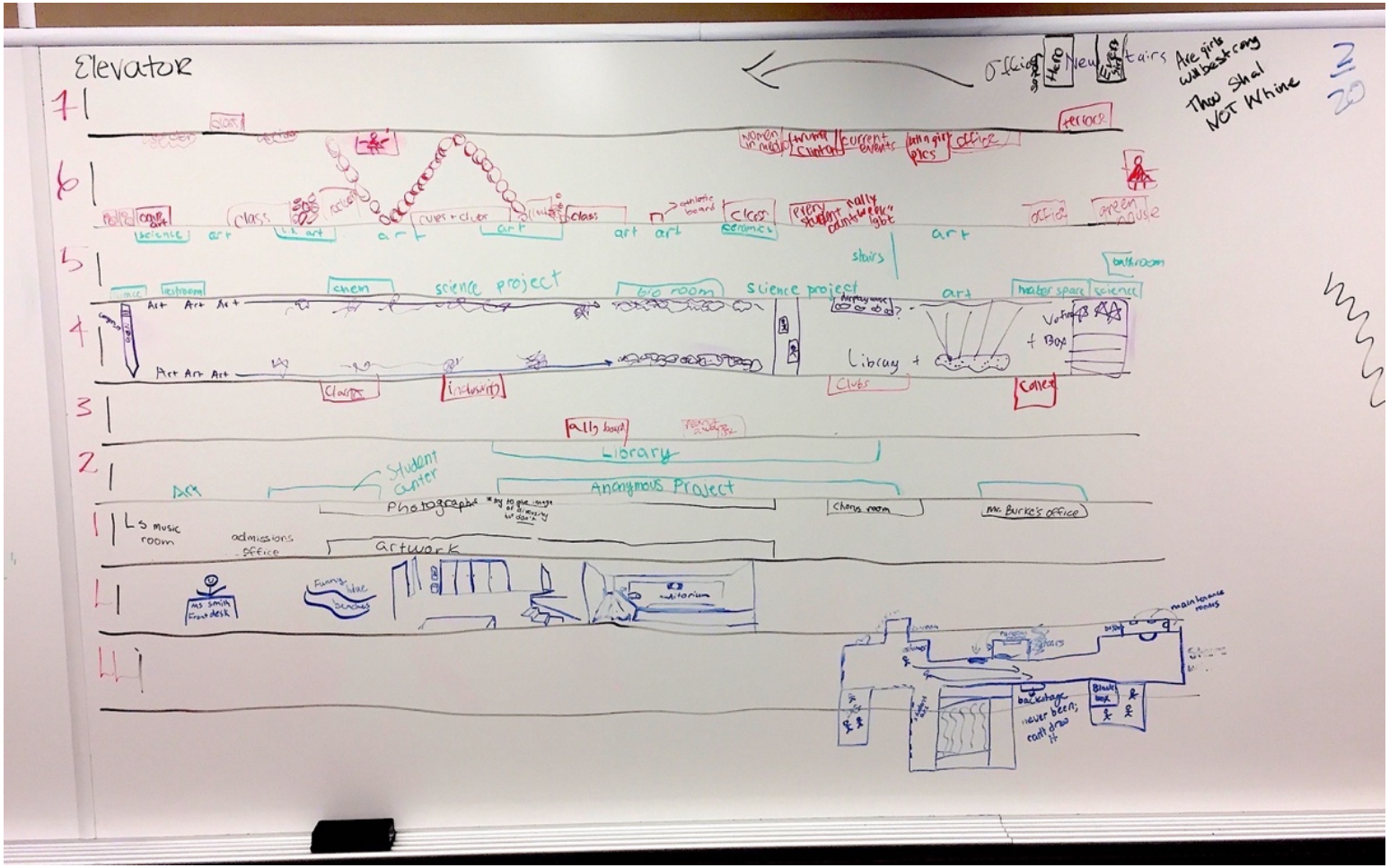
Elevator
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Figure 6. Section 2 Map of School

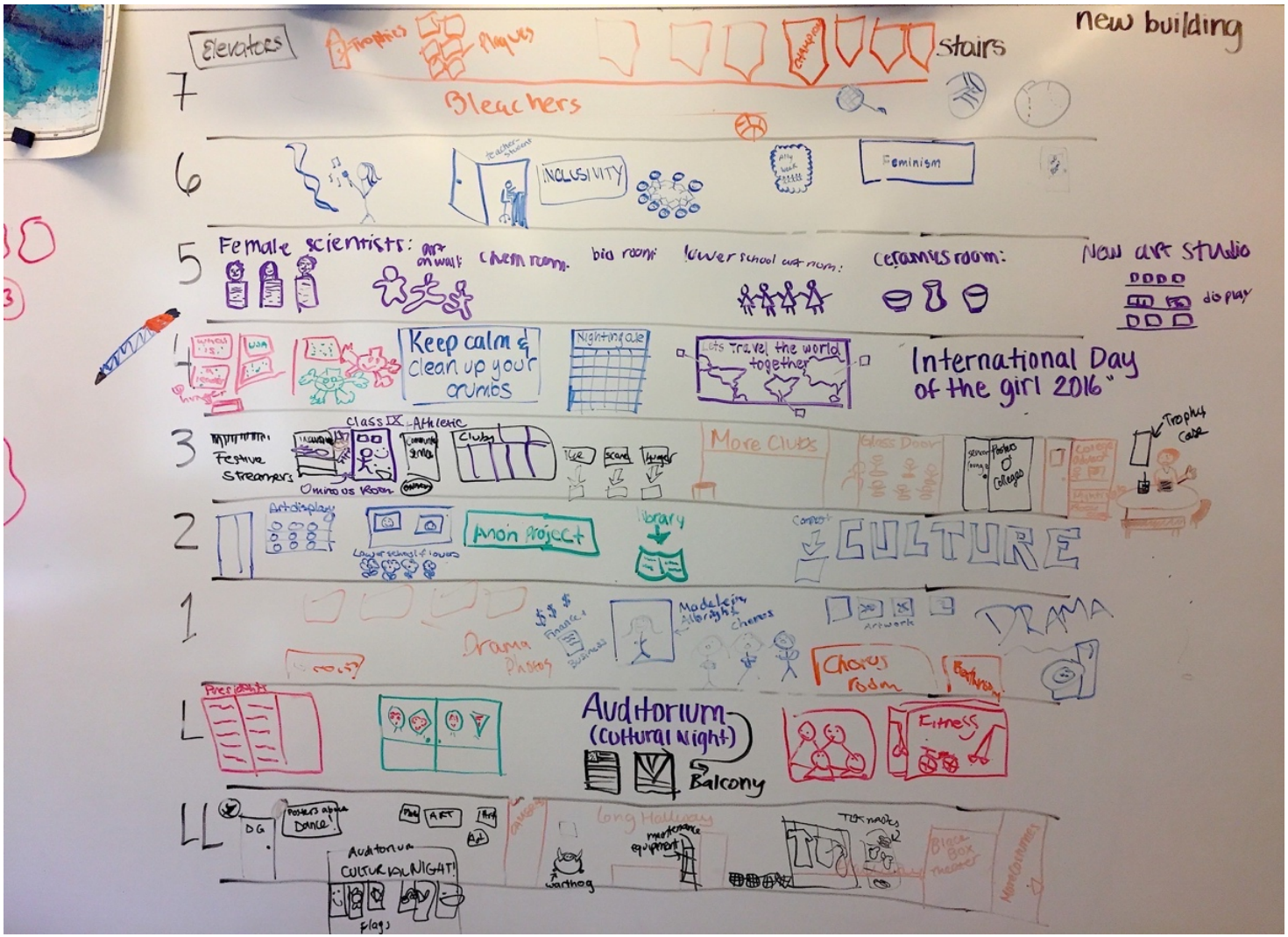

Figure 7. Section 3 Map of School

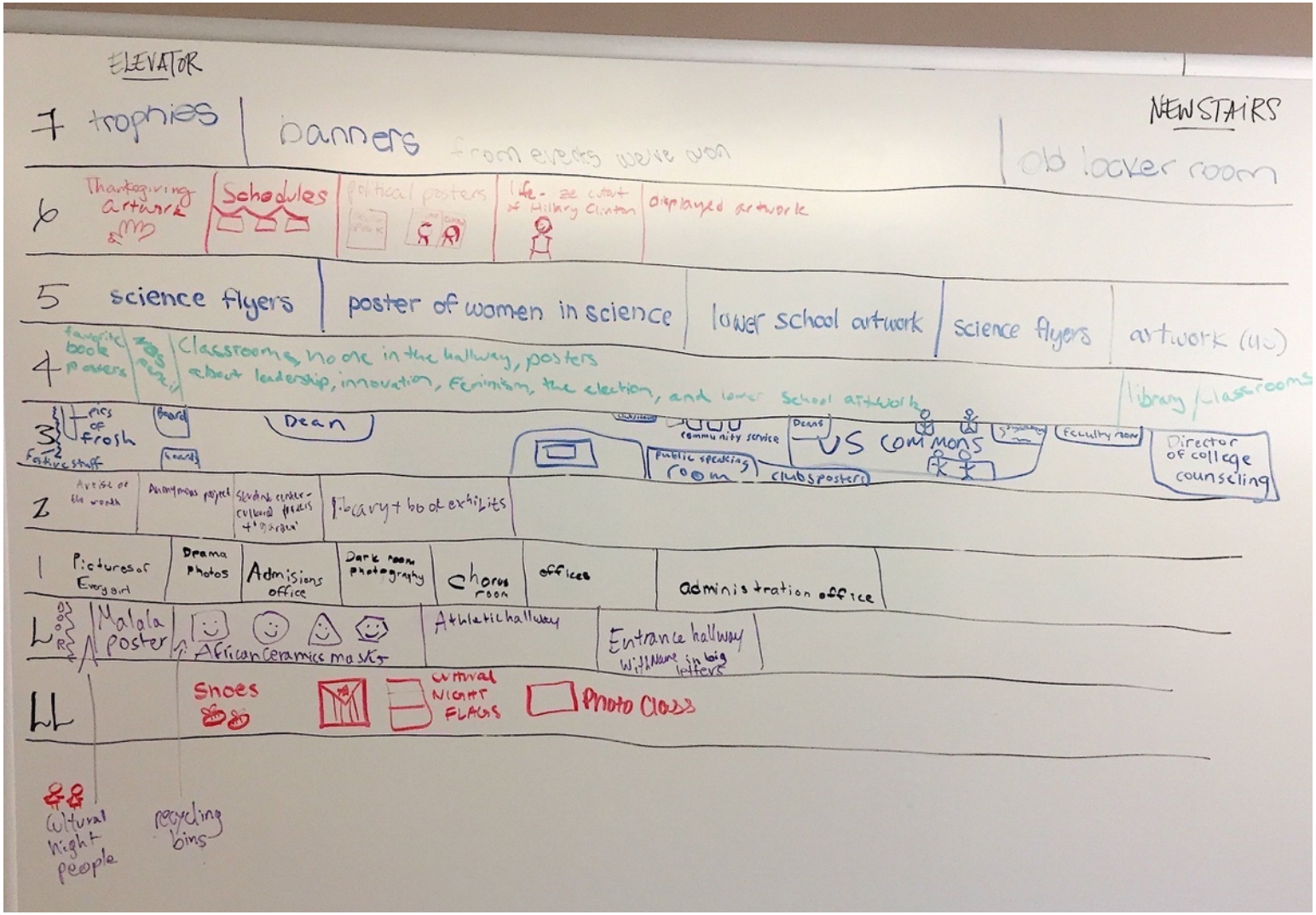

Figure 8. Section 7 Map of School

School Image and Reputation

"No matter how nurturing and open we see ourselves, we are still a school in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the world. We are still a very, very foreign place for many families." This statement from a former Head of School was published in the Clyde School magazine in the spring of 2009. She was discussing Clyde's admissions process and the challenges of attracting families from outside the wealthy neighborhood in which Clyde is located. I open this section with this quote to reinforce the level of privilege and the type of institutional identity that are both constantly maintained and negotiated at Clyde; it is an aspect of the school's identity that continues to pose a challenge when recruiting prospective families from other neighborhoods in Manhattan as well as the outer boroughs, such as Brooklyn, Staten Island, and the Bronx (along with Westchester County, Long Island, New Jersey, and Connecticut). In Chapter IV, we heard from Mr. Martin and Mrs. Thomas about the ways the school approaches telling its story to an outside audience for the purposes of reputation as well as enrollment and fundraising. This was an integral piece of the construction and maintenance of Clyde's institutional identity. But what do students make of the dominant narratives around the public image? How do their realities compare to the experiences showcased in official publications? And how is Clyde situated in the wider scope of the consortium of elite, independent single-sex schools in Manhattan, according to students?

Many students were critical of the ways Clyde represents itself to the public, namely, prospective families visiting the school, as well as on the school website and its social media accounts. The following three excerpts speak to an inconsistency that students felt existed in the image that Clyde constructed; one that lacked a realness and honest depiction of the school. For instance, when I asked Raine to think about the photographs posted throughout the building and what story/ies she thought they tell about girls or students at the school, she responded:

> Well, this is something actually, that my friends and I talk about a lot, how **all the pictures have someone of every sort of race like, that's why the photographer likes us [my friend group], because we're very diverse as people so that's why we usually get photographed a lot** … they seem to always be the same sort of people [in the photographs]. I mean, obviously, there's all kinds of people, but I don't know, **they more picture the perfect Clyde Girl I guess, making a speech, or doing some dance moves**, which is good, that's what you're supposed to be representing, but I don't know, **it doesn't feel exactly like the core of the school**. (Interview, 3/15/17)

> I don't think Clyde is a bad place. There's a reason I'm here. There's a reason I'm passionate about it … but it gets frustrating when it's like, **"You're trying to project something about us that isn't accurate. You're trying to say something about us that isn't real. Like, if you want us to be that, then make us that. And maybe focus less on who you're trying to attract to the school, focus on who's already here."** And that's how it's gonna build up 'cause I mean, yes, we say we want diversity, but that's more about like, we want to trick other people like, "We have a lot of diversity, come here." That will happen naturally once you make people feel included here, that will spread; it will be obvious to people where it won't have to be advertised. And I think that's where people get really uncomfortable that we're advertising an image that isn't true, which I think every place does, everyone does, especially with social media now … we have to change, but I think to change you have to change what's going on now and focus on people who are here. (Lydia, Interview, 3/8/17)

It was clear that students were anxious to share the role of "storyteller" of and for the school. They wanted to be included in the voices and perspectives that helped paint the pictures of everyday life at Clyde. When they saw and heard master narratives at work, however, they often felt an inauthenticity that took away from their more nuanced experiences. Karl offered,

> When you go onto the Clyde website, everything just looks so fake and, I don't know. It's … **there's nothing like truly from the students there….** Have you seen the Clyde Instagram account?… If they had like students posting things or like, maybe they could do like a feature on a student or something, that would … I feel like that would work to their benefit a lot more. By highlighting how life really is inside the schoolhouse and not just like, a random picture of three kids sitting at a lunch table grinning and being like, "Three 10th grade students having fun!" It's … you can't tell anything from that picture, how like staged it is, or if it's staged at all and it's just so arbitrary and one-dimensional. (Interview, 3/13/17)

This was an interesting observation about the function of the school's use of social media, which, as previously mentioned by Mr. Martin, was supposed to provide "snapshots of everyday life." Karl points out a lack of agency and ownership felt amongst the students in getting to tell those everyday stories of life at Clyde; and Lydia wondered about the role that competition with other schools plays in Clyde's actions and how it projects itself.

> I think Clyde is changing a lot. I don't know if that's for the better because I do miss the old Clyde … like, **more okay with not being like every other school?** I get that you have to compete with other schools, but I think we've definitely changed a lot to be like every other girls' school and I think a lot of the reasons people liked Clyde is because we were okay with having girls that weren't going to [all] be the same and now it's much more of like, "Well, we want to be just like the other schools 'cause we have to compete with [Girls' School X]. They have a greenhouse, we need a greenhouse…." (Lydia, Interview, 3/8/17)

She also questioned the school's motivations around representation, troubling the balance that Mr. Martin also referred to—how does a predominantly White school acknowledge where it is with racial and ethnic diversity and honestly communicate where it would like to be? Lydia shared:

> … especially when it comes to race, students are always calling it out. So they're like, "No, on the website, a lot of it's for show, like, you put three Black people on the website, but what are you doing to actually make us feel included in the schoolhouse? Like, not much." It's more of like to show others. I think a lot of focus is definitely on "what can we show?" And **yeah, you want to show your best self … but I think it's also important to show your authentic self.** (Interview, 3/8/17)

Students were also aware of the concern for reputation and representation in the admissions office, mostly as it related to issues of "diversity." The incoming 9th grade class for the 2017-2018 school year was scheduled to be the largest in the school's history. Typically, each grade has approximately 40 students. At the time of my data collection, the incoming freshmen class was totaling 73 students.

When I asked Mrs. Thomas if there was an ideal student that they look for or particular recruitment strategies they use in admissions to find the best girls, she explained:

> Obviously, first of all, they have to be able to do the academic work … they have to be academically up to the curriculum … and then after that it's really girls that want to get engaged in a community and be a part of it and add something to it. I mean, different interests are great … this year [in Grade 9] we have a girl who does velodrome bike racing. We have a couple of ballerinas. We have a couple of athletes. I mean, one is into like, slam poetry. And I think that is going to make it a really interesting class … it makes it an interesting community. And it, you know, everyone brings something different. And I think it allows the girls to really appreciate diversity on all different fronts. (Interview, 4/18/17)

As evidenced above, and in the excerpt below, one piece of information that both Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Hill made a point of highlighting in their interviews was about the "diversity" of this incoming class, noting also that only five students lived on the Upper East Side. While students coming from different neighborhoods qualifies as a kind of geographic diversity, the extent of their use of the word was unclear; did that also mean that there would be more students of color than there had been in the past? Or young people from different social classes? Maya was grappling with this and brought it to my attention:

> Mrs. Hill didn't mention, like, the race of the kids. So I was like, "Are these like, White people from different boroughs made to look like diversity, or like, actual diversity?" Because she herself said like, "We don't just want people from Manhattan," but like, just getting people from outside Manhattan doesn't mean diversity. (Maya, Interview, 4/10/17)

Maya's question about the use of the word "diversity" is important. In a society where "diversity" is often used as a coded word to talk about "race" (Pollock, 2004), it is crucial for administrators who are involved with and responsible for the demographic diversity of a student body to both have a comprehensive understanding of the nuance and work of the word "diversity" and how it translates to students, particularly students of color.

In the section above, students discussed Clyde's image and reputation as it is produced by the school and largely for prospective families. I conclude this counter-narrative with students' accounts of how Clyde is socially perceived by their peers both in and out of school.

Clyde is "socially irrelevant." When I asked students about Clyde's reputation among the other all-girls schools, their overwhelming response was that Clyde is largely irrelevant in the private school scene.

> Clyde kind of like, has this **stereotype for being anti-social**. We're kind of like, isolated into our own, like, area [which] makes it kind of hard to branch out socially. You have to make a conscious effort to do so, but also it's kind of nice 'cause, you know, [you] really interact with the people that are here in the community.… Like, I know at [Girls' School X] there's so much pressure … to like go to parties every day. Like be with all these guys and I think that really takes a toll on their education.… **I think an insular community is actually better in that way because you can really focus on your academics**. Or you can really just like focus on getting to know the people that go to the school with you really well. And I think that's what makes Clyde kind of special. (Jenny, Interview, 3/15/17)

> Well, we have a technically kind of good reputation compared to the other all-girls schools like, we're just irrelevant, which is not great, not bad either. Like, there's way worse reputations you can be for an all-girls school. I won't say what they are because they're not very nice words, but we're the speck of dust that is irrelevant to anything and everything, which is hurtful, obviously, because we want to be relevant, we want to be part of things, but it's sort of true because **our school really doesn't do anything**.… So yeah, **we're having a sort of neutral but mildly negative reputation that we could definitely improve on if we actually met other schools, we could work on that**, but it's better than most schools.… Like, **compared to the other schools, I think "irrelevant" is okay.** (Raine, Interview, 3/15/17)

> We don't really have any reputation … we're just pretty irrelevant, which, I mean, I don't really mind … because there's some other schools, like [Girls' School Y], their reputation is like they all, they just only do work, they don't have any fun, they're just boring. Or, it's like, **[Girls' School Y] girls become doctors, [Girls' School Z] girls marry doctors, and [Girls' School X] girls sleep with doctors.… I don't know why these images of the schools stick for so long**.… (Kate, Interview, 3/15/17)

Although Rachel admitted she was not very involved with events or activities involving the consortium of other elite independent private schools in Manhattan, she said, "I get the impression that Clyde's kind of like that *other* school" (Interview, 5/2/17). Raine shared, "Someone literally called us 'a speck of dust' because we're so irrelevant to the Interschool community.… But Clyde has just sort of been in its little bubble and not really … even to all-girls schools, not just the all-boys ones … we don't really do things" (Interview, 3/15/17). She also said that Clyde is often better about scheduling events with other schools in middle school, but not in high school, which, she argued, are the formative years for making the most connections, meeting different people, and having important discussions. She reported that the administration often promised more dances and trips with other schools, but they never happened. For Lucy, Clyde fell right in the middle of the spectrum of the six all-girls schools in terms of academics, social-ness, and overall reputation: "I think that's kind of good, you know? You don't want to be the person with the extremes of anything, like, you want to have a mixture of things. I think that's also why people comment that Clyde has a good work/life balance, because we kind of have this middle spot" (Interview, 3/13/17).

In this first counter-narrative, I shared students' perspectives on the school's sociocultural ecology—how the culture and community both intersect and conflict. We then got students' interpretations of the physical spaces of Clyde to consider how ideations of girlhood, empowerment, and representation physically manifest themselves within and on the school walls. And lastly, students shared their opinions about how Clyde tells its story and how much students would like to be involved in the storytelling. The last set of comments about Clyde's social reputation among the other elite private schools demonstrates how important image and representation are to a school's culture and institutional identity. At the same time, the students' acceptance of and contentment with the status of social irrelevance provide a bit of deeper insight into the student culture

that permeates the boundaries between in- and out-of-school spaces—an area I would like to explore further in future studies.

Counter-Narrative 2: Interrogating Expectations

In Chapter IV, I shared a dominant narrative of expectations and excellence at Clyde as it relates to academics, gender constructions, and the ideal student archetypes. Below I present the second counter-narrative, showcasing responses from students that speak back to and reckon with expectations conveyed and valued by the school. The first set of student perspectives is about how they perceive the pressures of excellence. The second set addresses expectations as they relate to the school mission and ethos of empowering girls to use their voices, but students discuss the discord between theory and action. And in the third set of responses, students dismantle, destabilize, and reclaim the ideal archetypes of the Clyde Girl and the Every Girl.

Finding Balance in an Academically Rigorous Environment

I preface this section with a note about why I chose *not* to focus my research on academics and academic spaces at the school. The primary reason is that the classroom is often the focus of studies about school climate, expectations, and social constructions of student identity/ies (see Anyon, 1980; McCall, 2014a, 2014b). While these research projects offer critical and necessary perspectives, I intentionally did not spend time in classrooms, as I was interested in young people's experiences of school outside the confines of their formal learning spaces. While I fully expected academics to be a part of my conversations with both students and school leaders, as the study was conducted in one of the highly competitive academic institutions in Manhattan, I did not ask questions specifically about academics. Not surprisingly, however, academics and the pressures associated with them came up throughout my interviews. When students are not in

classes, they are often studying, doing homework, working on group projects, or getting extra help from teachers before or after school. Ultimately, I was more interested in how students described the ways they felt they had to perform in an academically rigorous setting, not necessarily about the academics themselves.

The pressures and realities of being in an extremely academically rigorous environment seem to manifest themselves through feelings of empowerment, competition, and perceived expectations of excellence. Students attributed these feelings (which were often described as stressful and overwhelming) as simply a part of the school's DNA—an intangible aspect of the culture that often gets wired into students, resulting in a normalized "it-comes-with-the-territory" mentality. Interestingly, students did not cite or blame their peers as being responsible for perpetuating this type of climate; but rather credited their peers as strong sources of support and encouragement. Caroline illustrated this point:

> I feel like the student network here is so supportive that even if you don't do well, there is such a warm community of girls here that we pick each other up and we pat each other on the back no matter what. **I feel like the pressure to strive for excellence, it's really kind of ingrained in the culture here** and I feel like it's really … because obviously, we don't want to create a culture of laziness! **Certainly, that would go against Clyde's mission, but it's definitely ingrained in the culture and ultimately, I think I've absorbed that**. And that's just kind of part of who I am that, no matter what I do, I do it full, I do it at 150% and sometimes I do get disappointed and at Clyde, over time, I've learned that sometimes you have to accept that disappointment and sometimes I can't and that's a really hard thing.… (Interview, 3/6/17)

> … I feel like Clyde does prepare us in terms of academics and things like that because, I don't know, just like **my confidence really built up from my career at Clyde.** Like in 5th grade, I was really shy … I was the "quiet kid" in the back of the classroom … and now, I'm making my own Claymation [animated series] and I'm voicing so many of the characters in it and I just feel so much more out there and able to like, act and sing confidently. (Karl, Interview, 3/13/17)

The excerpts below demonstrate the range of feelings about competition and expectations among high schoolers. Only a few participants spoke about expectations

from sources outside of school like their parents. Jenny, for example, felt that Clyde had "definitely supported" her and that any pressure or expectations to do well came from more internal sources like herself or her parents, not from the school (Interview, 3/15/17). "There is a struggle and a pressure to be competitive and to be the best," Maya told me. Her parents had the mentality that if she did not get the best grades, she would not get into a good college and therefore would be wasting her education (Interview, 4/10/17). When asked what was expected of them as students, many participants primarily talked about the expectations they felt from the school in relation to academic performance and extracurricular involvement—many of them felt the pressure and impossibility of "well-rounded-ness," as Annie noted: "I think grades are the priority, and then it's like, extracurriculars … but you also need to be a well-rounded person. But if you can't keep your grades up, you can't do extracurriculars, so you can't be a well-rounded person [laughs]" (Interview, 4/18/17). This cyclical conundrum illustrates how Annie read and understood the implicit expectations of students excelling in various areas. To complicate this idea further, Lauren felt like students who fall in the middle of performative expectations get overlooked:

> There's a lot of expectation to be good at like, everything. Like, you have to be good in like all your academics, also do a sport, be good at arts, and like, I don't think that our school does a good job…. I mean, maybe for some people … but like, **if someone's not really focused in one thing, but kinda just like all around, just kinda like okay at everything, I feel like our school doesn't acknowledge them as much**. And they're kind of like left out. And then there are people that are really, really good at one thing, or really, really good at everything and like, the school acknowledges them more. (Interview, 3/6/17)

In the excerpts below, students further extrapolate on the expectations and pressures they feel at school. It was a topic that garnered a significant response in my student interviews.

> I think it's just being the best you can be…. I feel like Clyde really forces you, and sometimes it is a little bit stressful, even as a second semester senior, I will admit, I feel laziness but **I feel like if I don't do well,**

> **how will this community perceive me? How will they see me if I'm not performing at my best 24/7?** You know, if I'm just sitting in the hall and not in the library, how will people see me? I feel like there's also this expectation of perfection, which I don't know is necessarily a strength or a weakness, but I feel like it's kind of haunting sometimes, where it's like you have to be your best, you have to be performing at your highest caliber 24/7. I mean, I definitely felt pressure to be at my best going into the college process during my junior year, I feel like that was definitely the height at which I felt a lot of pressure from this community. (Caroline, Interview, 3/6/17)
>
> The values of Clyde are like, love, loyalty, trust and friendship … but we also have academic values and they're definitely geared towards a type of person. **Like, if you have mental illness, or if you live in a different borough, or you know, if your family is not assumingly a supportive family, your experience is going to be completely different at Clyde and it's gonna seem like it's an unsupportive community** … and it's frustrating because I obviously want everyone to feel like Clyde supports them, but I don't know how that can be fixed 'cause that's like, what the institution's expecting. They're expecting students to have As, to go to the top schools, and leave with a 3.9—higher than that (laughs)—GPA, and to be able to handle all this work and be on sports [teams] and somehow be an artist. They're not going to be able to accommodate anyone with any sort of mental illness or with learning disabilities. (Lydia, Interview, 3/8/17)
>
> [I'm expected to] excel academically. Keep my grades above a B minus, which isn't happening, but that's fine. Um, [to] be okay all the time. Yeah, I think that's like, it of the expectations (laughs). It's just mental expectations and academic expectations. Um, I don't know why? And they both, like, obviously, are at conflict with each other…. **I also feel like what teachers see as failure and success versus what one student sees as their own personal failure and success is at conflict sometimes**. (Naomi, Interview, 4/10/17)

Naomi brings up the fundamental question of who and what defines success and failure at Clyde. The school does not subscribe to academic rankings or assign GPAs, a practice that is meant to alleviate competition, stress, and pressure among students. Maria shares, "You can like, you know who's the smartest but you don't … it's never exploited to everyone" (Interview, 3/6/17); but Naomi's point disrupts the foundation of the argument—if the lack of academic rankings and GPA genuinely did not matter as a piece of the school culture, then perhaps there would not necessarily be such rigid expectations around academic excellence. At the same time, as discussed in Chapter IV, Clyde is

known as a strong, academically rigorous school, and there are most certainly expectations around maintaining that reputation.

Activism, Slacktivism, and Student Voice

One of the bedrock charges of the Clyde School is to help girls and young women locate, develop, and exercise their voices; whether it be to share a topic they are passionate about or speak up about an issue of injustice, Clyde students constantly receive messages about strengthening and wielding their voices and being the change they want to see: "At Clyde, your daughter will join a community of engaged citizens and learners and will be guided by insightful teachers who will help her to find her own voice and use it with confidence" (school website, Admissions). Lila, however, had received mixed messages about exercising her voice and agency as a member of the Clyde community. She provided an anecdote from when she attended a school-organized trip to the Women's March in Washington, DC in January 2017:

> Clyde sponsored [the trip] and then told us, "You can't talk about politics, you can't on video or any social media talk about your support for Hillary Clinton, you cannot have a poster that says anything negative, period." And I was like, "Then what are we doing at this march?" And when we started, **our Clyde girls, including me, started a lot of the chants, which was super fun and we *led* them**, which was even more fun and the number one thing we got was, **"Okay, you can't put that on Snapchat. Okay, you can't really put that there…. We need to make sure that Clyde has a good reputation," and it's confusing to me**. We stand for something so strong and so powerful as an all-girls school, like presenting very forward thinking and progressive learning and yet, we are not allowed to express our full thoughts at these places…. (Interview, 3/8/17)

Topics of feminism constantly circulated through the hallways, in conversations among students, on bulletin boards, in student club meetings, and it was at the forefront of most discussions about activism and student voice at Clyde, especially in the wake of the 2016 presidential election (which coincided with the beginning of my data collection). For some students, feminism appeared to be understood as "a set of critical tools that enable girls and women to recognize inequality and work toward equality—political, economic,

and social" (Sales, 2016, p. 373). Others had mixed opinions on the role feminism played at the school and how the student body understood it. Karl, for instance, thought feminism was the one topic that students really "got" and that there were other topics that the upper school should be addressing:

> I remember in middle school like, no one identified as feminist 'cause they thought it was like, a dirty word or whatever but like, in upper school, we get it, we know … that's the one thing that we aren't under a rock [about] in terms of like, knowing about it 'cause we have social media and things like that. And I feel like if you're talking about it to the upper school, it's useless. Like, there's other cool stuff you could be talking about to the upper school. Like, talk about feminism with the little kids.… I feel like it's like beating a dead horse when it's in the upper school. (Karl, Interview, 3/13/17)

Conversely, Lydia, who served as one of three co-heads of the Women's Rights Club, thought that feminism still carried a negative connotation among many people in the upper school. She explained that some felt feminism was overrated and others were just "so over it." She attributed these perspectives to those benefitting from the affordances of a privileged positionality (i.e., White, cisgendered, heterosexual, and upper-middle class, etc.) that allowed most students not to have to think about or deal with issues affecting women in different cultures or of different ethnicities and races (Interview, 3/8/17).

Kate, who attended a co-ed school prior to enrolling at Clyde for high school, credited Clyde for educating her about feminism, something she knew nothing about until she got to Clyde. In that sense, she thought that co-ed schools could do a better job at educating students about the concept and movement sooner. In the same breath, however, she questioned the ways feminism was presented and discussed at Clyde: "It often feels like the ways that they're trying to like, help us, is more like, working within the patriarchy and just like, 'There's this system that we have to work within, here's how you navigate through it,' but there's not a lot of like, 'Let's like, *smash* it [my emphasis]" (Kate, Interview, 3/15/17). Kate's call for a more "radical" approach to feminism illustrates the observations that Mrs. Hill and Dr. Collette shared in Chapter IV—that

students are hungry for more nuanced and real conversations about important issues and current events affecting their lived experiences.

In the following group of excerpts, students discuss the ironies, frustrations, and discouragements that result from a general complacency around activism in their environment:

> I think that a lot of people at Clyde are like, nice, like agreeable, like warm, but **they're not necessarily like bold** in some ways and **that's ironic because that's one of the characteristics that Clyde prides itself in**. I think people are just like pretty complacent, pretty whatever … like, **if Clyde were a woman, [she] would be someone who would like, marry well-ish, live a comfortable life, but not necessarily question the status quo**. (Simone, Interview, 4/12/17)

> If I had a translator it'd be more like, "You have the power to say whatever you want to say as long as it fits in with our agenda and like, our goals and stuff."… I also think **Clyde oftentimes raises a generation of very pleasant, complacent students who are very agreeable and not quick to disagree, which is interesting 'cause … that's [the opposite of] Clyde's mission statement.** (Lucy, Interview, 3/13/17)

> Clyde [is] not really doing what it says it's doing and it's portraying itself as such a great school because it is a good school, we get a really good education, feminism, pushing us to get empowered, but at the same time, not really. Just like, I don't know, there's a lot of discontent I feel. **There's a lot of talk but no action sort of thing**. So, yeah, if it could work on its inclusivity and action, doing what it says it's doing, and maybe I guess listening to the students more? Because if you walk around the corridors, just listen to all of the conversations, you could learn so much than just staying in your office. (Raine, Interview, 3/15/17)

> I think Clyde is what you make of it 'cause I think it's so easy to be a Clyde student, which is like, **talk the talk but never walk the walk**, which is usually the path that I've fallen into because I can get a nice pat on the back for really not doing anything and it's like, something I've just grown accustomed to and I can just get away with like, being mediocre and that's fine.… It's frustrating because I think most people would want Clyde to be this school not only where you're empowered but we're empowered to actually make a difference, where instead of like, empowered to just say we're going to do something and then not actually do it. I think that will change with time…. (Lydia, Interview, 3/8/17)

The feelings of complacency that Simone, Lucy, Raine, and Lydia describe above stand in direct opposition to the image that Clyde constructs and the promises it makes to students and the larger school community about instilling purpose, action, and voice in girls.

When students did speak out, Rachel felt that the faculty were very open-minded and listened to what the students had to say about important issues and topics like intersectionality and feminism. The administration, on the other hand, did not always do a good job of listening to students:

> They tend to be like, oh, acknowledge you. Thank you for saying that … even the girls who are supposed to be like, representing the school body … like the president and vice president [of the student body], I find that their voices don't even get heard by the administration.… Even the people who were supposed to be, like, have a big voice and [are] supposed to represent everyone. **How are you going to represent every girl if the girls who were supposed to represent every girl aren't being listened to?** (Rachel, Interview, 5/2/17)

During our interview, Rachel provided an example of a recent conflict between students and the administration that called Clyde's fundamental commitment to cultivating outspoken girls into question. Clyde has used Lands' End, a catalogue-based clothing company, as its uniform supplier for many years. In late February 2016, the clothing retailer issued a public apology after receiving substantial backlash for featuring an interview with Gloria Steinem in a short-lived editorial section called the "Legends Series," which aimed to profile individuals with different interests and backgrounds who have made a difference. After featuring Steinem on the cover, the catalogue received criticism from anti-abortion activists and Catholic schools across the country, who threatened to sever ties with the company over the coverage of the notorious pro-choice activist. Lands' End quickly responded with a statement, "It was never our intention to raise a divisive political or religious issue, so when some of our customers saw the recent promotion that way, we heard them. We sincerely apologize for any offense," and

subsequently pulled the interview from the website. While Clyde is a non-denominational institution, the school culture is rather liberal (fueled by students and faculty), despite parents who might lean more conservatively. Students at Clyde were not only upset about Lands' End's decision to pull the profile on Steinem; they were disappointed in how the school responded to the unfolding events. The following is an excerpt from an editorial written by a senior and member of the newspaper staff:

Sheep's Clothing
Issue No. 4, April 2016

> At Clyde, we like to say that we are teaching young women find their voices and shout in the face of injustice. "We know the power of one mind and one heart, as well as many minds and many hearts, to effect change: change a person, change a climate, change a prejudice, change the future," our website says. In practice, however, it seems the opposite is quietly encouraged. We are encouraged to make ripples rather than waves. Ripples large enough to make dainty splashes in the face of injustice. Waves drench, and that is too much fuss. Too messy. For God's sake, we are, after all, young ladies.
>
> … [Lands' End's] apology letter is a perfect example of "slacktivism," halfhearted participation in a political movement or cause done more to improve the activist's image than the actual cause. Clyde girls are not meek or helpless. We have opinions, and we don't ask for apologies or explanations. We ask for change. The response letter from Clyde was sent without student discussion or consultation, yet we are the ones who wear the "Lands' End" label on our backs! Boycotting Lands' End uniforms is very possible. It may be inconvenient, but the most important fights are never convenient.
>
> … Clyde's decision to keep Lands' End as a uniform provider condones their actions. To us, young women about to enter a world where sexism runs disturbingly deep, this inaction on the part of our school is more than an insult. It shows a complete disregard for our values and our futures. Clyde needs to be less worried about what other schools, prospective parents, and the rest of the world think and more concerned with what we allegedly stand for.

Building on the arguments in the op-ed, Rachel shared with me that Clyde missed an opportunity to harness the anger and emotions expressed by students. She thought they could have been translated into productive energies and more important conversations.

> … There's a thing on the Clyde website where it's like, "We encourage girls to effect change, effect the climate, effect whatever, change a mission," whatever. [It's] like, this very beautiful sentence. Um, I often look at that and then [I'm] like, no [laughs]. We're encouraged to but, it kind of dies. Like, nothing actually happens. It just kind of like, oh, we say something, but it's like, to an echo chamber of the students, and then nothing. (Interview, 5/2/17)

When I asked Rachel what effect she thought this had on the student body, she responded, "The easy answer to that is that we just … we give up." She felt like that had been a pattern at the school recently. She also acknowledged how busy the lives of students were and that it could be difficult to follow through with actions amidst overloaded schedules. She hoped to come back to Clyde in five years and find that students are really effecting change and following through on the issues and topics that they are passionate about. Lydia expressed similar sentiments about changes in students' attitudes and actions over the last few years:

> … When I came to Clyde, one of the reasons I was like, "Yeah, this is a really cool school" is 'cause students were outspoken and I think they're still outspoken but not to the same extent where it's like they'll talk about something and then students would do it. I think you have very few of those people now. Whereas, I felt like **before it was like, these are students that are really gonna transform the school** … and they're not afraid to, you know, challenge the school. **I think people challenge the school all the time but not to the same extent.** It's more of like, in whispers or behind people's backs, or they'll say it and be like, "I shouldn't have said that, I don't want to get in trouble." I think there's much more of a distance between administration and students, whereas I felt before it was very much working together. (Interview, 3/8/17)

Lydia's comment raises interesting questions about the factors contributing to the current climate of activism at Clyde—is it a different generation of students who are not as motivated to enact change? Is the school culture changing or responding to a larger sociopolitical and cultural landscape? Is it a combination (or neither) of the two? She also alludes to the school culture of politeness and reticence that students described in the first counter-narrative.

Lucy thought that the administration (i.e., the offices for advancement and admissions) often pushed a certain type of girl but that there were often contradictions and inconsistencies between Clyde's value system and their actions; namely, that Clyde prided itself on the idea that girls should have the confidence to be able to say whatever they want to say, but when students did actually speak up and say what was on their minds, it felt like they were often met with resistance by the administration. "I think that's with every school, but like, they just don't like people who disagree with them, [but it's] especially hypocritical for Clyde because they advertise that so much" (Interview, 3/13/17). She went on to say,

> [My friends] are not actually that outspoken. They're not actually like, that opinionated … if you get them into a real-world situation, like, I don't know where they would stand.… **[I wonder] whether we're actually creating the type of girl that we want to see?** And if we're not creating that for people who don't represent those things because of the way that Clyde's taught them, is that the most successful person? (Lucy, Interview, 3/13/17)

In this last excerpt below, Annie talked about the tensions that existed in wanting to be outspoken while wondering how powerful her voice could actually be and feeling like her message often fell on deaf ears among her peers. Her anecdote extends the conversation above, providing the perspective of a student who is motivated to enact change. It also harkens back to Lydia's experiences with the challenges of engaging students about feminism:

> It's so challenging to get people to just listen…. Like, don't preach to the people who are never gonna listen. That's just too taxing and tiring…. And it's hard too, like, cause **I'm just a student, I don't have much power in the grand scheme of things** even though I think I would like that…. But yeah, working with my board [Inclusivity Board] who are other people who are really passionate about changing things at Clyde, **it's been exhausting and kind of, like, depressing in a way because people are just so, like, no one's gonna listen to me.** I just don't want to do it anymore. But I think we need to, like, keep at it, and it's hard but the more, like, we can just get our voice out there…. (Interview, 4/18/17)

This section, which discussed issues related to student voice, circles back to the promises of the mission of the school and the reality on the ground for students every day. It is significant when participants talk about students not following through with a cause they care about or giving up because they know they will ultimately be met with pushback from the administration. For an institution committed to cultivating and strengthening the voices of young people, what are the implications of sanctioning students' voices and surveilling their drive for activism?

Critical Perspective on the Ideal Archetypes

In Chapter IV, the Clyde Girl and the Every Girl were introduced as ideal archetypes—a part of the school's dominant narratives of girlhood, belonging, and expectations. In the following two sections, students criticize, deconstruct, and trouble the two archetypes, pushing back against the constructs that limit the possibilities of what students at Clyde can look like, who they can be, and what they can do. A number of participants reported that they felt the "quintessential Clyde Girl" phrase is not operationalized as much as it used to be, but it remains a part of the school's lexicon, a piece of shared knowledge amongst the members of the institution. Students felt the Clyde Girl was problematic in that it conveyed the valuing of a very specific type of girl. The "Every Girl" motto has, in many ways, replaced the Clyde Girl as it, too, impossibly promises to equally serve and include all students; but, as evidenced in students' responses below, it still manages to uphold a limited conception of who is included in this ideation of images and messages around girlhood.

Dismantling the quintessential Clyde Girl. As noted in my conceptual framework, borrowing from Gee's (1990) notion of membership as it relates to "big-D" Discourse and from the findings of my exploratory study at the Clyde School, I understand the Clyde Girl as an archetype that operates as a symbolic representation of belonging at Clyde—the ways of being that are sanctioned as desirable, respectable, and

supported, and in turn grant full access to membership in this particular discursive community. Annie explained that there was an underlying feeling present within the school community that "if you don't necessarily fit a certain mold, then there is gonna be this kind of divide…" in terms of how one experiences belonging at the school. When I asked how she would describe those who fit into that mold, she said:

> I mean, there's definitely a majority, and that would, in my opinion, be like, White, wealthier families who have … you know, the kids are like, smart, they have tutors, they fit this, like, "I can do the play and the sports and have good academics, and I'm straight," and these just, privileged, I guess, identities. (Annie, Interview, 4/18/17)

Below is a series of excerpts that illustrate how the Clyde Girl is conceptualized by students. The Clyde Girl, who, in many ways, is a representation of the quintessential, or coveted, student, fits the "mold" that Annie refers to—you will notice that students largely define the archetype by her identifiers and her "well-rounded-ness," someone who excels academically, athletically and extracurricularly, and socially.

Kate, a senior, explains that the quintessential Clyde Girl is a term "that's kind of … in the zeitgeist of Clyde." She goes on to say,

> This girl gets straight As in every class, she does like 10 gagillion extracurriculars, she is really happy and like, very just outgoing. There's definitely an image of what the Clyde Girl should be and like, frankly, **there are just very few of us [who] fit into that mold** … and … we've only recently been having these discussions … the Clyde Girl is usually White, wealthy, cisgender, heterosexual, very … it's like a very narrow idea of what the Clyde Girl should be and like, there are obviously so many deviations from that? … And like, I mean, luckily, **I haven't really had to … 'cause I am White and wealthy and like, cisgender, [but] I don't identify as straight so that has been something that is kind of interesting**.… (Interview, 3/15/17)

> When I first came [to Clyde], the stereotype that I heard was that most people were Jewish, White, very wealthy, lived on the Upper East Side, and um, didn't have [many] problems in their lives. They lived well, they didn't have any things to be concerned about.… And like, I came here, and [it's] kind of true. There's a lot of that stereotype and I see where it's coming from but then if you like, sort of search and filter through, you find **a lot of people**

> **who really don't fit it at all and are rebelling against it all the time**. (Raine, Interview, 3/15/17)

> I've always assumed it's like, a blonde, blue eyed, smart, athletic, but also artsy, funny, quiet, but not too quiet girl. She's like ... made up. Like, she's not a real person. I think it's like Blake Lively in *Gossip Girl*, and like, the ideal version of what that girl is I think ... it's hard to be so inclusive and have everyone be the quintessential Clyde Girl.… In middle school and freshman and sophomore years, I was like, really struggling a lot to be the Clyde Girl and like I just, when I showed up the first day, I wasn't that already and I knew that, so it was like, "I don't know how to mold myself to be this when it's just never gonna fit." … 'cause it's also, **the Clyde Girl is born that way. Like, she's a Clyde Girl from day one. She never mushed herself to become it. She is just naturally that.** (Lydia, Interview, 3/8/17)

Some students acknowledged the presence of the archetype, but alluded to the disconnects felt between themselves and the ideal image. This distance is important in that it then allows space for redefining and reimagining the archetype, which will be addressed further later in this chapter.

In the excerpts below, students describe the identifiers and discursive practices associated with the Clyde Girl. Even though there is no explicit definition or formal image of the archetype, there is a shared understanding that circulates throughout the school culture. Many of the explanations remain similar to what I found in my pilot study (see Appendix A).

> I think of someone who lives on, like, the Upper East Side, you know, identifies with the White-blonde-image. Not even the blonde, but you know, um, that image. There is a certain … ah I mean, I don't want to say privilege, but [there] is a privilege, with that. I mean, I come from New Jersey. [It takes] like an hour and a half to get home**. I don't really identify as someone in like the same socio-economic class as some of the people, especially someone [who has been here since] lower school.** (Rachel, Interview, 5/2/17)

> I think **my identifiers are pretty much lined up** with what Clyde would want me to be based off like, looks and if I said all my identifiers it's like, "Yeah, that sounds like a Clyde Girl," but I think **it's been interesting to have those all seem to line up and not feel like they do**. Which has been good. **I'm glad they don't** 'cause I don't want to line up with the exact Clyde ideal experience, because it hasn't [been] and it doesn't need to be,

> even though it might look like it should line up perfectly. (Lydia, Interview, 3/8/17)
>
> The stereotype I would describe her as someone with a very short skirt. Um, kind of like, expensive jacket. Iced chai latte in her hand [laughing], all these bracelets on her wrist. [But] I feel like that's kind of [the] stereotype for any prep school on the Upper East Side. But, um, **I don't think that's like what we consider a typical Clyde girl, like an accurate typical Clyde girl**. 'Cause honestly, **I don't think one exists**. There's so much diversity within like, not necessarily with race, but like just in personalities, in character, in the upper school. So I don't think that's applicable at all. (Jenny, Interview, 3/15/17)
>
> Well, I mean, from the outside perception, once you get to the upper school there is a stereotypical Clyde [girl] like, looking at, from other students' points of view on the Upper East Side, there is a stereotypical Clyde Girl [who's] like, the really pretty, um, tall girl who does lots of sports and then still has good grades and goes out and parties every weekend but like, they still have it together during the week…. Like, **there's that outside stereotype, but within the community I don't think that we have any sort of, uh, internalized girl that we're aiming to be**…. (Naomi, Interview, 4/10/17)

Below Mr. Martin notes the phenomenon and work of the Clyde Girl—his comment below speaks directly to the contradictory nature of the archetype—something that has become so irrelevant and unreflective of the study body and yet remains so ubiquitous and present in the Clyde school culture and community.

> I look around and I don't see that student [the quintessential Clyde Girl] anywhere. And **they don't identify with that archetype, but they can all independently construct it. Why is that? How is that possible? And how do we disrupt that?** How do we let them see themselves in the "Clyde Girl"? That's work that needs to be done. (Interview, 2/1/17)

In the following section, students and school leaders tackle the most recent ideal archetype: the Every Girl.

Destabilizing the Every Girl. In many ways, the Every Girl is the Clyde Girl, version 2.0: the newest iteration of the ideal student. She, too, is overwhelmingly constructed and understood as being wealthy, White, pretty, has good grades, is highly involved in extracurricular activities. Different from conversations about the Clyde Girl, in discussions with students, as well as with Mr. Martin and Dr. Collette, participants

pushed past the archetype itself, not only questioning its meaning but its purpose and potential implications on the student body and the school climate. There was much more talk about the complicatedness of using the word "girl" in a school-wide phrase (in ways that never came up when talking about the Clyde Girl); participants also troubled the language used to communicate the commitments to Every Girl, namely, reaching or meeting every girl equally and uniformly.

> I mean, in one way, the Every Girl campaign is really saying well, you can be a girl, but only if you're a girl in like, every sense of the word … like, you identify as a girl. You act like a girl. You're willing to portray to the world (laughing) that you are a girl…. Your gender identity and your … like, the sex you went with all have to be corresponding to a girl.… And so, in a way, I think "Every Girl" is very limiting. **That's why I prefer to say "every student," "every Clyde student,"** because, you know, you can be an all-girls school, you can identify with a girl's experience, but you might not, you know, associate yourself with a girl in every sense of the word. (Rachel, Interview, 5/2/17)

Karl echoed Rachel's sentiments, calling the reality and authenticity of the Every Girl promise into question, particularly in regard to students who may not identify as girls:

> Like, I wish they could change the Every Girl motto, or I wish like, we could have more education about gender identity and sexual orientation…. I like it as is, but there are more steps that we could take.… **I get like why they have the Every girl motto, but considering it encompasses a period of time when students might realize that, "Oh, I don't really identify as female, I prefer different pronouns," it might be difficult for them and people wouldn't really know that such students exist since we crush everything with female pronouns** and like, I don't know, it's strange.… I feel like even though we call ourselves an all-girls school and it is an all-girls school, we should still educate kids about different um, choices that you have as like, as a person and just because you go to this school doesn't mean that you have to grow up and stay identifying as female all throughout your career. (Interview, 3/13/17)

Simone, a senior, offered an interesting perspective that I had not considered until she brought it up in her interview: that there are striations in the effects of the Every Girl. In other words, as she suggested, one's positionality plays a role in how one takes up, understands, and/or compares oneself to the ideal image of the Every Girl:

Simone: … I feel like people have problems with [the phrase] because you're supposed to be like excellent in everything at Clyde, adore school, whatever like, socialize, the holy trinity. That also goes back to the ideal Clyde Girl. But I think that um, that the people who also think about [being included in] the Every Girl **are just like, rich White girls who are not on financial aid, or whatever. Who like, have a fine time, but just don't do well academically or like who don't get chosen for panels or whatever**. So I think that … in some ways **those are the victims of the Every Girl**.

Emily: So you think the girls who are more sensitive to the Every Girl thing tend to be White girls who are maybe not measuring up to this ideal?

Simone: Yeah, or maybe like, in some parallel universe could one day be an Every Girl, whatever, model. But like, other people like don't have a chance at it at all or something.

Emily: Other people meaning whom?

Simone: Like people like me or something…. I was talking about the ideal Clyde Girl to someone and [they were] like, "Oh, you might fit some, like some people might think of you as the ideal." And I was like, what the fuck would that … that would not….

Emily: [laughs]

Simone: I feel like that's like easy for you to say because I fit like certain types of boxes of like the academics or whatever, [I] like ask questions [crosstalk] but I think the real Every Girl is about the elephant in the room of like wealth and whatever. (Interview, 4/12/17)

Simone's thoughts about the Every Girl introduced a perspective that I had not considered. While the Every Girl is meant to be an all-encompassing term that denotes the school's commitment to including and reaching every girl where they are, Simone thought it ended up referring to the "every day" or average girl, an archetype that still carried a particular privileged (predominantly White) identity. In that sense, it may have felt to the administration that the phrase was more inclusive than the Clyde Girl, when in

actuality the discursive practices associated with the phrase still felt exclusionary to students who sat on the periphery or completely outside the image of the Clyde student.

For Annie, Clyde's declaration that they reach students where they are still felt like certain students were favored over others: "I think 'aspire' would be a greater use of language" (Interview, 4/18/17), as in "We aspire to reach every student where they are." Here Annie touched on the power of language—how adding one word to a statement can change its whole meaning and impact. Aspiration denotes hope, ambition, and commitment—qualities that all institutions should strive for; as opposed to an institution making a definitive claim, this would leave space for multiple realities and narratives to co-exist.

Out of my interviews with the five school leaders, Mr. Martin and Dr. Collette seemed to be the two adults most aware of students' perspectives on the Every Girl and most outspoken with their own opinions on the archetype. Dr. Collette acknowledged that there is something fundamentally flawed in an institutional phrase and campaign when students outwardly disavow the language:

> I mean, I think if [students are] giggling, there must be [something wrong], right? If the response that you're consistently experiencing, and my own experience does echo that, **if the response that you're experiencing is you see "Every Girl" and they start laughing**, to me that says that **there must be a disconnect happening for them**. That there must be something about that phrase or the notion behind it or the precise way we're articulating it, that **isn't feeling true to their experience**. (Interview, 12/15/16)

Mr. Martin provided an explanation of the Every Girl campaign from the perspective of Director of Communications:

> Yeah, so, Every Girl was ... it is very much a marketing strategy. It was crafted before I arrived, so it's a ... something I inherited. I mean, at its most basic, it comes out of our mission statement, which is we're going to educate the hearts and minds of every girl. It was **co-opted for fundraising purposes** because we had a capital campaign to pay for the expansion and renovation of our schoolhouse and the idea was, most people aren't going to be excited about donating to bricks and mortar, **we want to make sure that they know that this renovation and this campaign is about better serving**

> **every single girl** in the building regardless of who she is and where she comes from. And so, "every girl, every girl, every girl, every girl," it was about two and a half years, everywhere you turned, our head of school was using the phrase, trying to weave it into everything that we put out. And it very quickly, as most campaign rhetoric does, became tired and stale.
>
> … **The thing I wasn't expecting** and maybe this is just me not working in a K-12 environment prior to Clyde, **is that the students picked up on it very, very quickly and, you know, began satirizing it and began using it against the school in interesting ways.**
>
> … We are pivoting hard away from the phrase for several reasons. One, the campaign is coming to a close. Two, it's been four years. Three, **when the students are making fun of something, it's probably a good indication that you shouldn't be using it anymore**. But ... I am appreciative actually that it has opened up, I think, some conversations that the school needs to have, which is, you know, the way you pose it, what do we mean when we say "every girl"? What does that actually mean? I think it relates to admissions. I think it relates to academics. I think it relates to fundraising, health and wellness. **Is it possible? Can we reach every girl? Before we even get there, what is a girl? How are we defining "girl" at this school?** These are all, I think, conversations that have bubbled up alongside this marketing and fundraising campaign. We'll see which ones get answered and which ones don't.
>
> But for me, it's just ... it's just marketing. It really isn't, you know, of course every girl, of course, every student. **Every school is going to say that, but I also know of course, no, not every girl's going to be treated the same.** And not every student is going to get the same access because **that's just not the reality of the world we live in** and also, **not everybody needs the same thing**. That's an important thing for us to acknowledge as well. (Interview, 2/1/17)

Martin acknowledged the reality that not every girl can be reached equally, in the same way, or at the same time; nor is that necessarily what every student needs, which poses the question: What purpose does the promise statement then serve? How does an institution grapple with setting high standards for itself and its members while also embracing its realities, challenges, and imperfections? Does it, perhaps, begin with a school reconciling the discrepancies between its dominant and counter-narratives?

Reclaiming and redefining the Clyde Girl. Lucy felt like the "whole typical Clyde Girl" image no longer matched the image that the students saw on a daily basis. "I

think our definition's better," she said to me matter-of-factly. "Maybe we need to figure out how to better align our … what we're putting out there as advertising with what our school's actually seeing because it's a positive thing" (Interview, 3/13/17). Although Lucy never provided me with "their definition" of the Clyde Girl, her point about the school needing to reexamine and realign the promises and the realities of Clyde as a way to better reflect students and their experiences is important and illustrates how deeply students understand and care about their school.

This last set of excerpts demonstrate a reclaiming and reimagining of the Clyde Girl archetype that was happening increasingly among the student body at the time of my data collection. It was understated and unofficial, but a few participants shared that they felt the students were increasingly starting to redefine and reclaim what a "typical" student at Clyde looks like today.

> I think we all came to an agreement that it shouldn't be like one type of person ... when you're defining a large group of people, it's really hard to do because it's not going to fit over everyone.... It's more of like an applaud to all students that go here. It's like, well, **Clyde students are ones that want to learn, are eager to learn, and to kind of do it their own way, yeah? And they are outspoken compared to other people**.... (Lydia, Interview, 3/8/17)

> I think now an ideal Clyde Girl in terms of, like, the students' perspective is **someone who's willing to ask the tough questions and willing to, like, really get deeper into the conversation**. I find this [happens] a lot in assemblies, I think more so this year than any time in the past. (Rachel, Interview, 5/2/17)

> I feel like there's a consensus amongst everyone that like, you are here because you want to make something of your life and you want … I mean, there are some people who may take this education for granted? But I feel like pretty unanimously everyone just like, really wants to … **just gain more knowledge and like, ask questions about the world and I think that's kind of what the teachers kind of push us … to keep digging into discussions that like, force us to think outside of maybe our experiences as well?** I think that's kind of what it means. If I could put a label on every single person, I feel like that would be what it means. (Kate, Interview, 3/15/17)

I was not expecting students to provide re-definitions of the Clyde Girl when I asked them to talk about the trope in my interviews. It was interesting how instead of dismissing the phrase altogether, the participants above chose to reclaim it, demarcating what an actual or real Clyde Girl looks like today from their perspectives versus the institutionally-sanctioned image. Their conceptions moved away from gender, race, and cultural capital and instead focused on the identity of "student." Lydia, Rachel, and Kate all centered their re-definitions of the typical and/or ideal student around intellect: the student that embodies everything about Clyde is one who thinks critically, asks questions, and makes their voice heard. While it is crucial to recognize the ways students were reclaiming the archetype, their "re-definitions" of a Clyde student, in fact, largely *echoed* the storylines of promise and commitment seen in the dominant narratives in Chapter IV. They are a testament to how even reclaimed notions of the Clyde Girl remain socially situated within the school context and demonstrate that students indeed share many of the values upheld by the school. The important takeaway here is that they want to share the ownership of the values, practices, behaviors, and images that circulate within and outside of the school building to tell the story/ies of the Clyde School.

Counter-Narrative 3: ~~A Clyde Girl is~~ Clyde Students *Are*…

The final section of this chapter showcases a diverse array of students' opinions and voices on topics and issues that were important to them and that illustrated the vast nature of personalities, experiences, and perspectives represented amidst 17 student participants (nearly 10% of the high school student population). The excerpts in the following section are intended to serve as a testament to the fundamental flaws that can exist in institutional language and practice, no matter how well-intentioned. That said, and as some participants will note, the takeaway should not necessarily be that the institution and school leaders are to blame for crafting narratives and expectations meant

to motivate, empower, and enliven its students and the larger school community. Clyde, like any other school, is deeply committed to being the best institution it can be, to serving its members, and fulfilling its promises. This section, rather, seeks to demonstrate how grand statements meant to unify a population can actually overlook and silence the immense diversity and wonderful complicatedness of students' identities and experiences that make young people such dynamic individuals.

The first subset of counter-narratives consists of students' responses to "bringing your full self to school," a phrase that was used almost as frequently as the Every Girl at Clyde. The second subset of counter-narratives is presented in the form of multimodal artifacts created by students in Grade 10. I showcase three students' identity maps and collages to illustrate both the depth and nuance of their lives, personalities, and perspectives, as well as the affordances of engaging young people in identity exploration through multimodal media-making activities. The last subset addresses three topics, or issues, that students were deeply concerned with, affected by, and committed to, but felt that Clyde needed to do a better job of addressing if they are truly committed to reaching and supporting every student at the school. I will then conclude this chapter with a summary of takeaways and main ideas from the three overarching counter-narratives.

Bringing Your Full Self to School

"I try to bring my full self to school every day, but there's always some setback, or like, I'm always more scared to do something than I think I am," Maya shared with me during her interview (4/10/17). Maya struggled with being perceived as shy and non-talkative since elementary school and had found that people at Clyde continued to "distinguish that for me … I talk to people, but not in a high volume." She is loud at home and is the loudest with her sister, but her volume at school depends on who she is with: "I physically can't sometimes … I think it changes with school. Like, I can actually feel my throat close up…. I think it's just, uh, actually, that might have to do with

people's perceptions [of me]" (Interview, 4/10/17). At the same time, Maya also credited Clyde for helping her move out of her bubble—to push herself to try new things and share more of herself. Maya had recently come out to her grade as pansexual during a class meeting. Her parents did not know, nor would they be supportive, but she felt she could first come out as bisexual to Naomi in her sophomore year and then made the decision to come out to her class as pansexual the following year. In this sense, Maya found that some aspects of her full self were more accepted at home, and others were more accepted by her peers at Clyde.

With the exception of two participants (Caroline and Maria), students reported that they did not feel like they could bring their full selves to school every day, nor did they necessarily want to.

> They say they want us to bring our full selves, but then when we do they're like, "That's too much of you. That's … wow, we did not need all of that information." And like, you hear that all the time. "You're laughing too loud," or "Why are you in this room? What are you doing? Why are you writing stuff on the board? Why are you listening to that music?" It's always like, "That's too much of you that we don't need to know."… **Don't tell people to bring their full selves to school 'cause they're not doing it anyway and there's a lot of people who don't want to bring their full selves to school here 'cause if we're not being supportive just as an institution, why would someone bring the rest of them if they [the school] is not supportive of what they did bring?**… That's where I think people get confused and I think that's detrimental for young girls kind of like, figuring out who they are in general but then also have a school that's like, "We want to empower you, but you can't do this, or this, or your bra strap is showing, that's bad."… so that's where it gets conflicting … just say what you mean. (Lydia, Interview, 3/8/17)

Sharing the sentiment of many, Simone spoke to the expectation of asking people to bring their full selves to school when it was a generally unnatural and unfeasible thing to do:

> I think that there was not a time when I could bring my whole self to school, but I think that's a universal thing…. I think it's an illusion, but it's not just unique to Clyde, like almost no one brings their full self.… I don't blame them [the school] for wanting that … obviously people hide parts of

> themselves or whatever.… I don't think it's a bad thing that people want that to happen in the administration or whatever, that Clyde is so warm and it would be so ideal that people could be at a point where they bring their full selves. Like, I don't disagree with it. **I think it's unrealistic, but it's … not something that phases me**. (Interview, 4/12/17)

> I don't think anyone can [bring their full self to school every day]. I think that's probably better! **I think if I brought my full self to school, Clyde probably wouldn't like me as much**.… I think the version that I bring to Clyde, I don't, people probably think one thing about me, but if they hung out with me at my house or in an environment that wasn't Clyde, they'd be like, "Wow, she's actually a lot cooler than I thought." (Lydia, Interview, 3/8/17)

> I never really understood what it meant to bring your whole self to school, to be honest.… **It's a very scary thought to bring your whole self to school** because, you know, we have … we're expected to … be a Clyde girl here. We're not expected to be, you know, daughters of conservatives….[4] I don't think I've ever brought my full self to school. I don't think I've been my full self anywhere. I feel comfortable within the school building, um, maybe that's because, you know, I'm privileged in a way … there are times when I feel uncomfortable, maybe that's when I'm not my full self. Um, but at the same time, being uncomfortable at a place where you're supposed to be challenged is okay, so I don't know … **I think I feel my full self when I'm just, like, being able to talk about my opinions and being able to, you know, have my voice heard**. (Rachel, Interview, 5/2/17)

> Um, I don't really feel that way, which is unfortunate. Um, maybe it's not because Clyde says I can't. It's more that I don't feel comfortable doing that … I think I'm very open and, like, okay with sharing my different identities, but in terms of expressing those it's kinda challenging … you know? So, like, **everyone knows I'm queer, I'm Asian, I'm adopted, I identify as a Christian, I'm a female, but in terms of expressing all of those things that make me me…. I don't feel like I wanna express those here**. (Annie, Interview, 4/18/17)

A few participants talked about how the uniform reinforced certain stereotypes and prohibited people from truly or fully expressing themselves. Dress as a discursive

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[4]Rachel recognizes and struggles with the dilemma of private schools (elementary, high school, and universities) tending to be more liberal institutions while students' families are often more conservative. She personally struggles with balancing being a liberal individual in a more conservative family. She also wonders how a school is supposed to balance the two—being a liberal institution while making sure more conservative parents/families are happy with the stances that the institution is taking (Interview, 5/2/17).

practice conveys ways of knowing and belonging through visual and material modes. A school uniform possesses its own set of codes of belonging, in the same way that one's own style communicates an understanding of identity and place.

> I have this like, more snazzy sense of fashion that can't … like, be confined to like this and that [referring to her uniform]. I like wearing … I have weirdly similar fashion tastes to my faculty advisor, we wear like, little waistcoats and things like that … it's not like the uniform really constricts me but like, **I still don't feel like I'm ever able to bring my full self to school just because like, there are things that I would like to do with my hair, to do with my clothes [that I can't]**. (Interview, 3/13/17)

> … I feel like Clyde can be [a] truly feminist [school] once they like, **get rid of the uniform and just start letting us like, bring our full selves to school**. Because they always say like, "Every Girl, you can bring your full self to Clyde," but I don't know how true that is necessarily. (Kate, Interview, 3/15/17)

If the notion of bringing one's full self to school is not a realistic nor coveted option for students, what function does it then play in the school's rhetoric and culture? Participants recognize that it is a positive and respectable goal for the school to have, but it poses the question as to whether different language around bringing one's full self to school would be better received. For instance, should Clyde instead say that the school aims to provide an environment where students are able to bring as much of themselves to school as they want or feel comfortable with?

Building on notions of self-expression, self-reflection, and self-understanding, in the following section, I present a sample of the identity maps and collages that Grade 10 students created in their leadership class. I feature the maps and collages of three students who participated in interviews for this study (Karl, Raine, and Lila) so that readers have a little more contextual information and can engage the multimodal artifacts in a deeper way.

Expressions of Multimodal Selves

I had the opportunity to explore the intersections of identity, literacy, and place through two hands-on activities with the sophomore class in their leadership course. In addition to mapping the school, 10th grade students also engaged in an identity collage activity intended to provide students with a platform to represent themselves not only through words but through images as well. Before students began to construct their collages (see examples in Figures 10, 12, and 14), they first created identity maps (like concept maps) on the other side of their paper (Figures 9, 11, and 13). Figure 15 is a visual composite of the most frequently recurring words in more than 40 identity maps to give an idea of some of the most salient aspects of identity that students chose to share. Below are three samples of the identity maps and collages from Karl, Raine, and Lila. You will also notice that I let the artifacts speak for themselves by providing the students' explanations of the collages and/or the composition process. I do not interject my interpretations of their maps or collages explicitly. I do, however, provide some reflection along with reflections from Dr. Collette (who served as a co-facilitator) as a way to frame the activity as a meaning-making process and a further illustration of how unique, dynamic, and nuanced these students are and how important it is for the school's discursive practices and rhetoric to reflect, or at least acknowledge, young people's realities.

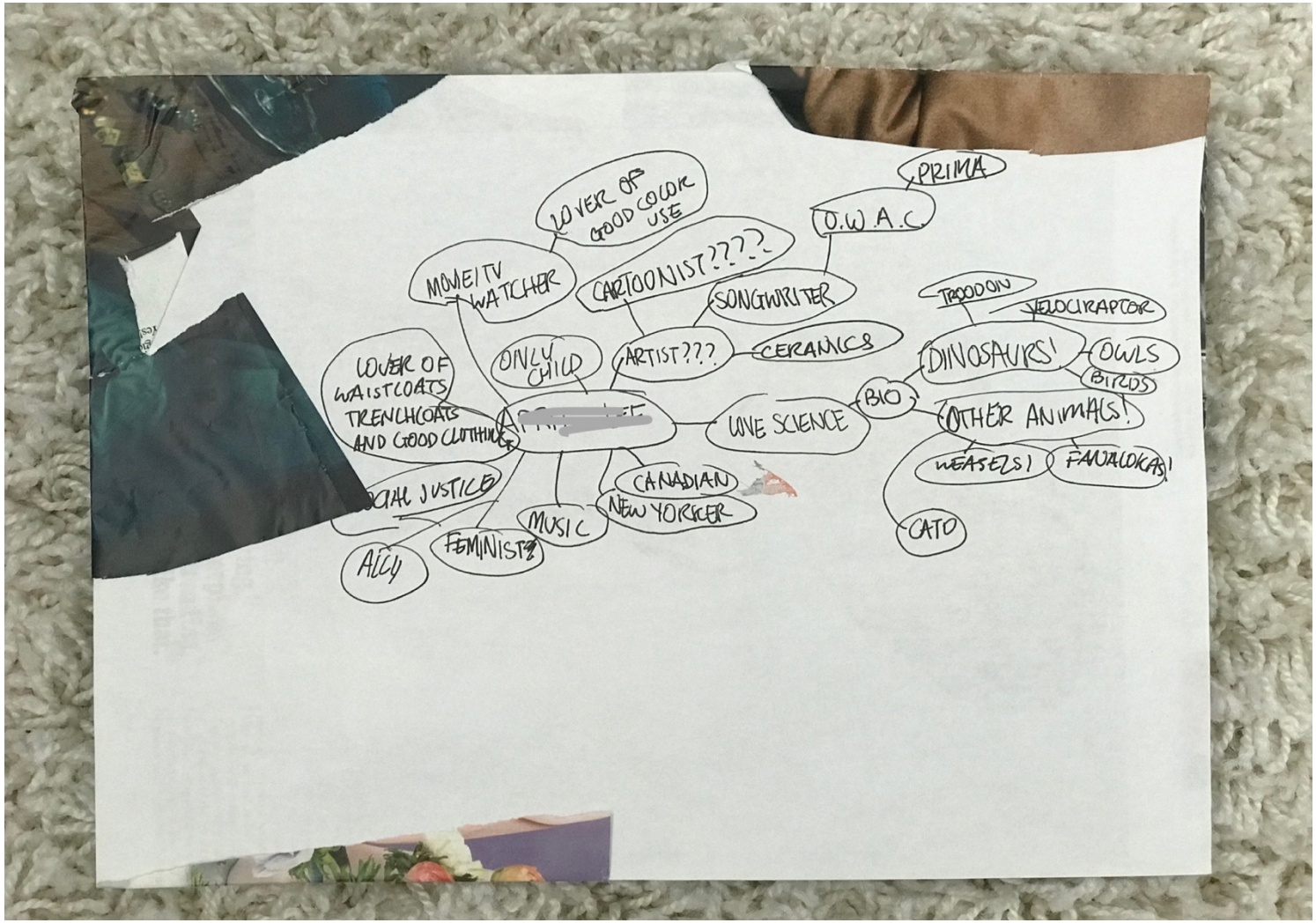

Figure 9. Identity Map - Karl

Figure 10. Identity Collage - Karl

Karl: Artist …Yeah … I was just flipping through the magazines and was like, "Oh, that's cool!" And, "Oh, this is aesthetically pleasing and it fits the page!" So I cut it out. "Oh, I would wear that and it has fancy font!" So I cut that out...and, I don't know, I like their outfits and they're like, happy and dancing, and I don't know, is this like, fifties? What is this? I have no clue, I just saw it and was like, "Me!" [laughs] and then I cut that out. And I ended up blocking the text of this, I think it says, "We should all be feminists," or something. And I recently watched *Fantastic Beasts* and I was like, "Huhhh! There's this whole article about them in fancy clothes and stuff! I have to cut this out!" And then I did just that. And then the time [of the class period] was up, which was sad.

Raine: Well, there are a lot of things that I didn't put in 'cause I actually couldn't find what I wanted in the magazines, they were mostly fashion and that sort of stuff and I'm not really into that, that's not really what I identify as so I kind of picked up a bunch of random words. The first thing I found was, "the fast and the curious," which I'm naturally a very curious person, which is why I'm liking science and I'm always interested in people and just things in general […] If it's something I'm passionate about then I will like, actually do a lot of research and spend a lot of time trying to figure out whatever…. I have a corkboard at home and I have little index cards and whenever I have a question, I put it on there. It's called, "Scientific Questions to Ponder About," and there's some really random things. One of them is something about like, natural selection, like a modern version of natural selection because like, should humans be eliminated by natural selection because we're not meant to really survive? […And then I have] "Bio is life," because I really enjoy bio, my mom's a biologist….

… And then I have an arrow that points to New York. Well, the arrow is just there for aesthetic, but New York, 'cause it's my home and I've been to so many countries because my parents are huge travelers and I have many nationalities … so that's why there's "travel," "family" and "world" right next to it.… And then, "The end," reminds me of a lot of things like different stages, like I went from New York to Hong Kong to New York [for school], and I went from French semi-public to American private school.… And then I have partying because I love to party. I'm not going to lie about that, I like it. I love music, and I can't dance for the life of me, but I like socializing and music and it's just a lot of fun for me, and "friends" underneath that because I love my friends and I love being with people….

… there's this big messy area that says "music" and it has a bunch of artists that I really enjoy … my parents were really about introducing us to a variety of music so when we were young, we listened to rap … [my mom] would play us all this Notorious B.I.G. … she taught us that it was a form of art and that it was expression and she wanted us to know that there's all kinds of ways to express yourself. We did not have a right to do that in any case because we didn't need to express ourselves in such a way, you know, we were pretty privileged so we didn't need to do that, but she said that some people were not privileged and therefore they wanted to do it their way. So that was her way of letting us know that there are some things that we might not understand at the age of three, but later on, now that I think of it, I think it was one of the smartest moves she could have done.

Lila: So, we'll start with the P. The P is a symbol of pansexuality. This is the official one is this [shows me an example], I tried to make it look like that, I'm not very artistic. I also love to travel, so that background is a wonderful place. The skyline that I drew is New York, 'cause I love my New York. But um, I'm explaining the little things first. Um, I love music, which is why there's a guitar. Benedict Cumberbatch is like, one of my favorite people in the world, so you know, I just had to include him. Anna is my baby sister, so she's in it. Um, and then … let's see, crime shows…. Music again…. And then I have Beyoncé for feminist thing because I love to be my feminist self as much as possible and so she's just like, completely and utterly like, representing that. Um, but yeah, I don't think I will ever put all of me onto this one tiny piece of paper, but it comes pretty close.…

The first thing I drew was my P, which is one of the biggest parts of me. It's also one of the biggest things in the picture, which is … sad because I'm not out to my parents … but it's a really big part of me. Also, I wish that Beyoncé's picture was bigger … she's just amazing. Um, I guess music means a lot to me? It's my kind of relaxer. It's one of the things that means so much to me and allows me to express my feelings in a place where I can't otherwise when I'm at home and I feel like I can't talk about something, it always…. I am a songwriter and a lot of my songs are based around feeling hidden or feeling finally free once I came out, I created like, practically a playlist of songs about feeling free and flying free, so um, music is a really big thing for me.

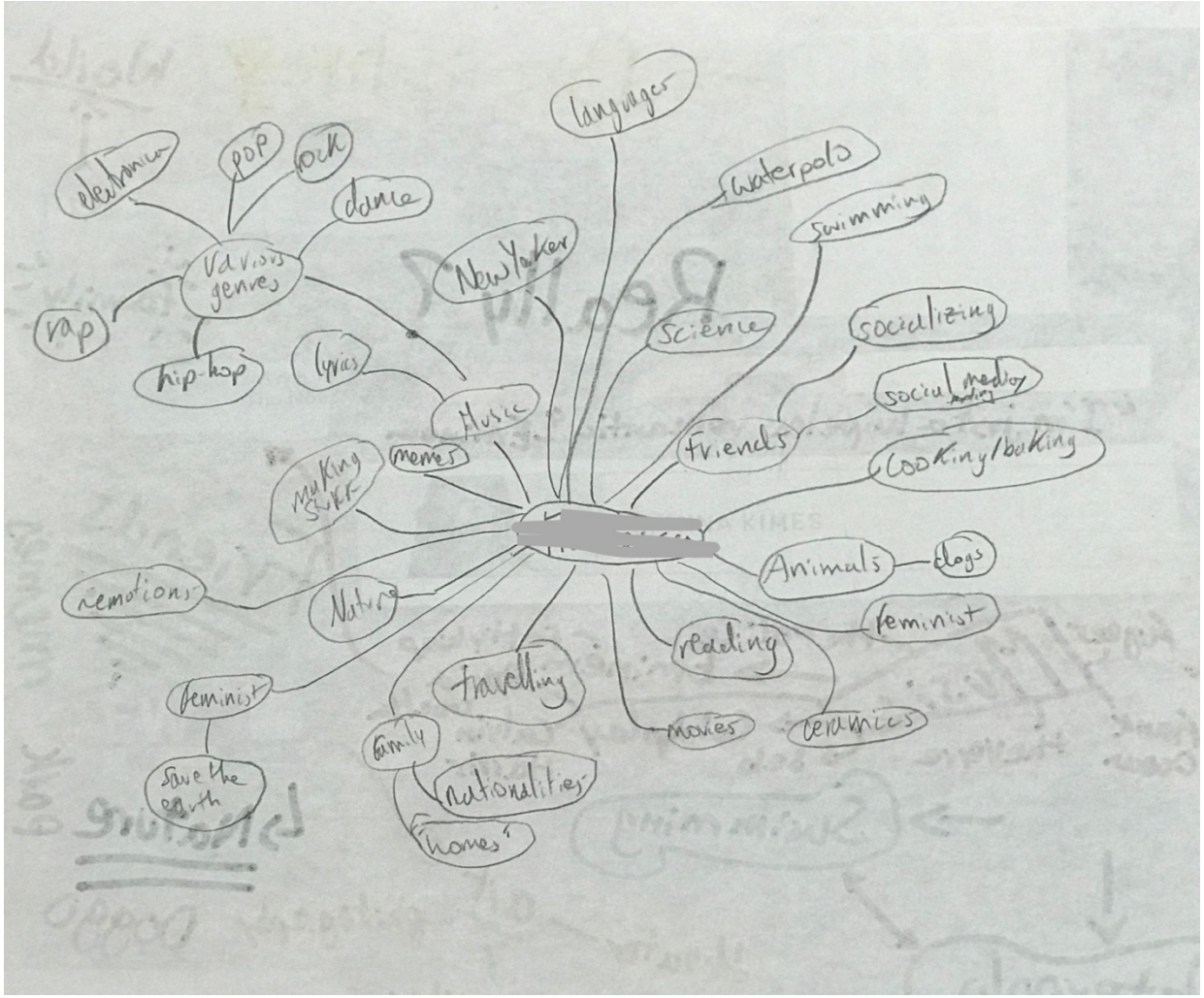

Figure 11. Identity Map - Raine

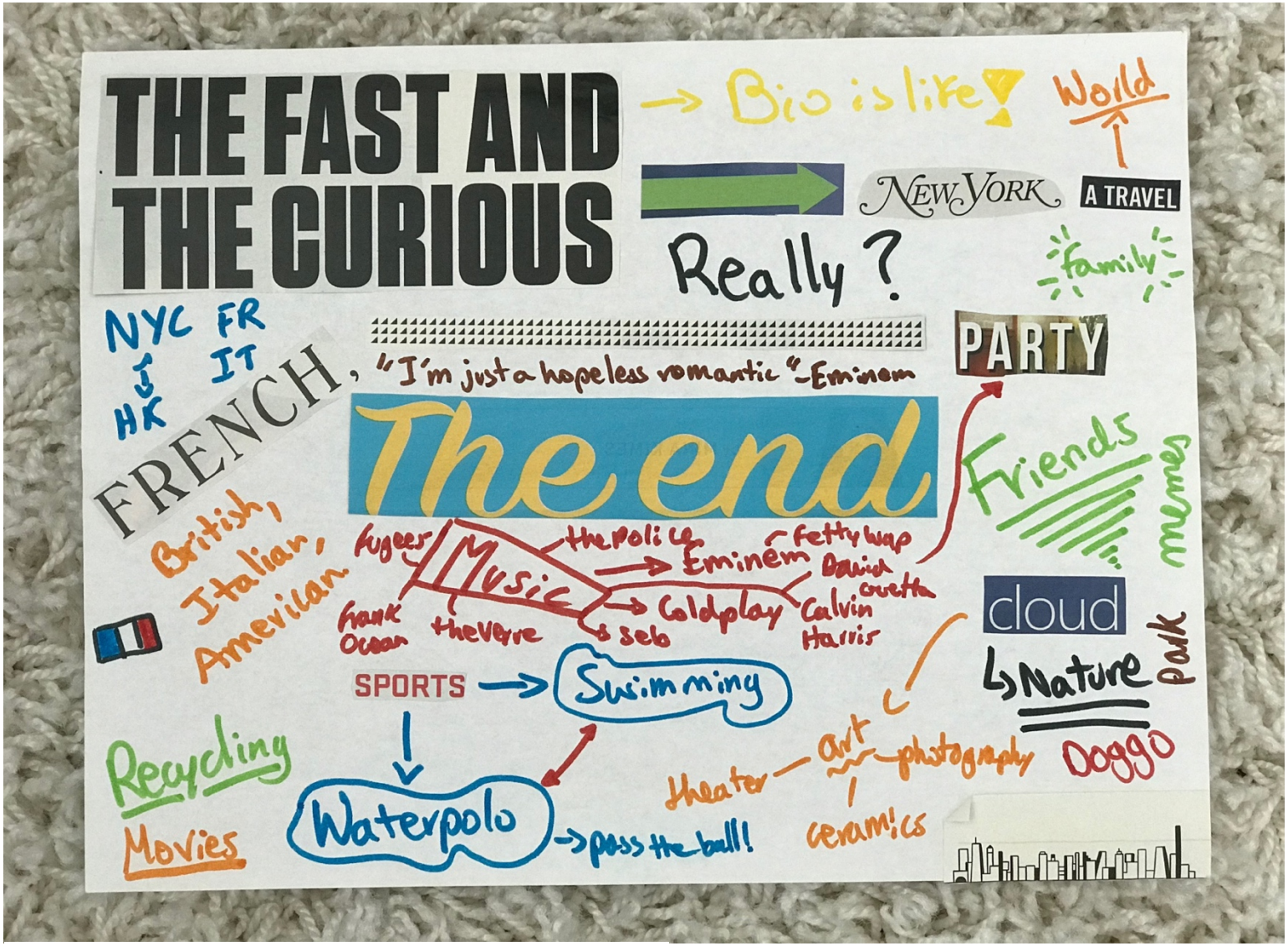

Figure 12. Identity Collage - Raine

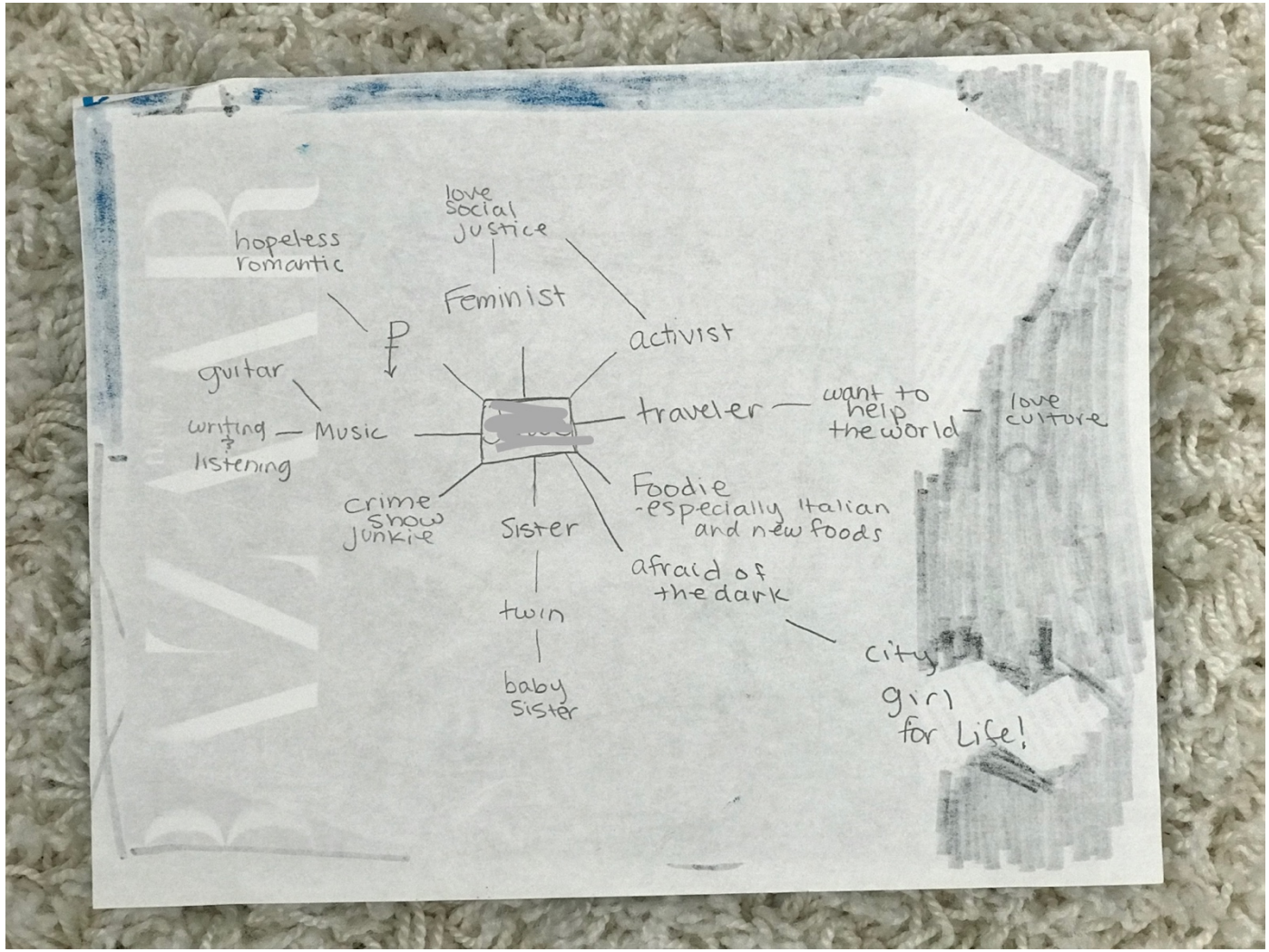

Figure 13. Identity Map - Lila

Figure 14. Identity Collage - Lila

Figure 15. Word Cloud of 10th Grade Identity Map Identifiers

The artifacts accompanied by the participants' explanations not only offer valuable insights into young people's literacies and composition practices as they relate to their identities, but also how they perhaps negotiate intersectionality within their school context. After running the activity in the four sections of her leadership class, I engaged in some conceptual reflection with Dr. Collette, who shared:

> I thought it was really interesting [to see] the kinds of identity categories that [students] felt attached to and the ones they didn't think about that much. And how much personal taste and passion was playing into their articulation of their identities. So many of them wanted something that spoke about growing up in New York City, that felt like a huge part of their identity. And then, if you recall, the one or two kids from New Jersey were very aggressive about the fact that they're from New Jersey. [But for the New York City kids] I thought it was interesting … that it was New York, but it wasn't neighborhood. It wasn't, "I'm from the Upper East Side…. I'm from the Upper West Side."… Nobody was like, "Brooklyn!"… I thought it was really interesting that they were so committed to region, but not to neighborhood.
>
> … And then hobbies, they wanted to put Netflix, or eating, or dogs, whatever. **These felt like bigger parts of their identity to them than something like their gender identity or their racial identity**…. That just isn't resonating with them. Might be because they're young, might be

> something about how we're educating them at school, might be a generational difference, but I found it really striking that **so much of the way they wanted to articulate what was most important about themselves was about passions, hobbies, and how they spend their time**. (Interview, 12/15/16)

As evidenced in the maps and collages above, these young people understand and present themselves as socially situated beings, which is important to note in a study examining how identities are defined by negotiations of sociospatial landscapes and ways of participating in various social groups, cultures, and institutions. Each set of collaged images represents the multimodal and multispatial practices through which young people are enacting themselves (Vasudevan, 2011). In their maps, students identify aspects of their social and political contexts with nods to popular culture, feminism, and their extracurricular interests as frequently as, or more often than, their social identifiers like race, class, and gender. They describe themselves as feminists and activists, as aware and worldly—many of the characteristics associated with both the ideal conceptions of the Clyde Girl as well as the reclaimed image described in the previous counter-narrative—demonstrating how these qualities permeate students' identities. Whether their conceptions of something like feminism are entirely accurate or comprehensive, them claiming feminism is an important piece of their identities as young people, or modern women, today and within the context of an elite all-girls school. As this dissertation is concerned with how people experience girls and girlhood in a particular sociocultural ecology, these maps and collages provide insight into how young people situate themselves and navigate the social forces of an all-girls school.

Like the school mapping activity, the greatest limitation of the identity collage activity was time. The two major pieces of feedback from students was that they only had one 50-minute period to sketch their identity maps and then construct their collages, and although they were encouraged to draw what they could not find in a magazine, students wished there was a greater array of publications to choose from for their images. Were I to run this activity again, I would build in more time for reflection with students about the

purpose and process of visually representing one's identity, which would subsequently promote deeper discussions with individuals about their identity collages. Students had an opportunity to share as much or as little about their maps and collages as they wanted with their peers in the last ten minutes of each class. This was important in that it allowed for dialogue and reflection; a chance to make themselves known, and perhaps unknown, amongst their peers. Despite the limited time frame of the activity, it is important to recognize the affordances of the space that was created and the insights garnered through students' multimodal representations of their socially situated selves.

Issues of Adversity and Taboo

Throughout my 17 interviews with students, there were three topics—gender and sexual identities, mental health, and wealth and privilege—that kept recurring, sometimes as tangential comments and sometimes as central components of students' responses to one of my questions. The commonality between the three topics is that, although they were central to students' lives, they were often regarded at Clyde with an illusion of acceptance, when in actuality, they still remain quite taboo and under-discussed.

Gender and sexual identity/ies: The illusion of and search for a safe space. In Chapter IV, school leaders shared their perspectives and reassurances about preparing for a future with transgender students. For both Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Thomas, the topic of transgender students still felt like a new frontier for them personally and administratively, and in her interview, Mrs. Hill commented, "I feel like there's not as much fear in talking about LGBTQ issues really and I think maybe I'm naive, but I … maybe trans-issues still make people a little bit like, not sure…" (Interview, 1/26/17). "Transgender issues" were such a new and frequent topic of conversation at Clyde that at times it felt like "LGBTQ issues" were talked about in a past tense, meaning they had been around for longer and had been digested and addressed with programming, curricula, and discussions built into the school's eco-system. As a result, there was often an illusion or belief held by school

leaders and students who aligned with normative identifiers that issues related to gender and sexual identity/ies were appropriately and inclusively engaged at Clyde. Yet, as evidenced in the student excerpts below, there were a range of conversations, levels of awareness, and perceptions of authentic safe spaces for students to engage, find support, and share this piece of their identities with others.

"I've never had to deal with coming to terms with my sexuality because I'm straight … like, I've never had to deal with this, with all of the stresses for someone who's maybe not … that has to deal with [it]" (Maria, Interview, 3/6/17). I interviewed Maria on a Tuesday morning right after Morning Meeting (a bi-weekly event) where a panel of students identifying as LGBTQ+ talked about their experiences of being queer at Clyde, including a few students who shared that they had been "outed" by a peer before they were ready to come out at school. The conversation made her realize that Clyde might not be an equally safe space for all students:

> It kind of makes me think, like I know I've only come in contact with people who've been really accepting about everything, but like you just never know what every single person … that makes me a little nervous because I've always been so great about the Clyde community, but what if there's that one person who feels like something has happened that's made her feel uncomfortable? (Interview, 3/6/17)

In Karl's experience, and in response to the same component of the panel discussion, she shared that a number of her friends had been outed by one girl in her class the previous year, causing them to feel unsafe in a typically inclusive-feeling student community. Karl wondered, "… why are you asking like, 'Is she bi[sexual]?' to her friends and not directly to her face?… I feel like that's … it's a strange sort of culture (Interview, 3/13/17). This student's behavior is problematic for a number of reasons: outing a person before they are ready to come out creates an unsafe and potentially dangerous environment; and regardless of the student's motivations for asking questions—whether they stem for curiosity or ill-intentions—her questions run the risk and likelihood of perpetuating a heteronormative stance, positioning different orientations as Other.

Lila identified as pansexual, which, she explained, is when:

> you take out the "I am attracted to a male, to a female, to a male and a female," and no longer look at the gender side of it, or how your own identity fits into that. It's attraction is attraction. Love is love. Who you like is who you like, not based on their gender, their race, you know, anything like that. It's a beautiful thought. (Interview, 3/8/17)

Lila also discussed the need for Clyde to address "newer issues," particularly in health class. It is not until sophomore year that students learn about sexual orientation and gender identity. The curriculum for 9th grade follows more of a traditional (and largely heteronormative) approach to sex education, focusing on reproduction and sexual health.

> … I quickly learned that you're not taught anything about sexuality or gender expression or anything like that until 10th grade. Which is a big part of, what should be a big part of someone's … how they grow up. They shouldn't have to learn it from their parents, or from a book they borrow from the library that their parents don't know about. It shouldn't be like that. The school should at least offer a basis for people to understand what bisexuality is, what gay and lesbian is, and how even if you were born a girl, you do not have to stay a girl because you feel like you must and that society tells you to. **I feel that school environments should be kind of … should make a base for learning in all senses of learning, not just the academics of English and math and science**…. (Lila, Interview, 3/8/17)

> … I want to make this the safest community that I can. Not for myself but just for everyone around me and for all my friends who are being outed by students or whatever**…. I wish this could be a better place**. It is already a really amazing place, but I feel like there's still so much more room for improvement.… Like, I get the point of the school but like, if a student decides to come out and decides to remain here because they love the school, like, I believe they should be able to stay. **Even if they identify as like, he/him, they should still be able to stay here just 'cause they like, started their Clyde career here and they feel comfortable staying at the school, which is like, a choice they should be able to make themselves**. (Karl, Interview, 3/13/17)

Annie credited Clyde with providing an outlet and the community—specifically her peers and her faculty advisor—in helping her to "be okay with being queer" (Interview, 3/18/17), an identity she was not allowed to have or express at home. She had found particular support in two student-run clubs: the gay/straight alliance and the "diversity"

club as they provided spaces where students "could speak more honestly without feeling pressure that a teacher might overhear" (personal communication, 5/22/17). She did, however, recognize that her experience was not necessarily the experience or perspective that other LGBTQ+ students had at Clyde. She wondered specifically about trans-students and how students not identifying as female might experience and navigate a place like Clyde:

> What if a trans-person like, wanted to come out? Or like, someone who's non-binary or whatever. Like, in classes, teachers will use she, and we just assume that everyone is "she" or "her" and everyone is a girl and everyone identifies us that way. And I think that's because we're at an all-girls school, but **we do need to be sensitive for those who aren't and I know, like, for a fact that there are people here who don't like that and feel uncomfortable**. (Annie, Interview, 4/18/17)

Student participants overwhelmingly felt that the school should allow transgender students to attend Clyde, particularly if the student transitions from female to male while enrolled at Clyde. Participants hoped that the school and administration would be supportive and welcoming of any student who decided to transition, but some participants acknowledged that they were not sure if the student would want to be in a place like Clyde after transitioning: "If you change while you're [here], you shouldn't be kicked out for it, but I would imagine in that situation that the person would not be very comfortable in a school that speaks to only a girl's [experience]" (Rachel, Interview, 5/2/17). Annie echoed this sentiment,

> It should be something that's okay and normal … [but] I don't think that will happen any time soon though, unfortunately, just because people are sensitive and it's a tricky subject, and I think **if someone were to transition, I just can't imagine that ever happening because I don't think it would be a safe space**…. I can't see someone wanting to come out, or wanting to transition, while they're in a place like Clyde. (Interview, 4/18/17)

> … I really like being at an all-girls school because I feel like it is supportive and, at the same time, if you don't feel you identify as a girl, like, this would be the time to discover that. And I feel like a lot of people here would be supportive of that. 'Cause you find the right people, but I feel you can always find the right people. And it's not just like, there's not only like a

> range of differences in boys, there's also like a range of different types of girls. (Maya, Interview, 4/10/17)

As evidenced in the excerpts above, it is clear that young people are leading by example when it comes to considerations for transgender students at their school. While they were open to transgender students remaining at Clyde after transitioning, they were not sure that those students would want to stay in a school climate that was not yet prepared to provide them with the supports and safe spaces they would need.

Mental health: "The standard experience of everything being okay." Mental health was cited by many participants as one of the main reasons they did *not* feel the school was fulfilling the promise and commitment of reaching every girl. Annie had a sleeping disorder that she had been struggling with for the last few years. Stress caused her body to essentially shutdown, requiring her to sleep for extended periods of time, which in turn meant that she was often late for or missed full days of school:

> **I'm not allowed to, like, have my issues here**…. I have to be here on time. I'm not allowed to, like, make excuses. I have to be in class. I have to be present. I have to be awake. And then if I wasn't, then I need to meet with all the teachers, email the, and do all these, like normal student things…. But they are sometimes really, really hard for me to do. And that's like, **one thing that I feel like, very, not okay with bringing to Clyde, even though it involves Clyde so much**. (Interview, 4/18/17)

Another student explained that it did not feel like there was a shared language or understanding related to mental illness in the upper school. For example, it was common for upper school students, who tend to be under-slept and over-worked and mentally and emotionally drained, to frequently use phrases like "I'm so tired," "I'm so sad," or "I'm so stressed about this test" to express themselves and commiserate with one another. There had been instances, however, as Jenny explained, where students with diagnosed conditions took offense to these statements, responding, "You don't have anxiety!" or "You don't have depression or all of these mental illnesses that would make you like that" (Interview, 3/15/17). The phrases have garnered a colloquial nature, as students use the expressions as a coping strategy to deal with stress and expectations, a way to

communicate with their peers. Students suffering from more serious or diagnosed afflictions, however, felt like their conditions were not being taken as seriously when everyone used the same terms for their feelings. In this type of exchange, Jenny explained, both students' realities were largely invalidated, "which I think is probably like, the reason why not every girl is being reached. So I think that, um, like if we could just have a talk about mental illnesses like, and understand there's different like, levels of it" (Interview, 3/15/17), that would make a difference.

Jenny was not alone in her request for more conversations and shared rhetoric for issues related to mental health and well-being. Maya had been feeling particularly stressed out as a junior: "I keep telling everyone I'm stressed, because I just want people to like, tell me I'm going to like, be okay … and I just keep thinking like, 'Maybe they are just lying to shut me up,' which might be good, because I might need that [laughs]" (Interview, 4/10/17). Maya's need for and subsequent doubt of her peers' affirmations is an illustration of how she was coping with being in a high stress environment, but her laughing at the end of her comment insinuated that this was just another piece of the school culture that was "normal" and expected, something that came with the territory. Naomi, sharing her thoughts on the Clyde Girl archetype, brought up another interesting perspective on mental health at Clyde:

> I still don't think there's a stereotypical Clyde Girl, but I do think that we have, um, even though pretty much everybody is going through something, there's still the standard of like, **the standard experience of everything being okay…. And like, 99% of people aren't okay, [but] we still walk around pretending that we are**. And I feel like that still happens here. (Interview, 4/10/17)

Naomi's remark was telling of the culture and how students interpreted and engaged the discursive practices associated with mental health. Referring to it as the "standard" experience, Naomi denoted this as a widespread and common feeling among the student body. Although the students mentioned Clyde's occasional programming about mental

health, well-being, and mindfulness, it was unclear about how these kinds of everyday feelings were being addressed, if at all.

Wealth and privilege: The elephants in the room. Maria came to Clyde in 9th grade. She had attended a private, independent Quaker grammar school in downtown Manhattan. She remembered not knowing or thinking about who had more and who had less in terms of wealth at her old school. Although she recognized that she was younger and possibly less aware of socioeconomic class in grade school, she described attending high school on the upper east side as an entirely different experience.

> **You walk into a room and you kind of know, just like by how someone is dressed or how they talk about topics**, but it's never been so overbearing that it's kind of ruined anything for me, but I think it's something that I've definitely become more aware of, even just like going out to lunch every day. Like, I think the food here is awesome, incredible, but going out for lunch is nice, but I can't go out for lunch every day for two months in a row. It's just an insane amount of money that's not worth spending, but some of my best friends go out every day. [They] refuse to eat inside. (Maria, Interview, 3/6/17)

> When I was in the 9th grade, I feel like I had a burden to prove myself … because I was the newcomer, the outsider…. Like, **I had to be the best or whatever academically or had to like really, like, I'm getting over $43,000 in tuition** so I should … like be accepted or like I really should prove myself that I deserve this or deserve to be here. (Simone, Interview, 4/12/17)

> I think at Clyde there is a huge divide in terms of class, and so that's a pretty clear, like, okay, this is where the split is, and **then you find your friend groups within that, uh, divide, which is unfortunate, but I mean, it happens wherever you go I think. So, most of my friends are people of color [laughs]**. (Annie, Interview, 4/18/17)

Lydia, a senior, got deeply interested in social justice issues as her class difference became more obvious to her in high school.

> I think definitely in upper school there are more instances of class [issues and tensions] 'cause I think **that's one of the things that Clyde is just like, no one wants to talk about it and I totally understand why** you don't want to talk about it because even for me it's uncomfortable.… I took that as part of my identity because it was so uncomfortable, it was like, **"I'm**

> **just gonna like, make it a joke, it's funny, like ha-ha, I'm from Brooklyn. I'm on [financial] aid."**
>
> Clyde's very like, sensitive when we talk about race, and so **people of a more privileged identity feel more stressed out because they feel like, they can't do anything about it, but the people on the bottom are like, "Well, this just happens to me everyday … you know, this is nothing new**. Why should I be stressed out about this, in a way."… So it's kind of, since the people of color are faced with, you know, this is a normal thing, that it's nothing like surprising or new, but then when people of a privileged identity hear about this, it's like, "Oh my god, what do I do? I don't know, and this is so awkward, how do I deal with this?" (Maya, Interview, 4/10/17)

Raine felt that there were a lot of assumptions made about wealth at Clyde. While there was an awareness that some students were on financial aid or came from programs like Prep for Prep,[5] in her opinion, it often felt like her classmates and the general climate at the school forgot that not everyone had the same financial privilege:

> Raine: Because, like, no one really talks about Prep for Prep or financial aid or being in a different class than the upper class. It's always pretty much assumed that you're either upper-middle or upper [class] and so that's something. We talk about race and gender and all that stuff but we never talk about [socio]economics and that's still a big issue.
>
> EBW: Why do you think that is?
>
> Raine: Because … I'm not sure. It's just a very strange thing, now that I think of it. Like, **we've never ever talked about this**, not that I remember. And we probably should because a lot of people feel like they're not being treated the same because of their class […] I don't know why Clyde doesn't talk about it because like, **they're supposed to make a safe environment where everyone can be really comfortable being their truest self, but if you don't talk about it, how can you be your most comfortable self?** (Interview, 3/15/17)

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[5]Prep for Prep is an academic and mentoring organization based in New York City: "Since 1978, we have identified New York City's most promising students of color and prepared them for success at independent schools throughout the Northeast. Once placed, we support the academic and personal growth of our students through college" (website, About Prep, n.d.).

Wealth and privilege remain two of the most uncomfortable and taboo topics of discussion at Clyde. As noted in her book on the anxieties of affluence, Rachel Sherman (2017) explains that this behavior toward money and privilege is historically typical:

> In the United States, social class it a "touchy subject" (Fussell, 1983), which is "vast amorphous, politically charged, and largely unacknowledged" (Keller, 2005)…. This commitment to equality of opportunity [i.e., the 'American Dream'] has long gone hand in hand with a taboo on explicit conversations about class and money, both among individuals and in public discourse. (p. 5)

The lack of discourse around affluence and privilege in privileged spaces remains an ongoing and under-studied phenomenon, one that Clyde continues to struggle with and therefore very rarely acknowledges in ways that students would like to see.

Summary

In this chapter, I introduced three counter-narratives that illustrated the ruptures, complexities, and challenges that Clyde students (and some adults) struggle with and navigate on a daily basis. Through a discussion of the school culture and school community, participants talked about the divisions they feel between the students and the administration. The participatory mapping activity revealed insights into how students feel in the spaces they occupy. And students shared perspectives on how Clyde's public reputation and the ways the school advertises itself to the outside world feel inauthentic. The most significant takeaway from the first counter-narrative is that students want to share storytelling rights with the adults in the building. The second counter-narrative gave participants space to articulate the pressures and expectations they feel in a highly rigorous academic environment. Students interrogated the state of activism and student agency at Clyde, citing frustrations with a lack of follow-through from both the administration and the student body. Participants also provided critical perspectives on the Clyde Girl and the Every Girl, detailing the discursive practices associated with the

ideal archetypes, and demonstrating the embodied and critical literacies they exercise to make sense of these representations. In the third and final counter-narrative, participants demonstrated the vast array of personalities, positionalities, and experiences that comprise the individuals who make up the student body. It was meant to illustrate what a diversity of perspectives, opinions, and daily lives looks like and serves as a call for what young people need to feel safe, included, and like they truly belong at the school.

I recognize that this chapter contained a significant amount of content and analysis. Students had a lot to say, and I have maintained my commitments to not only centering, but amplifying, their voices in this dissertation. I included multiple long excerpts in many of the sections in service of demonstrating both the shared and divergent experiences of the young people at Clyde.

Chapter VI

(RE)IMAGINING GIRLHOOD: LOOKING TOWARD YOUNG-PERSONHOOD

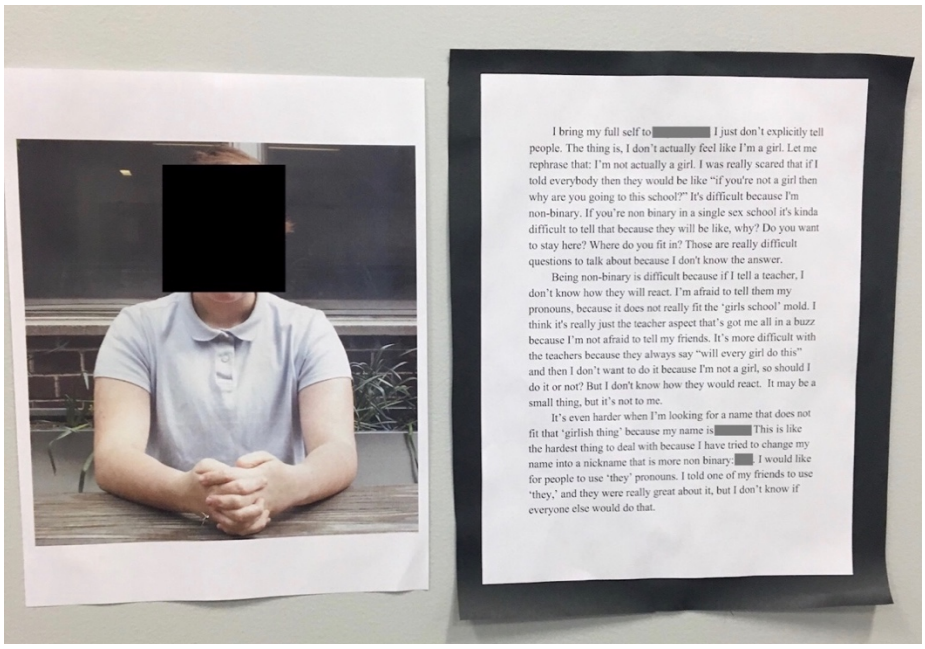

Figure 16. Profile from Annie's "Humans of Clyde" Project

I bring my full self to Clyde, I just don't explicitly tell people. The thing is, I don't actually feel like I'm a girl. **Let me rephrase that: I'm not actually a girl.** I was really scared that if I told everybody then they would be like, "If you're not a girl, then why are you going to this school?" It's difficult because I'm non-binary. If you're non-binary in a single-sex school it's kinda difficult to tell that because they will be like, "Why? Do you want to stay here? Where do you fit in?" Those are really difficult questions to talk about because I don't know the answer.

Being non-binary is difficult because if I tell a teacher, I don't know how they will react. I'm afraid to tell them my pronouns, because it does not really fit the "girls' school" mold. I think it's really just the teacher aspect that's got me all in a buzz because I'm not afraid to tell my friends. It's more

> difficult with the teachers because they always say, "Will every girl do this…" and then I don't want to do it because I'm not a girl, so should I do it or not? But I don't know how they would react. It may be a small thing, but it's not to me.
>
> It's even harder when I'm looking for a name that does not fit that 'girlish thing' because my name is [X]. This is like the hardest thing to deal with because I have tried to change my name into a nickname that is more non-binary: [Y]. I would like for people to use 'they' pronouns. I told one of my friends to use 'they,' and they were really great about it, but I don't know if everyone else would do that.

For their final project in Dr. Collette's social justice elective class, taken in the spring of 2017 (the same semester I conducted interviews), Annie and a friend co-curated a series of photo-essays titled, "Humans of Clyde," modeled on the original and largely popular, *Humans of New York* blog (with subsequent social media accounts), which features photographic portraits of New Yorkers on the street coupled with quotes and short stories from their lives. The authors compiled about a dozen profiles featuring students, faculty, and staff at Clyde. The profiles were displayed on the 3rd floor on a wall right outside the student commons. The authors' "artist statement" read:

> In the social justice elective, we don't just study activist movements, methodologies, strategies, and styles of leadership; we also implement activist projects of our own. This project is inspired by Brandon Stanton's *Humans of New York*, a blog that features thousands of portraits and interviews he has collected on the streets of New York City. *Humans of New York* provides a platform for all New Yorkers to share their stories. We felt this resonated with Clyde's mission to encourage "every girl" to "bring her full self to school." We wanted to bring these stories to light and provide a platform where students and faculty can have their voices heard. (Field notes, 5/25/17)

The profiles depicted everyday, yet provocative, accounts of lived experiences from people in the school community, including a 9th grade student who shared their story about not identifying as a girl. Annie explained the process of putting the project together and also mentioned the profile of this particular student:

> My partner and I interviewed different faculty, staff, and students who had a story they felt Clyde had ignored or would not accept or listen to. It was a privilege to be able to be trusted with these stories. I was also

> surprised at the amount of responses we received. We then transcribed the interviews, word for word, and parsed the stories down to a short synopsis of the person's quoted story. We then posted them on a wall with the person's photo so anyone who wanted to could walk by and read.
>
> I was able to share someone's coming out story. It was the first time they came out as non-binary. I was able to show administration that people who do not identify as "girls" or use "she/her" pronouns do exist in the school, and that these concerns of making the school more gender inclusive are not just for shits and giggles, but because there are REAL, ACTUAL people … (I know … crazy, right?).
>
> I'm not sure if things have changed … and according to some of the students currently at Clyde we still have a long way to fight for simple accommodations for the safety of our students. (personal communication, 6/1/17)

The project created a lot of buzz in the high school. Annie told me it was intended to be a place where students could share their stories openly: "No shame, no censorship, and directly quoted." However, she said, "even though the goal was to show the administration the detriment to limiting a person's voice, I still faced pushback from certain members of administration" (personal communication, 6/1/17). Annie included her own profile and a piece of her story about her battle with mental illness. She was subsequently told by the administration that she either had to change a particularly provocative line in her narrative or take it down because they did not want it to make prospective students or members of the upper school community uncomfortable.

> This made me so angry because it felt like I was back to square one. There are so many members of the student body and faculty who have dealt with the things I was trying to share and show that they are not alone, but the censorship was perpetuating this cycle. (personal communication, 6/1/17)

Annie and her partner received a lot of positive feedback from students and even some faculty members, which for them was the most important. "I'm super proud of how big this project got," Annie told me (personal communication, 5/22/17). Only five of the stories were "published" on the 3rd floor wall; although the pair collected many more, they were not allowed to put them up. All of the stories live on in a binder at Annie's home.

I spoke with Dr. Collette amidst the buzz of the "Humans of Clyde" project. She was equally excited by the responses of students and frustrated with the pushback from the administration. Working with the young people in her social justice elective that semester, she was filled with hope and eagerness around her students' final activist projects. They had all identified issues they were personally passionate about and designed actionable projects to address the topics. Many students chose issues happening at Clyde because they were personally affected by them and there was potential to effect change, whether that be the start of a conversation or a review of a policy. Dr. Collette was checking her email while chatting, fielding a handful of messages from the administrators and faculty who were not happy with some of the projects. She breathed deeply, turned to me, and said, "The students love this school so much. When they push back on current situations and issues, it's *because* they love the school so much … **it's like they're writing love letters to the school**" (Field notes, 5/8/17).

These last words from Dr. Collette have increasingly resounded with me and this study the more and more I think about them. As evidenced throughout Chapters IV and V, while students are critical of various aspects of Clyde, they also have wonderful things to say about the school, and, more than anything, they want Clyde to be the best school it can possibly be. Students simultaneously engage various multimodal, discursive practices—through words, actions, behaviors, beliefs, values—to "write" these love letters to the school *every* day.

* * *

In this final chapter, I will first summarize what I set out to do in this dissertation. I will then respond to my research questions with conclusions from my two data chapters, reflect on the research process, and build upon my conclusions with thoughts on the implications of my findings for future research.

When I embarked on this dissertation journey, one of my main objectives was to (re)center the voices of students in the conversations about them and their lived

experiences at school. As I have stated (and frequently reminded myself) throughout the project, the purpose of this dissertation was not to produce an exposé, pointing out the problems and shortcomings of the school for the sheer sake of criticism. This project was rather an attempt to identify the school's dominant narratives—and inevitable counter-narratives—about girls, ideals, and expectations in order to provide an "insider/outsider" perspective on the social and cultural aspects of the school's ecological makeup. As I stated in Chapter I:

> I set out to illustrate the ways in which place, literacies and discursive practices, and privilege function and intersect for members of an elite girls' school to create particular images and messages about who belongs and what is expected of them within their community and culture.
>
> I do this work in service of helping a school community better understand what it means to be a girl today and begin to reimagine what structures, identities, and places are needed to best support girls, or young people, in the midst of girlhood, whatever that might mean.

Throughout the three and a half years I spent at Clyde, there was never a question as to whether the administration always had the students' best interests in mind; nor whether the intentions for creating and sustaining a safe space, an inclusive institution, or serving every student equally were genuine and a top priority. As evidenced through my conversations with young people and school leaders, however, walking the walk can often prove to be more challenging than talking the talk.

This research takes the form of a case study—highlighting issues, topics, and events that are both unique to this one site and are also likely universal to elite private schools (and other institutions as well). I lean heavily on the student perspective, which, in some circumstances, may seem (or indeed be) inaccurate, uninformed, or one-sided. As Dyson and Genishi (1994) remind us, the end goal of a qualitative case study is to "understand how the phenomenon matters from the perspectives of participants in the case.… The process is inductive, grounded in the collected data—the artifacts … the field notes on people's actions in particular contexts, and the interview transcripts of people's

reflective talk" (p. 81). I amplify the voices of the young people to make the argument that whether their statements and opinions are fully founded or not, if they are part of students' realities and lived experiences, it is crucial that they be acknowledged, considered, and acted upon.

If nothing else, this is a call to honor the new, complex, and multimodal literacies practices of young people that provide insights into who they are and what is important to them. Bettis and Adams (2005) argue:

> Adult feminist scholars must know what the day-to-day habits of life are for adolescent girls. And if these daily habits include talk of who is nice, who is not, and how to change a tampon, then that talk and focus must be taken seriously, explored, played with, explained, and theorized. (p. 3)

I began this study with a working understanding—a guiding framework—of girlhood that considered the various temporal, ecological, cultural, and discursive storylines that intersect to construct and define the experiences of being a girl, and the places and spaces within which these experiences occur. I now leave this study with a remaining firm commitment to this working conception of girlhood, but I have gained perspective on and appreciation for the need, at times, to perhaps expand the concept to a non-gendered notion of "young-personhood." Different from adolescence (designating the more biological aspect of development), young-personhood refers to a particular time period in a young person's life that is iterative, reflexive, and responsive. The identity/ies that emerge and are tested out during young-personhood are deeply situated in one's social context—including school culture, peer culture, and popular culture—and indicate the ways in which young people read, participate, and belong in various sociospatial locations simultaneously.

To reiterate, the purpose of critical activist inquiry research seeks "not to prove or disprove, but rather to create movement, to displace, pull apart, and allow for resettlement" (Rolling, 2013, p. 99). At the heart of this research is a desire for counter-stories to be resituated and viewed as dominant narratives, ones that are multilayered and

complicated; ones that ebb and flow, with jagged edges and smooth corners; ones that look more like patchwork quilts than yards of silk. The reality of doing away with a dominant narrative altogether is unlikely, and, after all, the story/ies of institutions are what give them their identities and allow us to remember and continue to strengthen the cultures and communities within them. My hope is that this study might contribute to the growing body of anti-racist literature—as it interrogates constructions of girlhood and girls' adolescent identities within a particular, and still understudied, context of an elite all-girls school in New York City—that helps to spark realizations and conversations within privileged spaces about the importance of identity work, recognizing privilege as identity (Howard, 2008), and understanding the power and impact that language and discursive practices can have on creating and sustaining authentically inclusive school spaces.

Conclusions

For this dissertation study, I set out to examine how ideations of girls and girlhood are constructed and promoted as part of an institution's identity and, in turn, how members of the institution read and respond to those constructions. Specifically, I asked how Clyde's sociocultural ecology was informed by, and how it informs, constructions and representations of an ideal student. And how students and school leaders make sense of dominant narratives of girls and girlhood, and, most importantly for this project, how students and school leaders offer counter-stories that resist, challenge, and rewrite dominant representations and school-sanctioned narratives of girlhood.

To finish this study, I offer three conclusions from my data analysis: first, I argue that it is crucially important to recognize and understand the complexity of young people's realities and identities when considering the spaces and places they occupy, particularly within institutions like schools. Second, I consider the possibilities of Third

Spaces (Gutiérrez, 2008) as sites of reconciliation between dominant narratives and counter-narratives to dream up new and different storylines for an institution and its members. And third, I call for the school to make greater and more intentional discursive commitments to authentic inclusivity.

Emergent Realities and Identities

As evidenced in Chapters IV and V, the culture of the Clyde School continues to function in many ways that remain rooted in tradition, reinforcing an institutional approach and school climate that operate with a that's-the-way-it-has-always-been mentality (Lightfoot, 1983). The tropes and archetypes discussed in this study are not entirely unique; they exist in other spaces and broader contexts. What they help us understand in this particular context, however, is how expectations of identity, performance, and belonging are scripted onto and embodied by an ideal image of a girl—both the specific Clyde Girl and the all-encompassing Every Girl. But, as also evidenced in my data chapters, school communities and cultures are dynamic organisms that constantly interact with one another and face pressures to evolve amidst shifting landscapes and perspectives.

I opened this chapter with a student's coming out story. As Annie mentioned, it was the first time they chose to publicly identify as non-binary at school. This is significant for a couple of reasons: the first is that this student decided to share their story as part of a peer's social justice project. For me, this is a testament to the school community that many students described in their interviews—the trust and support students have for and in one another is powerful and noteworthy. The second reason is that, as more young people ascribe to non-conforming identities in relation to sexuality and gender, it raises questions about the future of gender politics within single-sex institutions. As my participants indicated, there are pressing conversations to be had

about the emerging realities and identities of young people, particularly as they relate to the school and social spaces they occupy.

The National Coalition of Girls' Schools' (NCGS) Board of Trustees recently assembled a task force to issue a position statement, recommendations, and list of key materials "addressing the unique issues facing all-girls schools related to transgender persons" (NCGS website, Transgender/Gender Identity Resources). Their position statement reads:

> The National Coalition of Girls' Schools (NCGS) believes the education of girls must ensure intellectual and social safety. Forging strong communities built on supportive relationships are hallmarks of all-girls schools. NCGS recognizes that when students transition—or begin to question their gender identity—they remain at the core young people with whom our schools have built trusting and safe relationships. Therefore, NCGS encourages our schools to consider, at every point, the importance of working in a supportive way with students and families **on a case-by-case basis** during enrollment processes and as students identify as transgender within their school communities.
>
> Our schools are also committed to creating a safe and secure environment for all students and protecting each and every student from harassment, bullying, and negative behaviors, based on a student's gender questioning or transgender identity. (NCGS website, Transgender Position Statement, 2017)

When discussing the topic of transgender students in his interview, Mr. Bennett imagined that Clyde will eventually adopt a policy that deals with transgender students on a case-by-case basis, echoing the suggestion from NCGS above. I wonder about the case-by-case approach—I surmise that like any other marginalized group "requiring" policy decisions and action, it could be argued that each person and scenario should receive individualized treatment and considerations; at the same time, how do we then ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and access to opportunities? This connects to wider discourses about what institutions are being designed to do and how they are, or need to begin, tackling unprecedented issues and circumstances. While women's colleges and universities have been working on policies and practices for transgender students for

some time now, this is largely a new frontier for K-12 single-sex schools. I anticipate that this is a conversation and debate that all-girls schools will be having for many years to come. My hope is that administrators, faculty members, Boards of Trustees, and parents ask young people for their opinions and experiences, invite them to decision-making meetings, include them in policy-writing, and remain open to various possibilities of what girls, and more broadly students, can look like and who they can be. Failure to include the individuals most directly affected by these institutional decisions would be irresponsible and inauthentic.

The Possibilities of Third Spaces

In Chapter IV, a set of dominant narratives, or stories, was presented; in Chapter V, a set of counter-narratives, or stories, was presented. Both sets hold truth and importance when considering the school climate, students' realities, and school leaders' perspectives. In thinking about how the two data chapters relate to one another, participants reported that conversations between students and adults often felt like they were missing the mark. I understand the two sets of narratives as parallel, competing layers in Clyde's story and identity; in order for new storylines and aspects of identity to emerge, however, the narratives need to speak to one another. A third space is a social space within which counter-hegemonic activity, or contestations of dominant discourses, can occur for both students and administrators; it is the only space where a "true interaction or communication" between students and teachers can occur (Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995). In her work on what counts as learning and literacy education, Kris Gutiérrez (2008) calls for the establishment of collective third spaces "in which students begin to reconceive who they are and what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond" (p. 148). In this study, the third spaces are located between and among the dominant narratives and counter-narratives. It is in the third space that social and critical theory/ies can be implemented. I am therefore calling for the application of this idea to a

broader context: How can a school use collective third spaces as opportunities to reconceive an institution's purpose and identity and reimagine what the institution—its members, the culture, and the community—might be able to accomplish with increased efforts to acknowledge and reflect young people's realities?

There is a richness to the notion of taking young people seriously, positioning their voices, experiences, and opinions at the center of conversations that involve their education, their lives, their existence. Third spaces are accomplished and mediated by a variety of tools, including "sociocritical literacy" (Gutiérrez, 2002), a "historicizing literacy that privileges and is contingent upon students' sociohistorical lives" (cited in Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 149). This point cannot be reiterated enough. For there to be authentic and fundamental change at the institutional level, we as researchers, school leaders, and adults in the lives of young people must recognize that the candor with which students read and speak about the places, spaces, and people they deeply care about can and should be leveraged as an invaluable resource for sustained improvement in their social, cultural, and educational contexts.

Discursive Commitments to Authentic Inclusivity

This study examined the kinds of discursive practices and identity work that young women—students—are engaging every day both in relation to, and outside of, the ideal archetypes in circulation at the Clyde School. This brings up questions about the education of young people broadly and, more specifically, the education of girls in today's sociopolitical climate—how can we as educators and researchers honor young people's realities alongside the histories and commitments of an institution in ways that foster progress and reflect authenticity?

Recall Annie's comment when talking about Clyde's commitment to Every Girl—she said, "I think 'aspire' would be a greater use of language, as in 'We *aspire* to reach every student where they are.'" In this example, the addition of a single word—

"aspire"—alters the semiotics of the entire statement. I revisit this moment to note the profound power of language and its connections to belonging. I hope that a significant takeaway from this study is a heightened awareness about how choices in words, images, and messages can affect members of an institution, particularly young people. In institutions that thrive on their histories and traditions, it is easy to overlook the language and discursive practices that fundamentally exclude certain people and/or their identities and positionalities from fully participating in a school's culture and community.

In order to be more authentically inclusive, it is necessary for an institution to identify areas in need of improvement, acknowledge its shortcomings and realities, and be willing to adapt institutional language and rhetoric and reexamine the everyday discursive practices that inform how students perceive themselves and the school's expectations of them. The most direct example is Annie's above. If Clyde changed its statement to "We *aspire* to reach every student where they are," or "We encourage students to bring as much of themselves to school as they want," the institution would communicate its steadfast commitments without making false promises or constructing problematic narratives. Granted, this can be complicated when Boards of Trustees, parents, and alumnae who often possess decision-making power and uphold the traditions and history of the school to the highest degree. But for schools to be truly inclusive spaces, the language and practices of a school culture must be reexamined. Students are often the individuals most deeply affected by policies, traditions, and histories that reinforce hegemonic ideals and expectations ingrained in a school's ecology. It is therefore paramount that young people be positioned as members of the institution with storytelling rights and as possessors of deep and complex knowledge that will help to authentically inform and strengthen an institution meant to serve them.

Reflections on the Research Process

In many respects, it is difficult to reflect back on your research process and not get bogged down with thinking about what you could or should have done differently. That is both the most exciting and frustrating aspect of the dissertation—it is the culminating project of your career as a doctoral student, but it also represents the beginning of your lifelong academic career—requiring me to frequently remind myself that this is only *one* possible way that I could have told the story. At the beginning of any research study, recruitment can be an incredibly daunting component of the project. Unless on the rare occasion of a predetermined sample, getting people who are willing and interested in participating in your study takes time, a deep forging of relationships and trust, and a willingness for both the researcher and participants to share pieces of themselves. The 17 students who were a part of this study offered invaluable insights into how they read, interpret, and navigate their realities and surroundings. The majority of the students that I interviewed had some sort of "divergence" in their identifiers; aspects of their identities and lived experiences that made them feel Other within the Clyde culture and community. As evidenced in Chapter V, even among the subset of students whose positionalities indicated that they should neatly "fit" into the box of the quintessential student, there were striations and narrative detours in their experiences and perspectives of Clyde. The students who volunteered to be a part of this study did so because they had something to say, and I am eternally grateful for that.

Ultimately, this dissertation tells the tale of students in two grades, and primarily the stories of seniors. The sophomores' insights and perspectives were valuable as students who were closer to the beginning of their high school careers. They were more settled in the routines and practices of the upper school than 9th graders, but not yet experiencing the full set of pressures and stressors that come with the college admissions process in junior and senior year. The seniors, able to reflect on their four years of high

school, provided invaluable information and opinions on the inner-workings of Clyde. Missing from the conversation were students in Grades 9 and 11, which, as I explained in Chapter III, was largely due to the timing and scope of the study. Further research that includes a greater balance of students from all four grades, particularly for focus group interviews, would be beneficial and important additions to this study.

Updates Since Data Collection

There have been two noteworthy and relevant developments at Clyde since concluding my research study. The first is the appointment of an Interim Director of Diversity and Equity. At the end of the 2016-2017 school year, it was announced that Valerie Adams, a member of the lower school staff at the time, would be taking on the role of "Interim Director of Diversity and Equity" for the 2017-2018 school year. This is the first time in nearly a decade that Clyde will have a designated position and role related to issues of diversity and equity.

The second update since data collection is that a revised mission statement was released in the fall of 2017. In my interview with Mr. Bennett in January 2017, he shared a critique of Clyde's mission statement, commenting on its passive language as opposed to language that propels students forward; that alludes to who the school wants students to be after they graduate, go to college, and then out into the world:

> My problem with our mission statement is that it doesn't direct the girls towards anything. We "educate the hearts and minds of every girl," that means it's passive, right? They're receiving something, but they're not ... towards what end? Towards a better world? Towards a sense of community? Towards a sense of belonging? So I do think that that's missing…. (Interview, 1/24/17)

In late November of 2017, Mr. Bennett sent the following email to the Clyde community, officially announcing Clyde's new mission statement. I include the email message that prefaces the new statement because of the discursive work happening in the introduction itself.

Dear Clyde community,

Earlier this year, I announced our new strategic plan. Representing the voices of our broader community, the plan honors our past and sets an exciting course for the future.

The plan included a call to update our mission statement in a way that highlights the central role of relationships in a Clyde education; articulates Clyde's commitment to global citizenry, diversity, and inclusivity; and celebrates the ways in which teaching to girls' minds and hearts promotes clarity of direction and purpose. The resulting statement, which appears below, was approved and adopted by the board of trustees earlier this fall.

Drafted by the school's leadership team, our new mission statement puts the girls' experience at its center, celebrating our students and directing them to a life of meaning defined by agency and compassion, courage and joy.

Imagine a world where joyful learning and intellectual discovery reinforce each other. Consider a place where critical thinking promotes compassionate citizenry. Envision a school that equips its students with the tools they need to go beyond barriers to advance equity for the betterment of all. This is our mission. This is our school.

The Clyde School inspires girls to go beyond barriers.

Our vision is for Clyde students to be joyful learners who have the intellectual depth and the courage to be critical thinkers, compassionate citizens, and agents of their own lives; in doing so, we advance equity for the betterment of all.

To achieve this mission and vision, we will educate girls' minds and hearts by:

Cultivating their sense of self;

Infusing their lives with meaningful relationships;

Teaching them to value difference as a source of strength and means of growth;

Empowering them to question the status quo with confidence, empathy, resilience, and reason.

While the language of the mission statement has changed to reflect more of an active commitment to students, I am still acutely aware that the statements remain definitive and absolute: "… we *will* educate girls' minds and hearts by ..." (my emphasis). In a review

of the mission statements from some of the other neighboring elite all-girls schools, similar language is used. One school "prepares a diverse and talented community of young women to thrive and lead in a global society"; another "challenges girls of adventurous intellect and diverse backgrounds to think critically and creatively and prepares them for principled engagement in the world." In closing this dissertation, I find myself wondering about who and what a mission statement is truly in service of. And more importantly, what an inclusive, committed, and responsive mission statement—one that feels genuine and realistic to those on both the inside and the outside of an institution—might look like. What would it look like if young people were involved in the fashioning of the image and crafting of the language?

Future Research Directions

In thinking about the possibilities for future research, I first ask: What are the boundaries of research when a phenomenon continues to change? While certain practices and aspects of the institutional identity of Clyde remain the same, over an extended period of time, the young people I worked with and the site as a dynamic organism have changed. As a result, this is a study that cannot be replicated by virtue of the fact that the forces at play when studied have evolved. In terms of extending this research beyond the school site, however, there is a need for further investigation of the national zeitgeist of positions of power and belonging as they relate to elite K-12 institutions. Questions remain as to how these private, independent institutions can continue to be interrogated in meaningful ways. As for future directions at this research site or the other girls' schools in the Manhattan consortium, I offer three possibilities for further studies below.

Constructions of Gender and Girlhood in Lower School and Middle School

In addition to including a greater representation of students in the upper school, future research on constructions of girls and girlhood in the lower school and middle school is necessary. It would be very interesting to do a deep dive into the language, programming, and discursive practices around gender, identity, and belonging in the school's younger divisions. During my data collection, I spent a day visiting the Lower School, sitting in on classes, meeting with teachers and the head of the lower school, and just spending time on the 4th floor. Girls were excited about math, solving complex word problems with their peers in their desk groupings, yelling out when they got the answer, and running up to the teacher's desk at the front of the room to confirm. There was a joy, an energy, and a lot of color in classrooms and the hallway of the 4th floor.

As mentioned in interviews with students and Mr. Martin, the lack of racial diversity among the youngest grades in the school is apparent. I wondered that day how and when teachers talk about race and other forms of diversity with students in K-4. Gender seemed to be a more approachable and comfortable topic to forge with the girls. In fact, I left from my day with the lower school acutely aware of how early on kids are enculturated to know their gender roles and either fit in or defy gender stereotypes. This was made explicitly clear when a teacher shared two large posters with me (Figure 17), full of words in all different colors, one with a "G" (girls) in the middle, one with a "B" (boys). Surrounding the initials were descriptions—emotions, material objects, likes and dislikes, attitudes, and activities—of both genders according to the 2nd grade class. Although I was not present for the conversation that happened around the composition of these two artifacts, it solidified the notion that young people are aware and ready to have discussions about gender identities. I immediately wished I could have spent more time on the 4th floor.

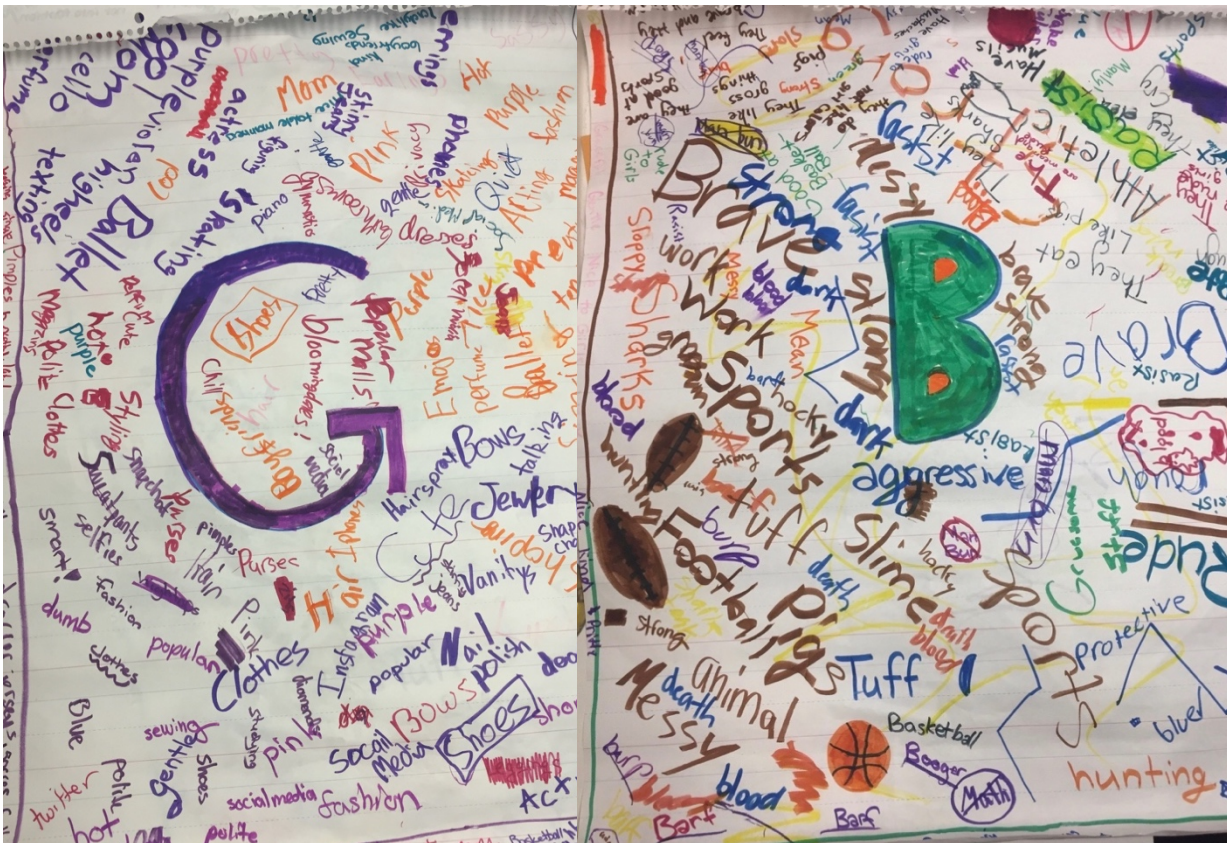

Figure 17. Characteristics of girls and boys, according to 2nd grade students

Perspectives of Faculty and Parents

I think the absence of faculty and parent voices in this study is felt. Both groups would have offered important and interesting perspectives on the constructions of girls and girlhood at Clyde, particularly in Chapter IV, in terms of establishing dominant narratives around expectations for students. Faculty and parents did participate in the Every Girl climate survey project in which I served as the primary investigator during the 2014-2015 school year. Parents offered an outside, but deeply invested, perspective—after all, in many cases, they chose this particular institution for its values and promises and want what is best for their children. Outside of peers, teachers spend the most amount of time with the students—they see them through a myriad of lenses both in and out of the classroom, intellectually, socially, in leadership positions, and participation in afterschool activities. I therefore imagine that both factions would have offered another

dimension to this project. At the same time, I knew that including parents and faculty would be quite an undertaking, and, given my timeframe and the scope of the study, I ultimately decided not to include these sets of voices. It is, however, something that I would like to revisit in future research.

Social Media Practices

While I include bits and pieces from interviews that touch on the role social media plays in constructing girls and girlhood, I acknowledge that there is a lack of deeper conversation about the presence of social media and its related practices in the lives of these young people. For most American girls, "social media is where they live" (Sales, 2016, p. 9). A recent Pew Research Center study on teenagers and social media use found that 88% of American teens ages 13 to 17 have access to a mobile phone, and 73% use smartphones. Additionally, "teenage girls use social media sites and platforms—particularly visually-oriented ones—for sharing more than their male counterparts do" (Lenhart, 2015, p. 5). I discussed social media use with all my student participants, and they had some incredibly fascinating and insightful things to say, particularly about having two Instagram accounts—one that shows more of a manicured, curated version of their life (their "rinsta," or real Instagram account) and another one that is shared with a much smaller group of people and shows their "more real" side (their "finsta," or fake Instagram account)—as I said, *fascinating*. Yet, at the end of the day, I did not feel like the data on their perspectives about and behaviors on social media were directly related enough to my research questions. While it is undeniable that social media plays a role in how these young people understand and navigate constructions of identity—specifically around gender, race, social class, etc.—the content of the conversations took us largely outside of school spaces and therefore was not relevant enough to my research questions about the relationships between an institution and its members. My data on participants'

social media use, however, are rich and deserving of analysis; I therefore plan to write on this topic in a dedicated article.

Multi-site Case Study

Finally, and in terms of scaling up this research, I would like to expand the scope of the project by conducting similar case studies at some of the other elite private all-girls schools in Manhattan's Interschool consortium. Using the tools and instruments I developed for this study would not only help me further refine them and my methodology, but would help to strengthen (as well as trouble and complicate) the findings and claims I am making here. As I stated throughout this dissertation, I am under no illusions that much of what I found at Clyde is most likely a widespread phenomenon particularly at similar elite, privileged institutions; however, as scholars (Howard, 2008; Proweller, 1998) have claimed, more research is needed on and about these spaces because, for the most part, they have managed to remain out of the spotlight in educational research.

Final Thoughts

All in all, the dissertation process has been a humbling experience—one that has taught me the value of rigorous, yet steady research; allowing time to sit with ideas, and field notes, and data. I have learned the importance of not only reflecting on the various components of the project by myself, but to do it with others, whether they be participants, colleagues, family members, or friends. This allowed the data to breathe and evolve and, reciprocally, fostered an ongoing and iterative process of strengthening the research with a collective group of people who helped me to continuously breathe new life into the project, identify emerging themes, and make sense of findings.

In closing, I want to reflect on the young people who participated in the study, who not only volunteered their time, but their stories. I am left in awe of everyone I have worked with over the course of this research project. They are some of the most accepting, open-minded, and genuine individuals I have crossed paths with. They very honestly care about the people in their lives, the spaces they occupy, and the world they want to live in. I am grateful for this storytelling experience, for the opportunity to locate teenagers at the center of this dissertation project, and hope for a future of continued research *alongside* young people interrogating, and perhaps tearing down, some of the ways-it-has-always-been practices and reimagining more of the ways-it-could-be futures.

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Appendix A

Pilot Study

Not Exactly "Clyde Girl 'Material'": Exploring a Discursively Constructed Idealized Archetype at an Elite, Private Girls' School in New York City

"What does it mean to be a 'Clyde Girl'?" This was the question Mr. Bennett rhetorically posed to me in the spring of 2014. It was a still chilly Wednesday morning and we were sitting at the small table in his office, which felt warm from the dense sunlight and the lush green of Sycamore trees lining the city street that seemed to be almost within reach on the other side of the window pane. I had arranged an informal meeting with Mr. Bennett to discuss the possibility of collecting data at the Clyde School for my dissertation research. We talked about my own experiences as a high school student at one of the all-girls schools on the Upper East Side and how my research interests in the sociocultural and institutional factors that influence girls' identities obviously have deeply personal roots. Afterwards, he paused for a moment before offering, "You know, something I have been thinking about a lot recently is, the 'Clyde Girl.' Is it a useful identity? Does it establish expectations that are helpful [and healthy], or is it a more divisive label? How is the label perceived outside of the school building?" (field notes, 4/16/14). He went on to explain that the high school held elections for student government earlier that week and one of candidates for Student Body President opened her speech with, "I am not a typical Clyde Girl." She won the election. Her outright rejection of the Clyde Girl ideal made Mr. Bennett wonder, "What does that mean? What is going on here?" (field notes, 4/16/14).

Overview of Study

For my qualitative exploratory study, I examined the discursive practices that high school students at an elite, private all-girls school on the Upper East Side (UES) of Manhattan associate with the Clyde Girl, a discursively constructed idealized archetype.

Using a critical analysis of discourse (McCall, 2014), I examined students' responses to two open-ended survey questions (n=155) about the Clyde Girl ideal, tracing storylines (Søndergaard, 2002) of how the image manifests in students' perceptions of themselves, their peers, and their sense of membership at the school. The purpose of this study was to better understand how students negotiated the dominant discourses of empowerment and belonging available to them at the Clyde School. I was curious about who feels supported, whose ways of being and knowing are valued, who "fits in", what the implications are for those who perceive themselves to be on the periphery or outside of the "norm" or the "ideal", and how available discourses might be reimagined as discourses of possibility to foster more authentically inclusive school communities.

Rather than starting with a theory, constructivist researchers "pose research questions and generate or inductively develop meaning" from the data collected in the field (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 29). It was students' responses to two questions in a recent climate assessment survey that piqued my curiosity about the meaning and role the Clyde Girl plays at the school. In thinking about research questions as a tool "to move the researcher toward discovering what is happening in a particular situation with a particular person or group" (Agee, 2009), this pilot study therefore was designed to explore the following two questions:

- RQ1: What are the discursive practices that high school students associate with their school's idealized archetype when asked what it means to be a Clyde Girl? What are some of the reasons that girls do or do not identify with the Clyde Girl image?
- RQ2: What is the nature of belonging as it relates to the identity of/identifying with the Clyde Girl archetype? What are some of the ways that membership and belonging circulate discursively at Clyde?

Students are the members of the school community who stand to gain (or lose) the most based on how closely they affiliate with and adhere to the archetype and its associated

expectations. In the climate survey they provided first hand knowledge of how the Clyde Girl operates and is perceived in the school. I argued that how the school—the leadership, administration and faculty—defines and utilizes the archetype of the Clyde Girl is of little importance if it ultimately fails to align with how students understand themselves and experience the ideal standard.

Data Collection

I began informal observations at the Clyde School in September 2014. Throughout the fall and spring semesters, I was often at Clyde at least once a week for 1-3 hour visits. I observed a range of high school classes and met with Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Potter, the Head of the high school, multiple times. I attended the US "diversity" club meetings on Thursday afternoons, and had the opportunity to co-facilitate a four-week long media literacy-based project with the 9th grade Women's Health & Wellness class. I conducted informal participant observations throughout the school building, spending time in the lobby, cafeteria, and US hallway. The process of mindfully recording my observations and reflections provided a space to make sense of the context from which the survey data emerged and helped me to gain insight into some of the "complex social and cultural nuances" of my research site (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). While the majority of my field notes are indirectly related to this study, they document the early stages of ethnographic work at Clyde and will greatly inform my future research at the school.

The upper school took the Every Girl survey in March 2015. We administered the survey to each grade in their respective homerooms at a designated time, accessing Survey Monkey on their personal iPads. The US survey consisted of 31 questions—3 introductory, 6 open-ended, and 22 scaled (see Appendix B).

Research Sample

Because this school-initiated project was designed to include all constituents, there was no initial sampling; a total of 856 people took the survey. For my exploratory study, I

employed a purposive sampling strategy of criterion sampling, which requires participants, or in this case participants' survey responses, to meet one or more criteria selected by the researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). This approach works well when all individuals have experienced the same phenomenon. In this study, participants shared the experience of being students at the Clyde School and familiar with the archetype of the Clyde Girl. Based on my interests in how adolescents negotiate identity and my experiences as a high school student in a similar setting, I wanted to focus my analysis on the HS students' survey responses. Knowing that this study would inform the design of my dissertation research, it was important to gain a comprehensive understanding of the upper school climate; therefore, I employed the full set of HS student surveys (n=155) as my research sample for this study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was part of an ongoing, simultaneous, and iterative process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As Boellstorff et al. (2012) believe, data analysis is about "finding, creating, and bringing thoughtful, provocative, productive ideas to acts of writing. [It] is deeply personal, almost idiosyncratic, but begins with stretching our cognitive and perceptual horizons to encounter, absorb, and react to relevant literatures and conversations" (p. 159). This exploratory study specifically examined how high school students perceive the Clyde Girl ideal in relation to how they understand themselves as individuals and members of the school community. I chose to focus on the responses to two of the open-ended (OE) survey questions: OEQ5: What does it mean to be a Clyde Girl?, as it gets to the heart of my initial wonderings about identity and belonging at Clyde; and OEQ6: Do you identify as a Clyde Girl?, which gave depth to the narrative of what membership looks and feels like at Clyde.

Using Gee's (1990) framing of Discourse as a club with understood rules for membership, and discursive practices as certain ways of being and knowing in particular

social practices and settings, I coded responses to OEQ5 and OEQ6 for storylines that contributed to my understanding of what US students think it means to be a Clyde Girl and why or why not girls identify with the archetype. My codes are grounded in the language students use to define and describe the discursive practices they associate with the archetype (Charmaz, 2000). I focused my initial analysis on disruptive responses—students who challenge and deviate from the Clyde Girl image. I began with OEQ6, identifying participants whose responses began with Sometimes, Not really, I used to, and No, which signaled a degree of disconnection from the ideal (n=51). I coded for the factors that girls attribute to complicating or prohibiting their alignment with the ideal such as, academic pressures, behavior, and positionality. I then examined the discursive practices that this group associates with the Clyde Girl in their definitions of the archetype (in OEQ5), producing codes like, well rounded, confident, and perfect. I used a table to code and trace storylines through a matrix of connections and breakdowns between and within students' responses to both questions (Figure A.1). Coding the set of responses that challenged the archetype first provided a strong baseline with which to compare those who embrace it. For the girls who positively align with the Clyde Girl (n=104), codes for their definitions of the archetype included, leader, independent, hardworking, and community member. These girls attributed identifying as a Clyde Girl to: learning opportunities, being yourself, and upholding school values/ideals.

#	*What does it mean to be a* Clyde Girl?	*Do you identify as a* Clyde Girl?
2	To be very well rounded. To be good at sports, academics, the arts, etc.	For the most part. I feel like I'm more a Jack of all trades, master of none type of person, so I don't excel in all of those fields.
4	I used to think that a *Clyde Girl* meant nothing more than to have attended Clyde for any period of time, one year or thirteen. Now, as I reflect on my years [here], I don't believe that anymore. I'm not sure I know what it means to be a *Clyde Girl.*	Because Clyde has been such a huge part of my life, I take pride in acknowledging that I am a girl who is a student [here]. I don't know if I can identify as a *Clyde Girl* on grounds other than I have attended the School.
6	It means to be a girl who attends Clyde. Questions like these where people are expected to give answers that go beyond the immediate definition are detrimental to society. We say we want to be free to be ourselves, but we box ourselves in without realizing it when we collectively define ourselves. We forsake ourselves to become this ideal *Clyde Girl* when we should just be ourselves.	I go to Clyde, so yes, by definition, but that's **not what this question is asking**. People shouldn't identify as a great *Clyde Girl*, they should identify solely as themselves.
9	It means you're very community-oriented	Not really, no. I **stick out** as **what Clyde calls "argumentative" and "rude"** even though I'm very close with students in every division especially MS and US. I don't embody Clyde's values and ideals, but I think I'm a good member of the community.
13	It means you are a female attending an all-girls school by the name of Clyde.	No. I identify as a female. I just happen to also attend Clyde.
18	That depends on who is asking: if you're someone from another school, it means that you go to a 'second tier' school that is lesser than [Brearley] and [Spence] and therefore you are lesser than the girls who go to those schools. In recent years, I've come across a decent amount of condescension about going to Clyde that has seriously made me question my academic integrity and has made me start comparing myself to my friends from out of school. Within Clyde, however, I feel that there is a certain pressure to be the girl who gets the Latin Award, [NB's] all four years of high school, and a few athletic or music awards along the way. I think that there is often a pressure to be complacently kind to people's faces, which then in turn forces people to ____. I think there is such a strong pressure to be well rounded, especially for college, that people often don't fully pursue their interests. I think that the school perpetuates this image by the lack of clubs time and faculty involvement in most clubs besides Debate and Philomel. Overall, I think that a *Clyde Girl* is someone who graduates with a solid grasp of subjects and one 'niche,' whether that is student government, science, or music. I think that Clyde needs to do an even better job of cultivating and supporting these niches.	I used to identify as a **stereotypical** *Clyde Girl* – not just because of my race and class, but because I was the girl who used to be recognized as such at awards ceremonies and by my peers. I think that the **stereotype** is one of the greatest problems at Clyde – the 'heart and mind' cliché is a tad stifling because it carries heavy nuances and expectations. There are definitely certain inadequacies with a few of the classes I'm taking (a poorly qualified teacher and students with a lack of drive as a result). I think that **the *Clyde Girl* that I want to be** is someone who is driven without limits and who is supportively pushed to do her best, intellectually and socially, by faculty and students. Yes, a certain degree of high school is about finding your interests and pursuing them, but I feel as if **a school like Clyde is supposed to help more in that.** I think that sometimes the girls who lack an interest in their classes feel unsupported or disrespected and need more attention from a faculty mentor who will support them.

= Academics (well-rounded; work hard)
= Academic Excellence (recognition, stress, coll
= Social Excellence (recognition)
= Confidence/Empowerment
= Extracurriculars
= Student at Clyde (matriculation, time, commur
= Clyde's values/ideals/expectations
= Ideal/Quintessential
= Behavior/Attitude
= Positionality
= CG is an aspiration/goal
= Not one definition/shouldn't be used
= Rejection of CG label
= External reputation

Figure A.1. Sample of Data Analysis and Codes

Interpretation of Findings

I categorized the discursive practices that students associated with the Clyde Girl within two overarching themes: empowerment and belonging. These themes denoted the

rules of membership—the ways of knowing, acting, believing, speaking, and valuing—required to identify as, and fit the criteria of, the idealized archetype. The subheadings within the themes indicated select discursive practices that provide the most significant storylines about the Clyde Girl—dominant narratives that are so seamlessly integrated into the school's language and culture, and hold such shared understandings, that they largely go unnoticed and unchallenged (Proweller, 1998). For instance, "The Clyde Girl is an Ideal," "The Clyde Girl is a 'Certain Kind' of Girl," and "The Clyde Girl is Able to Be Herself at School." I used excerpts from survey responses of participants who identified with and deviated from the ideal archetype to illustrate the complicated relationships that students have to the Clyde Girl. The girls who did not identify with the Clyde Girl especially helped to demonstrate the complex and nuanced nature of the relationships amongst individuals, institutions and ideologies. I viewed their challenges of the "norm" as part of a call to action to continue re-examining and discussing power dynamics, institutional structures, and just practices in the name of establishing and sustaining authentically inclusive school spaces and educational practices.

Discussion and Conclusion

While the archetype created a culture of motivation, support, and inclusion for some, it left others with little room to engage in their own meaning-making processes about what it means to be a student and a young woman at the school. This is significant within Clyde as it relates to fostering an inclusive and supportive community, as well as in larger ecological and cultural contexts where socially constructed expectations of how girls are supposed to be, act, and look are frequently impressed upon them by dominant institutions and structures. These standards of being reinforce normative ideas and values about who and what is valued in particular spaces. Synthesizing how girls understood the archetype demonstrated a need to continue critically deconstructing and reflecting on the

connections between literacy, identity, and place in relation to empowerment and belonging.

My exploratory study allowed me to establish a solid conceptual framework for ongoing research, to forge relationships with various constituencies at the Clyde School, and to re-immerse myself within a school culture that I am so familiar with, yet also so removed from. This was all necessary before beginning my dissertation project at this research site. Furthermore, the findings of this initial study are greatly informing the next phase of this research project which seeks to explore how girlhood, the concept that frames the Clyde Girl archetype, is constructed, perceived, and promoted by the school and how students embrace or challenge it through multimodal inquiries.

Appendix B

Every Girl Study Student Letter and Survey Questions

Dear students,

As you know, Clyde's mission is to educate the minds and the hearts of every girl. At the beginning of the school year, Mr. Bennett announced four school wide goals to help Clyde become a stronger and more inclusive community. One of the goals is to reflect upon and assess how closely we achieve our every girl ideal.

We are asking faculty, parents and, of course you, the students to help us with our work. This survey is meant to give you an opportunity to reflect upon your experiences at Clyde, which will help us to know what you love most and what we might think about doing better. As you know, Clyde is committed to being a place where every girl can bring her full self to school each day and where every girl feels represented and supported.

Please fill out this short survey, answering the questions to the best of your ability. The first part of the survey consists of a few open-ended questions; and the second part consists of scaled questions with additional spaces provided for optional comments. If you are unsure of what the question is asking, please write or select "I don't know" from the options instead of leaving it unanswered. The questions are designed and intended for you to answer from the "I" perspective. All surveys will be *completely* anonymous to ensure your privacy.

Thank you in advance for your time and honest responses.

Best,
The "Every Girl" Research Team

Upper School Survey

Introductory questions:

1. How many years have you been a member of the Clyde community?
2. How do you identify in terms of race and/or ethnicity?
3. Are there any other aspects of your identity (socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, etc.) that you would like to disclose/share? (Optional)

Open-ended questions:

1. Name two things that you love most about Clyde.
2. What does it mean to be a "Clyde Girl"?
3. Do you identify as a "Clyde Girl"? Please explain.
4. Do you bring your full self to Clyde? Please explain.
5. Are you involved in extracurricular activities at Clyde? Please explain.
6. Name two things that Clyde could improve upon to serve every girl.

Agree/Disagree (5 strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 neither agree nor disagree, 2 disagree, 1 strongly disagree, I don't know, N/A):

1. I am proud to be a member of the Clyde community.
2. I feel that my peers respect me both in and out of the classroom.
3. I feel that teachers, administrators and staff members respect me.
4. I feel supported academically.
5. I change the way I speak in order to fit in at Clyde.
6. At times, I feel pressure to have material items (clothes, jewelry, shoes, bags, technology, etc.) to fit in at Clyde.
7. I feel comfortable bringing my full self to Clyde.
8. I have a positive body image of myself.
9. I have at least one teacher, administrator or staff member who I can go to if I need help or have a problem.
10. I have at least one teacher, administrator, or staff member who I can talk to if I'm feeling stressed out or overwhelmed.
11. I feel race is a factor in determining friend circles in the US.
12. I feel socioeconomic class/money is a factor in determining friend circles in the US.
13. I have overheard jokes or comments with racial overtones made at Clyde.
14. I have overheard homophobic jokes or comments at Clyde.
15. I have heard body-shaming jokes or comments made at Clyde.
16. I would feel comfortable coming out as lesbian, bisexual, or queer at Clyde.
17. I feel that students respect other students who learn differently at Clyde.
18. I feel that my religion is respected at Clyde.
19. There have been events and/or occasions at Clyde that I have not been able to participate in/attend because of the cost.

20. There have been Clyde activities that I have not been able to participate in/attend because I live too far away.
21. I have been asked/required to engage in an assignment or activity that devalued or stereotyped my culture, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religion, gender, ability, etc.
22. I think we talk about issues of identity, race, gender, class, and other stereotypes enough at Clyde.

Now that you have completed the survey, would you be interested in participating in a follow up discussion? Yes or no?

Appendix C

Student Interview Protocol

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York NY 10027
212 678 3000

Protocol for Individual Student Interview

Protocol Title: Untangling the Clyde Girl: A case study on the constructions, perceptions, and counter-stories of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City.

Principal Investigator: Emily Bailin Wells, Teachers College
emily.bailin@tc.columbia.edu | (917) 439-8333

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study and for meeting with me today for this individual interview. I'm interested in how girls and girlhood are constructed and promoted by Clyde as an institution, and how you, as an upper school student understands, navigates, subscribes to and/or resists the images and messages you receive from school, your peers, pop culture, and your life about what it means to "be a girl" growing up in New York City and in the world today. The purpose of this interview is to give you an opportunity to speak about your experiences as a student at Clyde, your experiences of being a girl both in and out of school, what it means to be a teenage girl in 2016, and what it is like growing up in New York City. I may also ask you to talk about your hobbies, interests, or favorite pieces of pop culture; to reflect on moments in your life that shaped who you are; and/or to talk about the media artifacts you have created as part of this study.

If you consented to audio recording our conversation, you can ask that audio recording be stopped at any time for any reason. All data collected will be treated with strict confidence. I will transcribe the audio recordings after the interview, and will edit out your personal identifying information. Your identity will be protected in the transcript by the use of a pseudonym. In written and spoken presentations of the data, information that could be used to identify you will be disguised with pseudonyms. There are no negative consequences if you decline to participate at any time or wish to withdraw from the study.

If you have a pseudonym you would like me to use, please note it on your consent form. If you do not have a preference, I will assign one to you to ensure confidentiality.

General Questions:

- What is your name?
- How long have you been a student at Clyde? How would you describe your time at Clyde?
- What does it mean to a be a "girl" (in general, in 2016, etc.)?
- Do you think Clyde defines or promotes or values a certain type of girl?
- In your opinion, does Clyde reach and support every girl?
- How would you define "girlhood"?
- Can you think of a recent period of time or moment that defined you as a girl or informed your experience of/in girlhood?
- Do you ever feel like there are expectations for what kind of girl you're "supposed" to be that come from Clyde? From your peers? From pop culture and/or social media?
- Do you think Clyde as a school, through the curriculum, in the language used by administration and faculty, etc. promotes certain ideas about what the experience of "girlhood" looks like?
- Do you ever feel like who you are when you're outside the school building isn't the same as who you are when you're at school?
- Can you recall a moment when you felt excluded or like you didn't belong at Clyde?
- Can you recall a moment when you felt accepted at Clyde?
- What do you like to do outside of school?
- What are your thoughts on how girls and young women are depicted in the media and popular culture?
- What social media platforms do you use, if any? Why?
- Do you feel like who you are on social media aligns with who you are in real life? Why or why not?
- Is there anything else you'd like to talk about relating to identity, girls and girlhood, school, popular culture, etc.?

Appendix D

Additional Student Interview Questions about Media-Making

Questions re: Identity Inquiries and Social Mapping (Grade 10 Participants)

- Based on the maps of the school and your personal experiences and perspective, how would you say Clyde defines what it means to be a "girl"?
- Tell me about the social mapping activity. What, if anything, did you discover about how girls and/or girlhood are represented throughout the school building through the mapping activity?
- What is going on in the map(s)? What do you notice?
- What, if anything, surprised you about the mapping activity?
- Are there particular school spaces (classes, Morning Meetings or Assemblies, hallways, clubs, etc.) where you're able to talk about and think through tough or uncomfortable issues or conversations?
- When you're not in class, where do you personally hang out/spend most of your time? Why?
- How would you describe the "splinters" of your identity?
- Tell me about your identity inquiry composition. What's happening in it?
- What were your thought and creation processes while making it?

Appendix E

School Leader Interview Protocol

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York NY 10027
212 678 3000

Protocol for School Leader Individual Interview

Protocol Title: Untangling the Clyde Girl: A case study on the constructions, perceptions, and counter-stories of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City

Principal Investigator: Emily Bailin Wells, Teachers College
emily.bailin@tc.columbia.edu | (917) 439-8333

Dear School Leader,

As you know, I am currently conducting my dissertation research at Clyde. I have been doing preliminary research at CLYDE for the last two years. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how girls and girlhood are constructed and promoted at the Clyde School as part of the institution's identity, and how upper school girls in particular understand, navigate, subscribe to and/or resist these dominant narratives of what it means to "be a girl" across the contexts of school and life.

With your permission I will audio record the interview. Do I have your permission? You can ask that audio recording be stopped at any time for any reason. During the interview if you choose not to further discuss questions you may stop at any time. All data collected will be treated with strict confidence. I will transcribe the audio recordings after the interview, and will edit out your personal identifying information. Your identity will be protected in the transcript by the use of a pseudonym. In written and spoken presentations of the data, information that could be used to identify you will be disguised with pseudonyms. There are no negative consequences if you decline to participate at any time or wish to withdraw from the study.

If you have a pseudonym you would like me to use, please note it on your consent form. If you do not have a preference, I will assign one to you to ensure confidentiality.

- What is your position/role at Clyde, what does it entail?
- How would you describe [the purpose of] modern day all-girls education?
- What, if anything, sets Clyde apart from other all-girls schools, especially the five other Manhattan elite girls' schools?
- Tell me about the idea/phrase of the "every girl", what does it mean/represent?
- How do you/the school seek to reach, support, and serve the every girl?
- In your opinion, what does it mean to "be a girl" today in 2016? In New York City?
- How do you think about/how would you explain or define "girlhood"?
- In your opinion, how does Clyde construct, define, or promote what it means to be a girl here?
- In your opinion, what ideas, images, messages does Clyde uphold and convey about girlhood?
- In your opinion, what does Clyde do well in terms of fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging amongst students?
- What could Clyde strengthen/improve on?

Appendix F

Student Letter of Informed Consent

Protocol Title: Untangling the Clyde Girl: A case study on the constructions, perceptions, and counter-stories of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City

Principal Investigator: Emily Bailin Wells, Teachers College
emily.bailin@tc.columbia.edu | (917) 439-8333

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to partake in this research study entitled, "Untangling the Clyde Girl: A case study on the constructions, perceptions, and counter-stories of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City." You are qualified to take part in this research study because you are an upper school student at CLYDE. The purpose of this interview is to give you an opportunity to speak about your lived experiences of being a girl in in- and out-of-school spaces, what it means to be a teenage girl in 2016, and what it is like growing up in New York City. I may also ask you to talk about your hobbies, interests, or favorite pieces of pop culture; and to reflect on moments in your life that shaped who you are; and/or to talk about the media artifacts you have created as part of this study. I may also ask you to talk about your hobbies, interests, or favorite pieces of pop culture; to reflect on moments in your life that shaped who you are; and/or to talk about the media artifacts you have created as part of this study.

Participation in this project is voluntary. Given your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded to assist in my note taking. Participants may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time for any reason. This research study may be shown at academic meetings and conferences, and published in scholarly journals. In order to ensure confidentiality to the best of my ability, pseudonyms will be used for the names of all participants as well as for the school.

Approximately 20-25 students will be interviewed for this this study. Participation will take between 2-5 hours (including any necessary follow up via email, phone, or informal conversations at Clyde) depending on your grade and the corresponding activities. In addition to interviewing students, I will interview a few school leaders as well as a few alumna or former members of the Clyde community. I will also engage in participant observations of classes, club meetings, Schoolhouse meetings, etc.; and I will conduct document reviews of admissions and development materials, student publications, and school publications to get an idea of how stories of girls and girlhood at Clyde are shared with a wider, outside audience.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how girls and girlhood are constructed and promoted at Clyde as part of the institution's identity, and how upper

school girls understand, navigate, subscribe to and/or resist the dominant narratives they receive about what it means to "be a girl" across the contexts of school and life.
It is my hope that the study will contribute to ongoing conversations about how to further strengthen and foster an even more authentically inclusive school community and culture at Clyde.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed by Emily, the principal investigator. During the interview, I will ask you about your interests, hobbies, your life in- and out-of-school, how you understand and navigate the life stage of "girlhood," and what kind of images and messages you receive about being a girl from Clyde, from your friends, family, popular culture, and society.
If you are in Grade 10, you will also have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the social maps and identity collages that you created during your leadership class and Schoolhouse programming with Dr. Collette.
This interview will be audio-recorded to foster accuracy in my note-taking. If you do not consent to being audio-recorded, I will take notes in my research notebook, but audio-recording will facilitate a more accurate account of our conversation. After the audio-recording is transcribed (written down), it will be deleted. Participation in the interview will take approximately 60 minutes.
You will be invited to choose your own pseudonym (or be given a pseudonym by the principal investigator) in order to keep your identity confidential. You may also be asked to participate in some follow-up questions. You will have the option of answering them over email or in an in-person conversation with me. The total duration of the study should be approximately four months.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, participation in this study is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don't want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. I will ensure that you have consented to being audio-recorded by asking you to sign a second consent document at the time of the interview. Your confidentiality will be protected in my research notes by the use of pseudonyms. If you feel any discomfort, you may choose to end your involvement at any time. Again, I am taking precautions to keep your information confidential and preventing anyone from discovering or guessing your identity by using pseudonyms for all names of students and the school and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no direct benefits for participating in this research study. Participation may benefit the fields of critical literacy and multimodal inquiry. Your responses will contribute to greater understandings of how girls and girlhood are constructed and promoted at Clyde and what impacts, if any, it has on the students. Findings from the study may provide recommendations for how to further strengthen inclusivity at Clyde.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no payment or reimbursement (monetary or otherwise) provided for participating in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?

The study is over when you have completed the interview. However, you can leave the study at any time even if you haven't finished.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY

All data collected will be stored on the researcher's password-protected personal computer and on an external hard drive in password-protected folders. Pseudonyms will be used for the names of all participants so as to keep their identities confidential. All data collected will be treated with strict confidence. Audio recordings will be transcribed after each interview. In the transcription and audio recordings of the interviews, as well as the researcher's notes, your identity will be protected by the use of pseudonyms. The lists of the participant's real names and pseudonyms will be kept confidential. They will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the residence of the researcher, Emily Bailin Wells. In written and spoken presentations of the data, information that could be used to identify individuals will be disguised with pseudonyms. Regulations require that research data be kept for at least three years.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?

The results of this study will be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the principal investigator.

CONSENT FOR COLLECTION OF STUDENT WORK

The collection of student work is part of this research study. Some of this work might include media projects, brainstorming documents and concept maps, or artifacts generated during group activities. If you decide that you don't wish for your work to be collected, you will still be allowed to participate in the study.

____ I do give my consent for my work to be collected _____
Signature

____ I do **not** give my consent for my work to be collected _____
Signature

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING

Audio recording is an important part of this research study. In my efforts to most accurately record our conversation—the discussion, questions, comments exchanged between us during the interview—audio recording will be an important part of the data collection for this research study. If you do not wish for the interview to be recorded, you can still participate in the study. I will take detailed handwritten notes during our conversation and will then elaborate on it following the interview. In either instance, you will have the opportunity to look over the transcript(s) of our conversation(s) to approve or amend statements.

_____I give my consent to be recorded _____
Signature

_____I do **not** consent to be recorded _____
Signature

WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

___I consent to allow written and/or visual materials viewed at an educational setting or at a conference outside of Teachers College _____
Signature

___I do **not** consent to allow written and/or visual materials viewed outside of Teachers College _____
Signature

OPTIONAL CONSENT FOR FUTURE CONTACT

I may wish to contact you in the future for information relating to this study. Please initial the appropriate statements to indicate whether or not you give permission for future contact.

I give permission to be contacted in the future for research purposes:

Yes _____ No_____
Initial Initial

I give permission to be contacted in the future for information relating to this study:

Yes _____ No_____
Initial Initial

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Emily Bailin Wells, at (917) 439-8333 or at emily.bailin@tc.columbia.edu. (You can also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Lalitha Vasudevan at (212) 678-6660.)

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College,

Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

- ☐ I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- ☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- ☐ The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion.
- ☐ If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- ☐ Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- ☐ I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

Interview Information:

☐ Grade 10 student
☐ Grade 12 student
☐ Individual interview
☐ Group interview

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study:

Print name: _____ **Date**: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix G

Parent Letter of Informed Consent

November 2016

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am a graduate of the [redacted] ('03) and a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University. This year, I will be conducting my dissertation research at Clyde. I have been doing preliminary research at Clyde for the last two years. During the 2014-2015 school year, I was involved in the design, implementation, and analysis of the "Every Girl" survey, a school-wide climate assessment. Last year, I completed a pilot study based on the "Every Girl" survey data, continued my participant observations, and conducted a series of pre-dissertation focus group interviews with upper school students. For my dissertation, I will continue to build upon the findings of my pilot study as I explore how notions of "girls" and "girlhood" are constructed, promoted, and perceived at Clyde.

As part of my data collection, I will be conducting individual and group interviews with students, which will take place throughout the duration of my study (approximately November through April). Findings from these conversations will contribute to my understandings of students' perceptions of and experiences at Clyde and hopefully provide valuable insight and feedback for Clyde to use in its commitment to continually improving and strengthening an inclusive school community. The following document is a parental consent form that will allow your daughter to participate in my research study. Please feel free to contact me with any further questions (my contact information is on the next page).

Sincerely,

Emily Bailin Wells

Parent/Guardian Informed Consent for
Student Individual Interview

Protocol Title: Untangling the Clyde Girl: A case study on the constructions, perceptions, and counter-stories of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City

Principal Investigator: Emily Bailin Wells, Teachers College
emily.bailin@tc.columbia.edu | (917) 439-8333

Your daughter is invited to partake in this research study entitled, "Untangling the Clyde Girl: A case study on the constructions, perceptions, and counter-stories of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City." She is qualified to take part in this research study because she is an upper school student at Clyde. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how girls and girlhood are constructed and promoted at Clyde as part of the institution's identity, and how upper school girls understand, navigate, subscribe to and/or resist the dominant narratives they receive about what it means to "be a girl" across the contexts of school and life. It is my hope that the study will contribute to ongoing conversations about how to further strengthen and foster an even more authentically inclusive school community and culture at Clyde.

Approximately 20-25 students will be interviewed for this this study. In addition to interviewing students, I will interview a few school leaders as well as a few alumna or former members of the Clyde community. I will also engage in participant observations of classes, club meetings, Schoolhouse meetings, etc.; and I will conduct document reviews of admissions and development materials, student publications, and school publications to get an idea of how stories of girls and girlhood at Clyde are shared with a wider, outside audience.

Attached is the Assent Form that your daughter will be asked to sign on the day of the interview.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how girls and girlhood are constructed and promoted at the Clyde School as part of the institution's identity, and how upper school girls in particular understand, navigate, subscribe to and/or resist these dominant narratives of what it means to "be a girl" across the contexts of school and life.

WHAT WILL PARTICIPANTS BE ASKED TO DO IF THEY TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

This study will run from approximately November 2016 through April 2017. It is my hope that a total of 20-25 students will participate in this research project. The time commitment for participants will be approximately 2-5 hours over the course of six months, depending on your daughter's grade level and the corresponding research activities (for Grade 10, approximately 1-3 hours for media-making activities; and for

Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12, 1-2 hours for an individual or group interview and follow-up via email, phone, or informal conversations at the school site).
Participation in this project is voluntary. With your consent, I will interview your daughter either individually or in a group setting, depending on student preferences and logistics. During the interview, I will ask students about their interests, hobbies, lives in- and out-of-school, how they understand and navigate the life stage of "girlhood," and what kind of images and messages they receive about being a girl from Clyde, their friends, families, popular culture, and society. The interview will be audio-recorded to foster accuracy in my note-taking. Participants may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time for any reason. If you do not consent to your daughter being audio-recorded, she can still participate in the study. After the audio-recording is transcribed, it will be deleted. Participation in the interview will take approximately 60 minutes. With your consent, I may ask them to participate in some follow-up questions. They will have the option of answering them over email or in an in-person conversation with me. The total duration of the study should be approximately four months.
This research study may be shown at academic meetings and conferences, and published in scholarly journals. In order to ensure confidentiality to the best of my ability, pseudonyms will be used for the names of all participants as well as for the school.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN PARTICIPANTS EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that participants may experience are not greater than they would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, participation in this study is voluntary and they do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything they don't want to talk about. They can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. If they feel any discomfort, they may choose to end their involvement at any time. Again, I am taking precautions to keep participants' information confidential and preventing anyone from discovering or guessing their identity by using pseudonyms for all names of students and the school and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN MY DAUGHTER EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no direct benefits for participating in this research study. Participation may benefit the fields of critical literacy and multimodal inquiry. Participants' responses will contribute to greater understandings of how girls and girlhood are constructed and promoted at Clyde and what impacts, if any, it has on the students. Findings from the study may provide recommendations for how to further strengthen inclusivity at Clyde.

WILL PARTICIPANTS BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no payment or reimbursement (monetary or otherwise) provided for participating in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN PARTICIPANTS LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?

The study is over when students have completed the interview. However, they can leave the study at any time even if they haven't finished.

PROTECTION OF PARTICIPANTS' CONFIDENTIALITY

All data collected will be stored on the researcher's password-protected personal computer and on an external hard drive in password-protected folders. Pseudonyms will be used for the names of all participants so as to keep their identities confidential. All data collected will be treated with strict confidence. Audio recordings will be transcribed after each interview. In the transcription and audio recordings of the interviews, as well as the researcher's notes, participants' identities will be protected by the use of pseudonyms. The lists of the participant's real names and pseudonyms will be kept confidential. They will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the residence of the researcher, Emily Bailin Wells. In written and spoken presentations of the data, information that could be used to identify individuals will be disguised with pseudonyms. Regulations require that research data be kept for at least three years.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?

This study is being conducted as part of Emily's dissertation research. The results of this study will be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Participants' names or any identifying information about them will not be published.

CONSENT FOR COLLECTION OF STUDENT WORK

The collection and analysis of student work is part of this research study. Some of this work might include free-form maps of the school, identity collages, brainstorming documents and concept maps, or artifacts generated during group activities. If you decide that you don't wish for their work to be collected, they will still be allowed to participate in the study.

___ I do give my consent for my daughter's work to be collected _____
Signature

___ I do **not** give my consent for my daughter's work to be collected _____
Signature

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING

Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission for your daughter to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish for your child to be recorded, she will still be able to participate in this study.

___I give my consent for my daughter to be recorded _____
Signature

___I do **not** consent for my daughter to be recorded _____
Signature

WHO MAY VIEW MY DAUGHTER'S PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

___I consent to allow written and/or visual materials viewed at an educational setting or at a conference outside of Teachers College _____
Signature

___I **do not** consent to allow written and/or visual materials viewed outside of Teachers College _____
Signature

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Emily Bailin Wells, at (917) 439-8333 or at emily.bailin@tc.columbia.edu. (You can also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Lalitha Vasudevan at (212) 678-6660.)

If you have questions or concerns about your child's rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

My signature means that I agree for my daughter to participate in this study:

Print name: _____ **Date**: _____

Signature: _____

Assent Form for Minors
Student Interview

Protocol Title: Untangling the Clyde Girl: A case study on the constructions, perceptions, and counter-stories of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City

Principal Investigator: Emily Bailin Wells, Teachers College
emily.bailin@tc.columbia.edu | (917) 439-8333

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and for meeting with me today for this interview. During the interview, I will ask you about your interests, hobbies, your life in- and out-of-school, how you understand and navigate the life stage of "girlhood," and what kind of images and messages you receive about being a girl from Clyde, from your friends, family, popular culture, and society.

If you are in Grade 10, you will also have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the social maps and identity collages that you created during your leadership class and Schoolhouse programming with Dr. Collette.

In addition to interviewing students, I will interview a few school leaders as well as a few alumna or former members of the Clyde community. I will also engage in participant observations of classes, club meetings, Schoolhouse meetings, etc.; and I will conduct document reviews of admissions and development materials, student publications, and school publications to get an idea of how stories of girls and girlhood at Clyde are shared with a wider, outside audience.

I _____ (your name) agree to be in this study, titled "Untangling the Clyde Girl: A case study on the constructions, perceptions, and counter-stories of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City." What I am being asked to do has been explained to me by _____ (principal investigator). I understand what I am being asked to do and I know that if I have any questions, I can ask _____ (principal investigator) at any time. I know that I can quit this study whenever I want to and it is perfectly OK to do so. It won't be a problem for anyone if I decide to quit.

<u>Interview Information:</u>

- ☐ Grade 10 student
- ☐ Grade 12 student
- ☐ Individual interview
- ☐ Group interview

Name: _____
Signature: _____
Witness: _____ Date: _____

Safe Space/Confidentiality Agreement
In order to establish and maintain a safe space during this focus group interview, I understand that agreeing to participate also means that I am agreeing to respect my peers and the space we create together during this interview. I also understand that people may share personal thoughts, stories, and opinions and that I am expected to keep them to myself and not share or discuss anything with anyone (other participants or peers) outside of this room.

Name: _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Verification of Explanation
I certify that I have carefully explained the purpose and nature of this research to _____ in age-appropriate language. He/she has the opportunity to discuss it with me and knows that they can stop participating at any time. I have answered all of their questions and this minor child has provided the affirmative agreement (assent) to participate in this research study.

Investigator's Signature: _____
Date: _____

Appendix H

Assent Form for Students, Individual Interviews

Assent Form for Minors
Student Interview

Protocol Title: Untangling the Clyde Girl: A case study on the constructions, perceptions, and counter-stories of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City

Principal Investigator: Emily Bailin Wells, Teachers College
emily.bailin@tc.columbia.edu | (917) 439-8333

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and for meeting with me today for this interview. During the interview, I will ask you about your interests, hobbies, your life in- and out-of-school, how you understand and navigate the life stage of "girlhood," and what kind of images and messages you receive about being a girl from Clyde, from your friends, family, popular culture, and society.

If you are in Grade 10, you will also have the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the social maps and identity collages that you created during your leadership class and Schoolhouse programming with Dr. Collette.

In addition to interviewing students, I will interview a few school leaders as well as a few alumna or former members of the Clyde community. I will also engage in participant observations of classes, club meetings, Schoolhouse meetings, etc.; and I will conduct document reviews of admissions and development materials, student publications, and school publications to get an idea of how stories of girls and girlhood at Clyde are shared with a wider, outside audience.

I _____ (your name) agree to be in this study, titled "Untangling the Clyde Girl: A case study on the constructions, perceptions, and counter-stories of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City."

What I am being asked to do has been explained to me by _____ (principal investigator). I understand what I am being asked to do and I know that if I have any questions, I can ask _____ (principal investigator) at any time. I know that I can quit this study whenever I want to and it is perfectly OK to do so. It won't be a problem for anyone if I decide to quit.

Interview Information:

- ☐ Grade 9 student
- ☐ Grade 10 student
- ☐ Grade 11 student
- ☐ Grade 12 student
- ☐ Individual interview
- ☐ Group interview

Name: _____
Signature: _____
Witness: _____ Date: _____

Safe Space/Confidentiality Agreement

In order to establish and maintain a safe space during this focus group interview, I understand that agreeing to participate also means that I am agreeing to respect my peers and the space we create together during this interview. I also understand that people may share personal thoughts, stories, and opinions and that I am expected to keep them to myself and not share or discuss anything with anyone (other participants or peers) outside of this room.

Name: _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Verification of Explanation

I certify that I have carefully explained the purpose and nature of this research to _____ in age-appropriate language. He/she has the opportunity to discuss it with me and knows that they can stop participating at any time. I have answered all of their questions and this minor child has provided the affirmative agreement (assent) to participate in this research study.
Investigator's Signature: _____
Date: _____

Appendix I

Letter of Informed Consent for School Leaders

Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street
New York NY 10027
212 678 3000

INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent for Individual Interview School Leader

Protocol Title: Untangling the Clyde Girl: A case study on the constructions, perceptions, and counter-stories of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City

Principal Investigator: Emily Bailin Wells, Teachers College
emily.bailin@tc.columbia.edu | (917) 439-8333

Dear School Leader,

As you know, I am currently conducting my dissertation research at Clyde. I have been doing preliminary research at Clyde for the last two years. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how girls and girlhood are constructed and promoted at the Clyde School as part of the institution's identity, and how upper school girls in particular understand, navigate, subscribe to and/or resist these dominant narratives of what it means to "be a girl" across the contexts of school and life.

You are invited to partake in this research study entitled, "Untangling the Clyde Girl: A case study on the constructions, perceptions, and counter-stories of girls and girlhood at an elite, private independent all-girls school in New York City." You are qualified to take part in this study because you hold a leadership, directorial, and/or administrative position at Clyde. The purpose of this interview is to give you an opportunity to speak about your experiences at and understandings of Clyde from the perspective of your role at the school. For instance, I may ask you to talk about the school's commitment to every girl—the kinds of programs, initiatives, conversations, and systems that are in place to reach and support every girl at Clyde; what you think it means to "be a girl" in 2016 and how you might define the experience(s) of "girlhood".

Participation in this project is voluntary. Given your consent, the interview will be audio- recorded to assist in my note taking. Participants may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time for any reason. This research study may be shown at

academic meetings and conferences, and published in scholarly journals. In order to ensure confidentiality to the best of my ability, pseudonyms will be used for the names of all participants as well as for the school.

Five school leaders will participate in this study and it will take approximately 2 hours of your time to complete. In addition, I also hope to interview 15-20 students, as well as a few alumna or former members of the Clyde community. I will also engage in participant observations of classes, club meetings, Schoolhouse meetings, etc.; and I will conduct document reviews of

INFORMED CONSENT

admissions and development materials, student publications, and school publications to get an idea of how stories of girls and girlhood at Clyde are shared with a wider, outside audience.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

Again, the purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore how girls and girlhood are constructed and promoted at Clyde as part of the institution's identity, and how upper school girls understand, navigate, subscribe to and/or resist the dominant narratives they receive about what it means to "be a girl" across the contexts of school and life.

It is my hope that the study will contribute to ongoing conversations about how to further strengthen and foster an even more authentically inclusive school community and culture at Clyde.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

If you decide to participate, you will be interviewed by Emily, the principal investigator. During the interview, you will be asked to talk about your experiences as a school leader at Clyde and your thoughts on your experiences of girlhood and what it is like to be a girl today in 2016. This interview will be audio-recorded to foster accuracy in my note-taking. If you do not consent to being audio-recorded, I will take notes in my research notebook, but audio-recording will facilitate a more accurate account of our conversation. After the audio-recording is transcribed (written down), it will be deleted. Participation in the interview will take approximately 60 minutes. You will be invited to choose your own pseudonym (or be given a pseudonym by the principal investigator) in order to keep your identity confidential. You may be asked to participate in some follow-up questions. You will have the option of answering them over email or in an in-person conversation with me. The total duration of the study should be approximately two months.

WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while

taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, participation in this study is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions or divulge anything you don't want to talk about. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty. I will ensure that you have consented to being audio-recorded by asking you to sign a second consent document at the time of the interview. Your confidentiality will be protected in my research notes by the use of pseudonyms. If you feel any discomfort, you may choose to end your involvement at any time. Again, I am taking precautions to keep your information confidential and preventing anyone from discovering or guessing your identity by using pseudonyms for all names of participants and the school and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There are no direct benefits for participating in this research study. Participation may benefit the fields of critical literacy and multimodal inquiry. Your responses will contribute to greater understandings of how girls and girlhood are constructed and promoted at Clyde and what impacts, if any, it has on the students. Findings from the study may provide recommendations for how to further strengthen inclusivity at Clyde.

WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

There will be no payment or reimbursement (monetary or otherwise) provided for participating in this study.

WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?

The study is over when you have completed the interview. However, you can leave the study at any time even if you haven't finished.

PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY

All data collected will be stored on the researcher's password-protected personal computer and on an external hard drive in password-protected folders. Pseudonyms will be used for the names of all participants so as to keep their identities confidential. All data collected will be treated with strict confidence. Audio recordings will be transcribed after each interview. In the transcription and audio recordings of the interviews, as well as the researcher's notes, your identity will be protected by the use of pseudonyms. The lists of the participant's real names and pseudonyms will be kept confidential. They will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the residence of the researcher, Emily Bailin Wells. In written and spoken presentations of the data, information that could be used to identify individuals will be disguised with pseudonyms. Regulations require that research data be kept for at least three years.

HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?

The results of this study will be published in journals and presented at academic conferences. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be

published. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the principal investigator.

CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING

Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, you will still be able to participate in this study or you will not be able to participate in this research study.

_____I do give my consent to be recorded _____
Signature

_____I do **not** consent to be recorded _____
Signature

OPTIONAL CONSENT FOR FUTURE CONTACT

The investigator may wish to contact you in the future. Please initial the appropriate statements to indicate whether or not you give permission for future contact. I give permission to be contacted in the future for research purposes:

Yes _____ No_____ (Initial)

I give permission to be contacted in the future for information relating to this study:

Yes _____ No_____ (Initial)

WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?

If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the principal investigator, Emily Bailin Wells, at (917) 439-8333 or at emily.bailin@tc.columbia.edu. (You can also contact the faculty advisor, Dr. Lalitha Vasudevan at (212) 678-6660.)

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu. Or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 1002. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University. 525 West 120th Street New York NY 10027 212 678 3000

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

 I have read and discussed the informed consent with the researcher. I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.

 I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.

 The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his or her professional discretion.

 If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the investigator will provide this information to me.

☐ Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

☐ I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent document.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study: Print name: _____ **Date**: _____

Signature: _____