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Scouting a 21st Century Feminism: Exploring Girl Scouts as an Activist Volunteer

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“The charting done here is based on some knowledge from the past, upon present experience, and upon the hopes for future. These three sources are inseparable, intertwined.”¹

-Mary Daly

Preface: A Brief Girl Scout Synopsis

Girl Scouts of the United States of America is a non-profit non-governmental organization that has a large impact on the lives of young girls. Girl Scouts was created by Juliette Gordon Low in 1912 and holds itself to the core promise to serve God and country, help other people, and live by its law.² The law states that a Girl Scout will try to be honest and fair, courageous and strong, respect authority and be a sister to every Girl Scout.³ Nationally, Girl Scouts is made up of 109 councils serving 2.7 million girls. A council is a governing body that has a president, CEO, and a Board of Directors. Each council has a set of bylaws, policies, and standards set forth by the Girl Scouts of the USA, the national council. Councils oversee the neighborhoods which are made up of communities and all the troops within them. Troop leaders are considered part of the neighborhood and attend monthly neighborhood meetings. This tiered system of governance is implemented across America and internationally through the World Association of Girl Scouts and Girl Guides (WAGGGS). My project deals with American Girl Scouting on the neighborhood-to-troop level.

Introduction: “Be a Sister to Every Girl Scout”

When I was growing up in a Los Angeles suburb in the 1990’s, I quit Girl Scouts to join karate classes. At the time, I was bored and wanted a new experience outside of making posters and singing songs. When I look back to my time as a Scout one particular memory stands out. At a bridging ceremony I sat on the cafeteria floor next to the group of older girls who used to tease

me in school, they were Scouts too. While we watched the ceremony they kept turning around and telling me that worms were crawling out of my ears; although I never voiced it as a girl, I wonder how much of my decision to leave Girl Scouts was based upon those girls and not on my boredom. Those girls were Scouts, yet they had never attempted to live by the Girl Scout Law, the one that said “I promise to be a sister to every Girl Scout.” The words were empty to me, and I later wondered if the law wasn’t hypocritical.

My critical eye fell back on Girl Scouts years later when my eldest sister, Dawn, started a Daisy troop⁴ for her daughter, my niece, Allison. For the first few years Dawn held the typical role as a Girl Scout troop leader and I occasionally helped her plan a campout or project. Later, as the girls got older, Dawn took on more responsibilities as a volunteer. She became the troop organizer of Allison’s elementary school, responsible for finding interested girls and placing them in new or returning troops. She took on the role as Allison turned ten, and I began to plan my senior capstone project. I began to wonder if Girl Scouts had changed much from my brief experience in the 1990s.

Methods: Interning as an Activist Volunteer

In Sandra Harding’s introduction to Feminism and Methodology, “Is There a Feminist Method?” she defines the analytical process of feminist research. First, the method: techniques for gathering information and knowledge, or evidence gathering. The methods for this project are simple, but their weighted importance to my research shows the complex relationship between my methods and my epistemological questions. To be clear on my understanding of these terms, I take methodology to mean the study of the method, or the theoretical framework for research, the aspects of research being listening, interrogating, and observing.⁵ I feel this methodological

view of research gives my activist volunteer work special weight. But before I explain, let me continue my definitions.

Epistemology is how we know what we know, and who can be “knower.” These questions center on how to make certain knowledge legitimate.⁶ In this, the structure of a project created with a feminist methodology would work in a similar way to that of a traditional method, such as anthropological or ethnographic study, but the significance of what is valued in the research is different. This indicates a shift in focus that feminists usually describe as the lens through which they deliver analysis; this is not to say that feminist anthropologists cannot also use a feminist method. But to continue with my example, a traditional ethnographic study would more than likely focus on the cultures and background of the girls, using them as subjects in the study. Using my feminist methodology, however, I place value in the impact that Girl Scouting has on individual girls, but have not attempted to “test” this impact through my observations. Instead, I place value in our shared experiences. In addition, my project does not analyze the girls through a comparison with Boy Scouts. The argument has been made that Girl Scouts is no different from Boy Scouts, but this statement neglects the focus of the knowledge of this project, to examine Girl Scouts in setting in which they participate, not in comparison to another organization.

I see my form of method for this project as valued in the Women’s Studies Academy, and echoed in the scholarly work of Ruth Behar and Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. I would even go so far as to argue that this work is especially valued in the University of Redlands Women’s Studies community because the 2007-2009 Course Catalogue states that students are encouraged to do exploratory internships because “Women’s Studies is grounded in valuing knowledge from both analysis and experience. Women’s Studies courses embody a commitment to shared approaches

to learning.”⁷ Experience is valued because it shows the reality of women’s place in the world, giving value to the way in which we live that has often been dramatized or overlooked in historical frameworks.

There are many ways that feminist scholars use this program of method, methodology, and epistemology in their research. Feminist methodologies are very important in my work as a feminist because I do not want to participate in what Mary Daly calls the “Methodolatry of patriarchal disciplines,”⁸ where the following of traditional information valuing is so conditioned and restricted that only certain information is attained and appraised as worthy knowledge. This knowledge usually fails to take into account women, young girls, people of color, and various religious groups, and as Rosemary Reuther would say it diminishes, denies, and distorts women. It is, therefore, of no use to us.

Refusing to participate in Methodolatry, I find myself better suited “on the boundaries of the male-centered universities [where] there is a flowering of woman-centered thinking.”⁹ Examples of this feminist-centric boundary method can be found in many different feminist scholars’ work. Julia O’Connell Davidson’s “The Rights and Wrongs of Prostitution” uses a “pull-back argument” that incorporates the theoretical arguments of two other scholars in her field, Wendy Chapkis and Carole Pateman, as opposite poles in the field of thought, and then introduces a third argument, her own, that attempts to form a middle ground between the two. Davidson is scouting the spectrum of work in her field and choosing which knowledge should be more heavily weighted or valued amongst that written by her colleagues before executing her own argument, in this way she is entering into conversation with her predecessors and refusing to expect previous scholarly knowledge as absolute. It is a feminist effort because she does not use methodolatry, by asserting that previous methods are “gods” themselves. Davidson’s use of

method is compelling, but the form of feminist research that ties in most closely with my project, however, is the anthropologic work of Ruth Behar in Translated Woman and Elisabeth Burgos-Debray in I, Rigoberta Menchu.

There are certain drawbacks to anthropologic work as a participant observer, however. Ruth Behar and Elisabeth Burgos-Debray encounter a romanticizing of their research subjects. In some cases this romantic dramatization is reigned-in later in the work as the researcher realizes the full humanity of the subject. As Behar explains in her first encounter with her subject Esperanza, “I jumped on her as an alluring image of Mexican womanhood, ready to create my own exotic portrait of her, but the image turned around and spoke back to me, questioning my project and daring me to carry it out.”¹⁰ As she describes, Behar’s preconceived notion of the work did not include an idea of Esperanza as a fully humanized woman with her own thoughts and feelings, but as a subject of study. In Behar’s predecessor’s work, Burgos-Debray’s I, Rigoberta Menchu, another romanticized tone is carried through the introduction of the book; however, Burgos-Debray does not seem to recover from her notions of Rigoberta as the victim-heroine whose dramatic voice is the voice of an entire nation—not just the voice of one woman (which in itself could be seen as powerful). For example, Burgos-Debray says, “That is why we have to listen to Rigoberta Menchu’s appeal and allow ourselves to be guided by a voice whose inner cadences are so pregnant with meaning that we actually seem to hear her speaking and can almost hear her breathing.”¹¹

Understanding the struggles in these forms of research, I have constructed my project in another way, choosing to become an activist volunteer rather a participant observer. A participant observer relationship between studier and studied subject as seen in the works by Behar and Burgos-Debray shows the goal is to record interactions with the subject, making as little change

to the subject's initial state as possible. As an activist volunteer, I have chosen to observe the ways that Girl Scouts function in order to work towards a new way of being, in order to interact with the girls bringing new insights into their lives, guiding them, fulfilling the role of leader and activist. The girls of Troop 1148 have been aware of my project since I began working with them as a troop leader. I explained to them how I was creating a project that focuses on Girl Scouting; they have asked questions about the project and been excited about my work. I have also met all of the parents and informed them of the fact that I am writing a paper about my experiences as a Girl Scout troop leader. The girls understand that they are the central focus of my work.

Academically, I have used an exploratory internship in order to work with the Girl Scout troop. I was given credit for this internship as an activist requirement of the Women's Studies program and as a community service project through the College of Arts and Sciences.¹² In this internship I carry out the activist volunteer role, becoming active in the leading of the troop: creating projects, advising girls, and planning events. I'd like to further define my method of valued experience and critical thinking as a "Gynocentric Method" which "requires not only the murder of misogynistic methods but also ecstasy... This is 'the free play of intuition in our own space, giving rise to thinking that is vigorous, informed, multi-dimensional, independent, creative, tough.' *It arises from the lived experiences of be-ing*¹³."¹⁴ In this way, I have not only been a troop leader, I have been a feminist activist who can draw analysis upon these "lived experiences of be-ing." This method has links to the Girl Scout movement, as one of the new goals of the national realignment is to create a "girl-centric" environment.¹⁵

Informative Research Sources

The path my internship has taken was guided by a collection of research sources and critical thinking. These analytical resources have informed my day to day thinking with the girls and my critical analysis of Girl Scouting today. I was guided toward these resources through two criteria, they had to be contemporary—written in the past ten years (with the exception of Mary Daly, whose work I was assigned by a professor), and written by feminists that have some concept of current American culture. I looked for different themes within my research to explore different issues; for example, I read Mary Pipher’s work because I was explicitly interested in feminist psychology for adolescent girls, instead of abstract psychological theory. Furthermore, it was important to avoid archaic scholarly works that are accepted into the canon such as Freud or Foucault because they make it easier to fall prey to methodolatry.

Mary Pipher’s work was crucial in educating me on developmental issues for adolescent girls. Pipher’s main argument in Reviving Ophelia is centered on the struggles girls face when they enter into adolescence and the failure of our culture to support girls at this time. Pipher argues that the unaddressed issues of adolescence affect adult women who were not able to retain an essence of their “true self” throughout adolescence. Being one’s true self usually means turning a blind eye to media images and negative cultural models of women and having the courage to express autonomy. Pipher makes it clear that a girl’s decision to be true to herself can ostracize her from her peers, while rejecting the true self can make her more socially acceptable.¹⁶

Pipher’s work is also a valued resource when it comes to my technique of access with the girls in the troop. She notes, “What girls say about gender and power issues depends on how they are asked,” in this, Pipher’s work has shown that age-appropriateness plays a large role in the

response one gets out of young girls. In addition to Mary Pipher, I have read Emily Impett's collaborative study of adolescent girls' sexual health called, "To Be Seen and Not Heard." This study sees that inauthenticity in relationships where girls silence their own needs to reduce conflict can cause unsafe behavior.¹⁷ Furthermore, "Girls experience immense pressure to behave in feminine ways, both in their own relationships with other people and in their relationships with their own bodies."¹⁸ The theme in both Pipher and Impett's work is that young girls struggle to reconcile who they are with who society wants them to be. This is important knowledge to have when entering into work with the Girl Scouts, because Girl Scouts is supposed to be a place where young girls are encouraged to develop the skills to express themselves as leaders. These sources help me ask the critical question: does an experience with Girl Scouts actually help girls keep their "authentic self" intact and develop healthily through adolescence?

Catching a Wave by Rory Dicker and Alison Piepmeier is a resource I have used to understand the relationship between second and third wave feminists. I wanted to understand this relationship because I am curious what generation identification the girls I am currently working with will have when they grow up. What will they call themselves if they choose to be feminists? What will be their approach to feminism and activism? I find the best way to begin to contemplate this question about the future is by looking into the past. Catching a Wave is a review of articles dealing with struggles and reflections on feminism that opens with a discussion of second and third wave feminism. This is an important distinction to understand because there is an understood shift in perspective depending upon which generation a feminist comes from. The authors of Catching a Wave define third wave feminism as typically the "younger generation's feminism, one that rejects traditional—or stereotypical understandings of feminism and as such is antithetical or oppositional to its supposed predecessor."¹⁹ Second wave feminism,

the predecessor, is seen as a more active and radical movement that focused on “recognizing and addressing structural inequalities.” Later in the collection of essays, the discussion of second and third wave is continued with the article, “Voices and Visions: A Mother and Daughter Discussing Coming to Feminism and Being Feminist.” This essay describes the boundary between the waves as “an indistinct blur rather than a clear break.”²⁰ In the essay, the point is made that despite the generation and aspiration differences between the waves at the beginning of the 21st century there is “no sound-bite version of ‘what feminists think’ or ‘what feminism is’.”²¹ This important to my work because I want to explore the feminist context that these girls will mature in. It is possible that in ten years when the girls are twenty we will be referring to them as forth wave feminists or something else entirely. This stresses the fact that these young girls are the future and our attention, insight, and guidance should be given to them.

In Grassroots: A Field Guide for Feminist Activism, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, authors of Manifesta, explore the current setting for activism among young women. Using their own experiences as a guide, these authors define activism and feminism as explicitly linked in the world, “When people express confusion about feminism or discomfort with the label, it is because feminism is presented as a concept or a theory and not action and experience. Activism and feminism aren’t different concepts.”²² Grassroots is meant for young women who are trying to understand feminism and activism and find a way to get involved, the message of the book, “anyone can be a feminist” presents a definite third-wave perspective, but the focus on active work is a second wave idea. Baumgardner and Richards effectively cohere the generations of feminism and the aspects of feminist life. The definition of an activist as “anyone who accesses the resources that he or she has as an individual for the benefits of the common

good”²³ allows young girls a point of entry into feminism with the message that no act is too big or too small, a nice way of presenting the idea of activism to Girl Scouts.

Other influences over my work show up more implicitly from time to time. The influence of Mary Daly is extensive, her work was originally assigned to me by a professor, but I went beyond the assignment and continued to read Daly when I realized her commitment to process. Daly’s belief in the movement between action and ideas finds solidarity with this project, “The charting done here is based on some knowledge of the past, upon the present experience, and upon the hopes for the future.” This project depends very heavily upon the experience that I have had as an assistant troop leader, and upon my hopes for the future. If I did not hope that the girls would somehow benefit from my project, I doubt there’d be any reason to do it. While doing my preliminary research for this project I read Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation originally published in 1973, and parts of Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism, published in 1978. Daly’s words often resonate with me. Daly is a sophisticated and complex writer; she wrings the uses of words to their core, extracting the meanings of words that go beyond our contemporary understandings, or readings of them. My interest in the language used in the Girl Scout organization sprung from Daly inspirations; however, while I could spend the length of an entire paper only discussing word meanings and word choice, I decided to refocus my paper on the activism aspects of my experience, even though I find the language work exciting and hard to part with. Ultimately, I take many lessons from Mary Daly’s work, but have decided to provide the analysis that I think will better help me understand my work with the girls, because I would like my project to be beneficial to them in the end.

However, there are many points Daly makes that inform my analysis. Daly's emphasis on the "Self" of individual women that can be honed to triumph over patriarchy echoes Mary Pipher's psychoanalytical work that details the struggle of young girls to keep their true selves alive during adolescence. Mary Daly describes this "Female Self" as one feared by men and thus responsible for the constant war games that men play with women's bodies, "For Female Selves are so terrifying to the patriarchal male that he must reverse/reduce them."²⁴ Pipher, on the other hand, sees that the Self becomes the power itself that young girls cannot wield, because to actually be herself, a girl has to deny the group, go against negative stereotypes of herself cast in media and at school and overcome them in order to continue to be herself, to be authentic:

Girls have long been trained to be feminine at considerable cost to their humanity...Another way to describe femininity training is to call it false self-training. Girls are trained to be less than who they really are. They are trained to be what the culture wants of its young women, not what they themselves want to become.²⁵

In this and other ways I find that Daly and Pipher are speaking to each other through their critical work. At various points in the analysis of my experience I've encountered cross sections of the Daly-Pipher conversation. These moments show how informative both authors have been in my research, and also show the integrity of their arguments, for they write in different fields from different generations.

Personal Feminist Perspective

My research into 21st century issues and my previous work as a feminist lead me to describe my feminist perspective as it related to this project. You could also call this my feminist intention, or goal. Rosemary Radford Reuther says that the critical principle of feminist theology is "the promotion of the full humanity of women. Whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is, therefore, appraised as not redemptive."²⁶ I agree with Reuther's

principle and present it as a critical tool in defining my feminist perspective that “whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts” women requires critique and reform; requires radical reconsideration. I add to this definition the principle that equality within patriarchy does not and will not exist for women or men. This is because a patriarchy is a “social system in which men dominate.”²⁷ What is called for is a new system of being which does not deny, diminish, or distort any gender, class, or race. As I work with the Girl Scouts, this perspective informs my thinking, my motivation, and my actions. I believe that only in working toward an awareness of the patriarchy and its implicit oppressions will it ever disappear. My goal with the Scouts has been to interrogate in an age-appropriate way to present this perspective to them, through my actions and leadership.

This also brings up a crucial point in my research. I have not included extensive attention to race and class issues in this project. Although I see many entry points for this conversation, I chose to focus on feminism instead of race. The girls I have worked with all come from a diverse range of ethnicities and had an issue risen amongst them dealing with race I would have likely included it within my research and my experiences. However, I have tried to stay true to my work as it came to me, one part activism and one part observation. The future of this project requires some attention to race and class roles within Girl Scouts, to answer whether or not there are any disparities between groups within the organization. This is important because to completely expose patriarchy to young girls race and class issues are high on the list of patriarchal life systems that feminists pay close attention to.

Critical Areas for Analysis in Girl Scouts

Before I can share my experiences with the Girl Scouts and my analysis of those experiences, I feel it is necessary to lay out some grounds for analysis. It is difficult to have a discussion about an experience as vast and far-reaching as Girl Scouting; therefore, here are the aspects of Scouting that will help my reader and me be clear on the criteria for analysis, as in the Girl Scout Law, “I will try to be honest and fair” in my analysis of the Girl Scouts, and take my reader with me through this journey of experience and reflection. Here are the areas of analysis I find have the most impact on the girls, voice, autonomy, accountability, and language. These areas should be sought out in every experience, brought to light, and considered critically within their Girl Scout context.

Voice

Young girls require a safe and supportive space to develop their voice. Voice, in the broad sense, can be anything from developing values to learning to speak in public. The most important feature of voice for girls is their use of it. In the Girl Scouts, we need to critically address whether or not girls are given the support and opportunity needed to hone their voice, to gain the confidence that they will need to act on their ideas. In this way, speech is incredibly important because it can lead to action. The result of a developed voice in young girls is the ability to speak; in this sense *speak* is the verb meaning to act upon her ideas in a public realm and let herself exist in the world.

Voice is also important because academic settings for girls are not ideal. Mary Pipher describes the academic setting for an adolescent girl as a place where she will face the predominance of male attention and male superiority, “Boys are likely to be praised for academics and intellectual work, while girls are more likely to be praised for their clothing,

behaving properly, and obeying rules.”²⁸ It is important that a girl has the opportunity to develop her skills outside of the traditional academic setting that in its place within the patriarchy most often reinforces stigmatizing roles, as Pipher explains. The Girl Scout Research Institute, an institute for the study of Girl Scout issues in the United States, has designed a structure of how girls’ leadership changes with age, categorizing elementary school as the age in which “girls lead with action” by “helping younger kids, being a good friend, and taking care of her family.”²⁹ In middle school, girls learn to lead through voice by “having good communication skills, learning how to resolve conflicts, influencing others, and speaking up for herself.”³⁰ Interestingly, in my experience with the Girl Scouts, I have seen girls of the elementary school age both with and without a developed voice.

Autonomy

Autonomy is defined as “self-government; existence as an independent moral agent or personal independence,”³¹ and in my definition of autonomy I include self-awareness. Learning independence and self-awareness are important skills for young girls. When dealing with peer pressure, family problems, or other adolescent trials, girls who are able to access a sense of autonomy are more likely to make positive choices. One of my main goals in working with the Girl Scouts has been to seek ways in which I can expose patriarchy to the girls. The challenge in this comes in finding an unimposing avenue through which I can show them, in their own language, the struggles they will face just because they are female.

The issue of autonomy addresses conformity in girls’ experience. As Mary Pipher points out, “While peers can be satisfying and growth producing, they can also be growth destroying, especially in early adolescence. Many girls can describe a universal phenomenon—the scapegoating of girls by one another.”³² A girl with a better view of herself, and her

independence, may not be able to avoid this peer treatment, but certainly has the tools to begin to see it for what it is and move past it. Moreover, she knows the extent to which she can be affected; she knows herself.

Accountability

Girl Scouts of the USA's three main beliefs are "voluntary leadership, democratic process, and responsibility of volunteers."³³ In Girl Scouting problems arise when leaders don't take their leadership seriously. The leaders are the closest model of leadership that the girls have. Inequities between troops become apparent at events when some girls are given more incentive to do well than others.

The Girl Scout handbook has specific goals for Girl Scouting, including becoming the best person you can, respecting other people, building one's own values, and leadership skills.³⁴ The question is who ensures these goals are met? What happens when a girl does not do her Girl Scout duty? What happens when a leader squanders troop funds or doesn't participate in the neighborhood community? A system of checks and balances does not exist through which leaders are consistently evaluated. The hesitancy to have a fail-safe system of accountability is that no one wants to criticize or reprimand a volunteer for fear of losing the volunteer or worse, gaining an ungrateful reputation and losing involvement on a large scale.

Language

Language usage is very important in Girl Scout documentation. In the Girl Scout Research Institute literature many quotations from the Ms. Foundation point out the Girl Scouts don't exist in a bubble; the influence of research done by the Ms. Foundation is telling because Ms. is an explicitly feminist organization. Girl Scouts takes on a progressive view of leadership techniques for women and girls. In formal documents language can be examined as well.

For example, Essential Elements of a Girl Scout Corporation describes a council charter as that which “defines the relationship between a council and Girl Scouts of the USA.” This charter “binds the elements of Girl Scouting across the nation into one large and cohesive Girl Scout movement and gives it a common purpose.”³⁵ The use of the phrase “Girl Scout movement” shows that the GSUSA has in ways echoed a women’s movement and focuses on moving toward a common goal rather than rooting in tradition and lacking re-evaluation.

Still, Girl Scouts in everyday experience forgets to focus on the importance of language. Many troop leaders refer to their girls with the common English colloquialism “guys.” All-women/girl environments are seen as “single-sex environments”³⁶ where men are a welcomed relief to all the estrogen circulating. These everyday occurrences are what Mary Daly would call a “grammatical silencing technique”³⁷ that destroys the possibility of all-women/girl solidarity, failing to promote the gender definition that creates Girl Scouting. The use of the word “movement” also bears new weight in light of the national realignment where the entire corporate structure is being overhauled through six dramatic area changes. Here, too, Girl Scouts uses the term to signify the collective group and to doubly imply change, or a movement toward a new way of being.³⁸

Southern California Girl Scouting: My Experience

My experience as an activist volunteer with the Girl Scouts of Rancho Foothills has been comprehensive. I have taken every opportunity I could find in the neighborhood to observe, interact, and enjoy my time with the Scouts. Although there have been many meetings and events over the past months, I have picked four interactions which I think are key to defining my work with the Girl Scouts. I have chosen to present these interactions one at a time, incorporating my

experiences into my research and analysis of Girl Scouting today. I find that my critical analysis of the Girl Scouts would not be possible without my experiences of the reality of Scouting, and so I see my personal experience as a valid use of source material for this analysis. The point of this project has always been to discern what a feminist critique of the Girl Scouts of the 21st century would be to find ways this critique can better the Girl Scout experience for girls. I have wanted to bring attention to the ubiquitous organization and question whether or not Girl Scout ideals are beneficial or blinding to young girls. In these experiences, I have found many examples of feminist forward thinking, and many examples that call for critical analysis. While these experiences are not infinite, they do accurately portray my work with the troop.³⁹

Annual Council Meeting: Working the Business

The Rancho Foothill Neighborhood is managed by the Spanish Trails Council. On April 5, 2008, I attended the 41st Annual Council Meeting. This meeting is run by the council president, with support from the three vice presidents, the secretary, and the financial chairperson. Also in attendance were the CEO of the council and some of the board members. Representatives from each of the 28 neighborhoods that the council serves called delegates, also attended. The council bylaws state that the number of delegates is based on the number of girls' membership as of September 30 of each year.⁴⁰ The delegates vote on issues raised before the council. Usually, this meeting is used to select new board or council members; however, this year because of the realignment of Girl Scouts of the USA no new members were being elected because all of the council positions will be terminated in October of this year. Spanish Trails council will be combining with six other Southern California councils forming The Girl Scouts of Greater Los Angeles.

The president of the Spanish Trails council is named Lorane Dick. Lorane was well organized and articulate, used empowered language and focused on the girls in every aspect of the meeting. While the corporate structure that the business is required to follow limited my ability to observe her personal leadership style, I can say that she shared the meeting with her vice presidents and tried to incorporate interesting ways to relay information. For example, she invited Girl Scouts from three different levels who embodied the goal for Girl Scouts in 2008 to say a few words. The girls spoke on behalf of “courage, confidence, and character,” and were incredibly moving. Lorane Dick reminded the group of delegates multiple times that our purpose as volunteers is to better the lives of young girls; that quality of our accomplishments is measured through our positive impact on the girls.⁴¹

The corporate meeting raised two important issues in my mind. The first is the national realignment of Girl Scouts of the USA. The purpose of the realignment is to “improve fundraising and volunteer systems and revamp the Girl Scout brand to reflect a more modern and leadership-focused image. The plan includes consolidating 312 councils into 109 and possibly creating a different group structure to attract and retain older girls.”⁴² And indeed, Lorane mentioned this new leadership approach in one of her speeches. She said that this new model was based upon three leadership principles, to “discover, connect, and take action,” incorporating a “by girls for girls” approach.⁴³ Many leaders expressed concern that the merger would directly affect their Girl Scout experience, but Lorane was sure to stress the purpose of leaders—to impact the girls, and not to worry about the corporate realignment.

This realignment has been taking place nationally for the past two years. In Pennsylvania, the realignment made news as five councils merged. At the time, a Manhattan-based

spokesperson for GSUSA said, “Girl Scouts USA is trying to create a high-capacity Girl Scout experience. Before the realignment, there had been some inequity. By realigning, a girl in a farm town in Iowa will have the same Girl Scouting experience as someone in Midtown Manhattan.”⁴⁴

My second issue was not addressed at the corporate meeting, but directly after when Dawn reviewed Girl Scout cookie training with me. She gave me a copy of “Troop Cookie Sale Manager Action Guidebook.” In this packet I learned that in 2007 “more than 6,000 girls from Spanish Trails participated in the cookie sale, earning more than \$530,000 in troop profits.”⁴⁵ Nearly sixty percent of these profits go directly back to the council, because Girl Scouts is a non-profit organization the profits must be used to continually benefit the cause of the organization.⁴⁶ Seventeen percent of the profits go back to the troops in the form of cash, thus, girls earn cents on the dollar for their fundraising efforts. While it’s true that no one is getting rich off of this system, there are some real challenges in Girl Scouting that tie directly to the monetary gain—or lack thereof.

Many volunteers receive no compensation for their time as Girl Scout volunteers: troop leaders, committee members, and neighborhood team members. Certainly, Girl Scouts is a purely volunteer organization and those who are dedicated to improving the lives of girls are called upon to desire the benefits without compensation. I suppose this is the nature of most non-profit organizations; however, would more leaders be committed to the true impact their leadership has if incentives were awarded? Incentives can be small, but they show the values of one’s work. When we get things for free in this society the implication is that it’s not worth paying for, because nothing is really free. The inequity seems fairly large; per box, troops receive \$0.65 and councils receive \$2.36,⁴⁷ and because leaders have nothing to lose, they are less accountable for their actions.

Rancho Foothills Leader Meeting: Styles that Reign Supreme

On March 3, 2008, I attended the Rancho Foothill Neighborhood leader meeting. These meetings are held on the first Monday of every month and are an opportunity for troop leaders from all levels—Daisies, Brownies, Juniors, Cadets, and Seniors—to gather and share information. These meetings are run by the neighborhood’s Service Team, a group of volunteers, many with their own troops, who put in additional time performing tasks for the neighborhood. Dawn serves on the team as the lead troop organizer for the neighborhood. Recently, she became the team member in charge of interviewing new leaders and providing the New Leader Orientations (NLOs), a position that requires special training. The Service Team is led by the Neighborhood Chairperson, whom I will call, Anne.⁴⁸ As Chairperson, she is the main liaison between the council and the troop leaders; she refers to herself as “the leader of leaders.” Other positions in the Service Team include the Registration Team, two volunteers responsible for registering all the troops each year through council; the Treasurer, responsible for the neighborhood’s funds and cookie distribution and sales; the Service Project Chairperson, providing community service opportunities for the entire neighborhood, and the Level Consultants, leaders who represent each of the levels of Girl Scouts and serve as the liaisons between individual leaders and the Service Team.

The Service Team meeting is held directly before the leader meeting. As an observer of the meeting I noticed Anne’s leadership style. In introducing herself to me, she explained that she had a troop when her daughter (now 24) was a child, and the troop had gone from Daisies to Senior Scouts together. She also told me that she is very high up in the Boy Scout organization, holding a similar position there as she does in Girl Scouts. What became clear as Anne guided the meetings was that she viewed Girl Scouting and Boy Scouting as essentially the same. She

would often justify a leadership technique she used by saying, “Well, that’s how we do it in Boy Scouts.” She also encouraged the leaders to look at the Boy Scout Pow-Wow books for ideas about skits to perform at an upcoming camping event, saying “All you have to do is change ‘boy’ and to ‘girl’ and the songs and skits work just fine.” As I observed the meeting these small points began to resonate, what was it about Anne that was rubbing me the wrong way?

The first time I met Anne was a week earlier on February 29, when I attended the Bronze Award⁴⁹ ceremony for a neighborhood Junior troop. Anne attended the event as the council representative and awarded the girls special certificates of achievement. When I spoke with her after the ceremony, I asked her to explain her position to me, to clarify her responsibilities and role within the neighborhood. She spoke about being the neighborhood chairperson and she mentioned some of the difficulties of the volunteerism of Girl Scouting, saying in a glib tone, “And most of the leaders are women, you know how hard it can be when women work together,” she made a dismissing movement with her hand and rolled her eyes, “I spend most of my time...trying to put out fires.”

Now, at the leader meeting, I watched Anne run the meeting in much the traditional style, she’d call on people one at a time to take the floor and talk about their specific projects, interjecting from time to time if they left anything out. The tables of the auditorium were lined up in rows, divided by the stage. No one could make eye contact with anyone else and with the Service Team on one side and the leaders on the other, the room was divided. I wondered if there were more progressive ways to run the meeting. Troop leaders are encouraged to give Scouts opportunities for leadership, especially at meetings. The Girl Scout Handbook encourages creativity and adventure, yet this was one of the most boring meetings I had ever attended. Later, my sister was very eager to ask me what I thought of the whole process. I turned the question on

her; she said that she thought Anne was like a dictator. Yet, interestingly, Dawn also had complaint with Anne's passive aggressiveness when it came to dealing with some of the other Service Team members who were not doing their jobs. Why was it that Anne ran the meetings with an iron fist, yet avoided personal confrontation?

Traditional leadership styles are defined in three categories: autocratic, where the leader holds the power; participative, where the leader and the volunteers share equal power; and free-rein, where the volunteers hold the power.⁵⁰ The effectiveness of these styles is gauged through their place in the traditional patriarchal systems of management. As one can feel from the titles, "autocratic" and "free-rein" both have negative connotations, seemingly making the "participative" style stand out as the middle ground.

Girl Scout leadership styles are encouraged to be participatory. Still, Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI) defines the "ladder of participation" in a much different way than the traditional three-style leadership standard. The first rung of the ladder is "manipulation," followed by "decoration" and "tokenism."⁵¹ These three rungs fall under the "non-participation" zone of the ladder, these rungs are not the desired outcome of a leadership process, but seen as necessary in the steps of the leadership ladder. The following five rungs of the ladder begin to incorporate autonomy; they are called "degrees of participation" and climb as listed, "assigned but informed, consulted and informed, adult-initiated and shared decisions with children, child-initiated and directed."⁵² As girls get older in Girl Scouts they are expected to begin to act as leaders, growing outside of the three traditional styles of leadership. This process develops voice and autonomy, showing girls how to speak in public, to express themselves and pull away from conformity.

A feminist leadership style is “a set of behaviors used in managing and/or leading people or organizations that reflect feminist values,”⁵³ such values include communication and collaboration, but the core of most feminist styles of leadership is experience. According to Sandra Harding, a feminist methodology would approach leadership using a method comprised of these three parts: listening, interrogating, and observing. In a feminist leadership approach both the leader and the led are inspired to explore new realms of evidence gathering experience and awareness-raising.⁵⁴ As Uma Narayan points out, tradition plays a role in the conservative backlash, as women become the embodiment of the tradition.⁵⁵ It is in this way that traditional forms of leadership deny women an expressive vision and participatory growth experience because they embody the tradition so that they cannot advance a new idea of leadership, but can only uphold the old idea that may have no liberating qualities.

Anne is a good example of a non-effective leadership style within Girl Scouting. The Girl Scout leadership writings are meant to apply to the troop leader-to-scout relationship; while the relationship amongst adults is left unclear. Anne’s autocratic style of leadership not only poorly reflects Girl Scout ideology; it turns new leaders off to Girl Scout involvement. She is unable to provide a welcoming environment for new troop leaders; because they can feel the cliquish vibe in the room at the leader meetings. Accountability is also an issue with Anne. Dawn has often posed the question to me, “when does Anne stop being the Chairperson?” Many troop leaders would like to have a new chairperson, especially now that new leaders are coming into the neighborhood. She sees Anne’s style of leadership as outdated, and Anne’s experience as a Girl Scout troop leader out of touch. The problem is that there is no way to vote Anne out of her position. Anne stepped up to take the position, and Anne will hold that position indefinitely. Admittedly, there is not a long line of volunteers waiting to step into Anne’s job.

Is Anne's behavior negatively affecting the girls? Many of the young Girl Scouts do not have direct contact with Anne. As she asserts, Anne is the leader of leaders and her impact is most heavily felt on the adult volunteers. The leaders, however, are constantly made aware of the lack of solidarity and support within the neighborhood. Troop to troop collaboration is low within the neighborhood and many leaders step in line with the cliquish nature of the monthly leader meetings; for example, they see each other every week but do not know each other's names. Through a trickle-down process, it can be concluded that Anne's leadership style affects the girls. Anne is not being held accountable for developing a more collaborative, participatory, feminist leadership style and because as a volunteer she is venerated by most for "doing the best she can" the Girl Scouts and troop leaders are left with a poor leadership example.

International Day: Look-ism as a Public Performance

On February 23, 2008 our troop participated in International Day. For three weeks leading up to the event we prepared by studying our assigned country, Brazil. The girls made posters explaining Brazil's biggest holiday, Carnival, and learned how to dance the Samba. On the day of the event the girls passed out coins from Brazil and samples of a Brazilian chocolate called *brigadeiro*. As the day started, Dawn gathered the girls around our booth and told them to remember that they needed to be on their best behavior, not just because they are Girl Scouts—Dawn made it clear to the girls that our troop was under special scrutiny because of her new position in the neighborhood. "We are being watched," she said.

As the day went on, I took a group of girls around the room so that they could visit other booths and learn about the countries represented at the event. I spent the second half of the day with that group stationed at our booth as they told other Scouts about Brazil. Then the girls were

called upon to perform their dance on stage before the crowd. A buzz of nervous excitement ran through the girls. They performed brilliantly and won over the crowd. We congratulated the girls when they came off stage, as leaders, we were very proud.

At the end of the event, a Girl Scout from the hosting Senior troop came on stage and told us that her troop had decided to hold a secret contest. The best troop effort at International Day would be rewarded with a prize. They were looking for best booth presentation and performance of skit or dance. Troop 1148 won! That was us; the girls were very excited, happy that they had been rewarded for being watched. To their credit, the girls had worked hard and it showed; so why did the situation leave me with a strange feeling?

It took me a few weeks to realize why I wanted to find fault in the events that took place on International Day. I discovered that there was a look-ism going on. Vernon Minor describes vision as

A powerful tool in establishing power relations. In our Western tradition, the one who does the gazing seems to have the influence over the gazed upon. The one who looks makes the purchase. The object of the gaze is like a precious object in a glass case: desirable, perhaps expensive, but obtainable. One who sees is a "seer," and that word has almost prophetic implications.⁵⁶

Minor is right in his analysis of the visual relationship, which in a social context is often, called look-ism. Not only does it establish a power binary, it casts the looked upon as an object. For young girls, the gaze of authority reinforces their role as object in the patriarchal system, teaching them to conform and perform or face the undesirable consequences of being unwanted. This socializes girls to accept the power binary and to live with a ruling resonance of fear.

At International Day the girls were told that they had to perform a certain way in public, and they did, for which they were rewarded. But I kept asking myself, what if they had been

reprimanded? How would their reactions to being watched change? At the root of my concern are the repercussions that look-ism has on the girls as they become adolescents. If they are socialized to believe that they are always being watched how will they begin to express autonomy? Mary Pipher realizes that critical questions for young girls revolve around the development of the self within the public eye, and because this is a hard area to navigate many adult women are still asking the same questions they did as girls, “How important are looks or popularity? How do I care for myself and not be selfish? How can I be honest and still be loved? How can I achieve and not threaten others?”⁵⁷

This look-ism brings up issues with authority. Primarily, *who* is looking, *why* are they watching, and *what* power do the authority figures hold? For example, if the girls had been reprimanded instead of rewarded on International Day what would have happened? Authority figures hold the power to discipline, which can be very threatening. Gradually, the system of look-ism exposed a discomfort at being objectified and controlled that I could detect, and that the girls are not able to express. As blooming adolescents, however, I suspect this discomfort will soon begin to arise in them. Through examining look-ism we begin to see other systems of power and their effect on development and relationships, which are implicit in our experience until brought to the surface.

Mary Daly speaks extensively to this concept of women who are socialized to know fear, “Women are silenced/split by the embedding of fears. These contrived and injected fears function in a manner analogous to electrodes implanted in the brain of a victim who can be managed by remote control.”⁵⁸ The “embedding of fears” begins early, begins when women are girls. Even though International Day was a fun event, beneficial in its attempt to spread world-knowledge, tolerance, and peace, this look-ism doesn’t serve the Girl Scouts well. In fact, this

system reinforces the patriarchal socializations that take place outside of Girl Scouting every day in the larger world. Moreover, this system leads to fears that are silencing, which undermine the Girl Scouts dedication to the development of voice, leadership and action.

Re-visioning Mary Pipher's questions, I ask, how can we teach girls to be empowered to compete in a competitive society? To be self-aware and self-reliant without installing a sense of fear? How do we cast a proper light on public performance and power relationships? How do we re-vision authority so that fear of failure to perform does not stifle girls' growth, paralyzing them with fear? These questions lead to a new system of socializing girls, which could be accomplished by changing the approach of Girl Scouts to stress the quality of work and not the performance of work. The casual message of "you're being watched, so behave" should be replaced with "be yourself, we value *you*."

"Creative Solutions:" Badge Project with Troop 1148

After a two week break from Girl Scout meetings, we came together on April 8, 2008 for our last meeting before the completion of this paper. I had designed a badge project from the Junior Girl Scout Badgebook that if completed would earn the girls a new patch for their vests. The types of badges that exist in the Badgebook range from camping to art, thinking globally to acting locally. I chose a badge that gave me a window through which I could begin to incorporate my ideas into action with the troop. I was excited to see how the girls would respond to my project and whether or not the ideas I had to present could be grasped by ten-year olds.

The badge I chose, "Creative Solutions," is composed of ten tasks, I selected six tasks in order to successfully complete the badge and earn the patch. I arranged the two hour meeting in fifteen minute increments. We worked both in a large group and in smaller groups at separate

stations. I wanted to incorporate a different pedagogy than the girls had experienced in troop meetings before, the most obvious of these aspects was the use of space and movement. The purpose of this alternate pedagogy was to keep the girls engaged in the topics we were covering and to show the other troop leaders an alternate form of troop leadership. Often in group meetings we sit and listen to one of the leaders talk, which can easily become boring and the girls lose attention. For this project, I placed four blankets throughout the meeting space; each blanket indicated a space for an activity that I called a “station.” Not only did this require the girls to get up and move around every fifteen minutes, it kept them from knowing what was coming next. This made the girls more interested and aware of their actions and surroundings.

The first task the girls had to complete took place outside of the meeting. At our previous meeting I asked each girl to come prepared with two facts about a historical figure—Susan B. Anthony, Ida Wells, Jane Addams, and Clara Barton. In teams of two the girls presented their facts and as a group we discussed the lives of these women. I saw this piece of the badge as particularly important in light of Mary Pipher’s analysis, “Girls come of age in a misogynist culture in which men have most political and economic power. Girls read a history of Western civilization that is essentially a record of men’s lives. As girls study Western civilization, they become increasingly aware that history is the history of men. History is His Story, the story of *Man-kind*.”⁵⁹ Introducing the important lives of women omitted from patriarchal history is another way in which I saw this badge as a worthy inclusion in my project, a way to begin to open a discussion with the girls.

As we discussed the lives of Susan B. Anthony and Clara Barton questions raised were, “what is a suffragist?” and “what does humanitarian mean?” Before we ended this group discussion I asked the girls if they had ever heard of the word “feminist,” all gave a definite *yes*.

I followed up with, “what does it mean to be a feminist?” The answers were mixed, and while I had no intentions of definitively answering this question for the girls (as I have often struggled with this myself); I found basic and correct information to be most useful. I started simple, “a feminist is someone who believes in equality between men and women.” Then discussion successfully turned to “what is equality?”

Our initial discussion was a great starting point. Already, we had touched on huge concepts that I didn’t think would ever come up in the course of a Girl Scout project. I reminded the girls that they should keep these important women in their minds and remember our discussion because we’d come back to it later. As we separated into groups to begin the stations, I told them that today they were going to be asked to think creatively. The first station was called “Ordinary/Extraordinary.” Here, the girls were given some ordinary household objects such as a spoon, a hair tie, a sponge, a hole punch, a paper clip, and a shoebox. The girls were asked to re-vision three of the items and come up with seven unusual ways they could be used. Answers ranged from jewelry to camping equipment. This was a useful beginning station because it introduced the girls to the creative framework and began to help them think outside of the box. For example, when the second group visited this station they pointedly asked if the shoebox was also one of the objects to re-vision. I hadn’t intended it to be, but I realized that simply by asking the girls were not only thinking outside the box, they were *using* the box!

The other three task stations were called “Shipwreck Island,” “Local/Global Problem Solving,” and “Chinese Tangram.” At each station the girls were called upon to think critically and creatively about the task at hand. From organizing a method of solving a local problem and beginning to solve a global one, to measuring and cutting pieces of their own tangram, the girls consistently rose to accomplish each task with grace and intelligence. For our sixth task we came

back into the large group, before we began we re-capped each of the five activities we'd completed.

I asked, "What was the purpose of the tasks that we've accomplished tonight? How can we begin to act on some of the problems we've identified tonight?" Finally, I explained the next task; we were to "Create a World." I taped a large piece of butcher paper on the wall and began to ask brainstorming questions of the girls.

"Who will run the future world?" I asked.

The first response was an exuberant, "Hillary Clinton!" I continued to explain what I meant by future, more than fifty to one hundred years from now. I asked the girls a few other questions and they began to provide feedback. "School will be all on computers, there will be no more war," they said.

Then, finally, I asked, "What will women do in the future?"

The response was immediate, "Anything!"

"They'll be president, be firefighters, they'll do anything boys do."

Intrigued I asked, "Aren't boys and girls equal *now*?" To my surprise, the girls were certain that they were not, "boy always act like they are better than us, they tell us we can't play sports," Yvette said.

Interestingly, everyone seemed to adamantly agree that boys and girls were un-equal. When I asked why the responses were mixed. Kelly said quietly, "Because of the Declaration of Independence."

For a moment it was quiet and I made eye contact with the other leaders. "What does the Declaration of Independence say?" I asked. No one could say for sure. I laughed and said, "Let me see if I can remember from fifth grade..."

We hold these truths to be self-evident,

that all men are created equal, that
they are endowed by their Creator...

That's as far as I got. One of the girls said mockingly, "All *men*? Why men? Why not all mankind?"

I responded, "Why not all human beings, or all men and women?" The girls seemed certain that this had something to do with the way boys and girls weren't treated the same at school. I was shocked by their insight and touched by the depth of their thinking; the oldest among them is eleven years old.

To finish the discussion I asked them to consider one final question, "What can we do to make sure that our future world actually exists as we want it to?" The girls were thoughtful on this question and I hoped that somewhere in their minds seeds of doubt about the systems they encounter every day would begin to grow. Seeds that reminded them that they should think creatively and "use the box" as much as possible, they should question inequality and the issues in their lives and in their society that don't add up, but most of all, I hoped that I had opened the door to more conversations of this kind in the troop. I feel confident that using this badge project as a window into feminist thinking I did not impose any of my philosophies onto the girls, but was able to question them on what they already see, what they have already encountered. In all, I hadn't considered that the best way to access these ideas with the girls would be to use their experiences, for I had thought the embedding of these ideas to be too implicit to have yet caught their attention.

Now, my understanding of how to communicate with the girls about these issues, how to participate in consciousness-raising, is to speak to them in a language that they can understand. My questions and fears that I wouldn't be able to find a language to speak to them have been soothed by my experience doing "Creative Solutions." I have realized that they will show you

their language if you listen. If you are attentive, the girls will speak to you in their native tongue, and it is only your responsibility to have your ears open, your mind open, your heart open and to speak back. The best example of this language sharing is the ending discussion of the badge project where the girls brought the Declaration of Independence into the discussion even though they did not know decisively why. Mary Pipher says, “By junior high girls sense their lack of power, but usually they cannot say what they sense. They see that mostly men are congressmen, principals, bankers and corporate executives.”⁶⁰ Pipher understands that girls are often “inarticulate about the trauma at the time it happens” but know that something doesn’t fit, they know that the language “doesn’t fit their experiences”⁶¹ and this has long been one of the reasons I have wanted to work with young girls. For when I was young, I had also been without language, and a consciousness-raising effort in my life could have had a wonderful effect.

This realization was the most profound moment I’ve had in my work as an activist volunteer to date. It was profound because my goal with this badge project was to introduce a positive feminist role model to the girls. This was built into my paper as an option for my analysis. I’ve found ways in which Girl Scouting does not reinforce a feminist ideal, so I was going to introduce one and see what would happen. I did not expect the girls to recognize the tasks we accomplished as feminist, but I thought introducing them to a feminist idea would show them a participatory leadership style which would call on them to be accountable for their time and the amount of effort they put into each station. Yet here I had opened the door to much more than that. I see my work with the Girl Scouts continuing on into the future, and wonder what my experience would be with two more years with the troop. My goal of distilling the patriarchy, scrambling the message of conformity, inauthenticity, and the denial of self could be reached little by little through weekly interactions with the girls. Just as negative socialization tactics

work throughout young girl's lives, this positive outlook could spread through their experiences, so that when they come to be my age they won't have to spend their time un-learning the patriarchy's socialization, but could continue on the path past the burdens of backwardness into a new plane. I suppose this was my ultimate concern with the Girl Scouts and my one intimate goal mostly because I see the ways in which my socialization has had a stunting effect on my life, and still I know that I am lucky for having the perspective that allows me to examine my socialization and make justice of it.

Concluding Remarks: Is Scouting a 21st Century Feminism?

"To the way the beloved
Story goes: *her body from a bone.*
And her soul out of nothing."

-Olena Kalytiak Davis⁶²

"I heard all your stories of your misery. The
shape your 'silence' took is in part what has
incited me to speech."

-Uma Narayan⁶³

Generations

In the next three years, Girl Scouting will celebrate its hundredth anniversary in the United States. For these many years Scouting has been a common experience for young girls; many of the faculty who have worked with me on this project, my mother and grandmother, and sisters have all been Girl Scouts. Historically, becoming a Girl Scout was one of the few recreational opportunities for young girls, many second wave feminists tell of a simple truth, "I had no other opportunity, but Scouting." With all of the new opportunities for young girls today, has Girl Scouting become an outdated activity? How much longer will Girl Scouts survive if they do not adapt to the needs of girls in the 21st century?

With the corporate realignment taking place this year, it seems that GSUSA understands this critical moment in Girl Scout history. Their plan is to highlight the benefits of being a Girl Scout in the 21st century. New literature begins to open itself to deeper feminist influences, inciting a revival of the Girl Scout Movement. The time is now. Susan Faludi, in the 1970s book Backlash, describes the conservative restraint that takes place after a time of progress for women's rights and opportunities, essentially creating a one step forward, two steps back culture. Today, we are not working within a time of backlash. The 2008 presidential election is around the corner promising the first woman president, or the first African American male president, their campaign slogans are proof—it is time for change. However, Faludi's argument is not completely outdated, young girls lives are harder than ever, coming to feminism they are faced with the bitch-feminist stereotype that distorts women, and reveals the distorted media images that girls receive of themselves daily. The 21st century is not only critical for Girl Scouting or politics, it is critical for young girls. Girl Scouts is planning to step into this arena of change with their new objective for Girl Scouting to create a “girl-centric, innovative, agile, aligned, and accountable organization.”⁶⁴

Envisioning the Future

There are many ways in which my experience with the Girl Scouts of Rancho Foothills has been satisfying, heart-warming, and insightful. I do not fear for the girls as I once did, because I now understand that GSUSA is guided by principles of leadership and activism. This leadership pedagogy introduces voice and autonomy to young girls and opens their lives to positive experiences. The Girl Scouts of the USA applies a democratic process⁶⁵ to all that they do in order to promote fairness and quality of experience, but in the 21st century Girl Scouts can

go further by applying a feminist process to their organization. The Girl Scout organization values voice and autonomy but lacks accountability and is negligent in their usage of language. These are critical areas for analysis that work toward a feminist process for young girls so that they can experience themselves on the boundary of patriarchy.

How do we get there? It is hard to say explicitly how we can introduce and maintain a feminist pedagogy in Scouting. Some would argue that Girl Scouts is already implicitly feminist and “forcing” a feminist framework would be too political. But Girl Scouting *is* political; it is a public organization that takes part in world discussions of peace and women’s issues. GSUSA is trying to revamp their image, attempting to modernize. Perhaps “feminist” won’t be the word that it uses when Girl Scouts incorporates a feminist process and pedagogy into the experience of Scouting. A new language could be invented to claim and reclaim Scouting as “by girls for girls.”

This project has also opened doors to the idea of creating new organizations; sister organizations that go beyond cookies and camping to really tackle girls’ issues. This new organization would focus on showing girls that they do not have to live by the dictates of their socialization. Teaching them to compete in a competitive society. To be self-aware and self-reliant without fear. To understand public performance and the plays of power. To re-vision authority, conformity, and solidarity. To be authentic. To break out of silence. To build and become herself without the doubting-complex of patriarchy, to create herself, her soul as if out of nothing at all—nothing pre-ordained or pre-qualified. To “discover, connect, and take action” towards a feminist future, whatever wave that may be.⁶⁶

Where to create this new space? Girl Scouts provides non-formal education in an all-girl format that takes place outside of traditional educational systems, although Girl Scouts is often seen as supplemental to young girls’ education. Can a new organization be created that presents

this new pedagogy in an educational format? One of the challenges to creating a new organization would be in establishing a following, building a reputation, because primary education is required in the United States, a program such as this new-imagining of Girl Scouts may be helped by that link. It seems contrary to think that the Girl Scout movement has been functioning all these years without affecting the educational systems which it is closely linked to. But clearly the educational system that exists today is not serving young girls well. Mary Pipher's work is an example of the documented short comings of traditional education, "Junior high is when girls begin to fade academically. Partly this comes from the very structure of the schools, which tends to be large and impersonal. Girls, who tend to do better in relationship-based cooperative learning situations, get lost..."⁶⁷ With a supportive educational environment girls can become more successful leaders from an earlier age.

For this new vision Girl Scouts serves as a valuable aspect of the learning process. In this way, the new organization could learn from the strengths and weaknesses of Girl Scouting. Volunteers could be held more accountable by providing them more extensive training in leadership techniques and skills through which the mission of girl-to-girl solidarity could be practiced. A regular system of checks and balances would ensure that leaders are clearly upholding the goals of the organization. Fundraising profits from the organization could be used in part to compensate volunteers to show the value of their work.

Language would be carefully weighted in this new organization. The documents of the organization would use empowering language to recreate Girl Scout values with a Gynocentric Method, celebrating the happiness and value of being a woman. However, no language could be censured or demonized, without the misuses of language we would be unable to understand how

important the correct language is. More important to using only the correct language in this organization would be the awareness of language and its importance in our society.

Girl Scouts has created one of the best programs for leadership skill building that I have encountered. The real strengths of Scouting lie in the activities that the organization has created for the girls. Many of the projects and badges that the girls earn and participate in have multiple interpretations, through which many can follow a feminist process. Voice and leadership skills are of the highest value in Girl Scouts, and would need to remain so in the new vision in order for it to be effective. Autonomy, consciousness-raising, would also be an important function of projects and learning in the program. The greatest triumph of Girl Scouting has been this system of activism. This process of projects and learning is the place where girls gain the most from Scouting, the rest are the logistics. On this level, Girl Scouting is effective, is helpful to young girls, and the Girl Scout corporation impacts the lives of young girls in a positive way.

My personal involvement with Girl Scouts will last until the day I can undertake the project of the new vision. I see myself as functioning on the boundary of the Girl Scouts. As I have seen with the "Creative Solutions" badge there is room for interpretation in Scouting. As a troop leader I know that my troop has the benefit of my feminist perspective and my goals as an activist volunteer. Moreover, my experience this year in Girl Scouting has helped me understand the ways through which I can communicate and impart ideas to young girls in a way they will understand. Inadvertently, Girl Scouting has provided me with many tools through which I can begin this communication process, a careful choosing of badge projects and an eye for change, for radical action, could have a great impact on young girls. This satisfies my desire to positively impact the lives of girls in the short term, because for now I can work knowing that I am able to touch a few lives as I do so. In the long term, however, I hope this project will serve as a

stepping stone for me to begin to re-vision my role in the patriarchy as aunt and mother, sister and daughter, student and teacher, to activist role model, the chief executive officer of the patriarchal breakdown.

Resources for Further Activism

In Girl Scouts of the USA troop leaders are the translators of Girl Scout rules, projects, and ideas to the girls. More troop leaders and volunteers are always needed. While a feminist pedagogy is not written into the corporate books of Girl Scouts my work with troop 1148 shows that feminist views can be brought to young girls through Girl Scouts, because feminism and activism are inherently linked. Finding volunteers is one of the biggest challenges to Girl Scouting today, “Most people think of troop leaders when we say volunteers, but we also need mentors to run short-term program or interest group, or, maybe volunteer leading a workshop at camp once or twice during the summer. We desperately need bilingual volunteers too.”⁶⁸

To receive an information packet on Scouting in the Redlands area, contact the San Gorgonio Council through their website and fill out the information request form. To receive information about volunteering in the Rancho Foothill Neighborhood, which incorporates Rancho Cucamonga, upper Ontario, and a western corner of Fontana, please contact Nadia De La Cruz, Area Executive.

Girl Scouts is also actively seeking volunteers from college campuses. Campus Girl Scouts can volunteer to plan events, run a Girl Scout group, act as a consultant, or raise money. Anyone enrolled in college, junior college, university, vocational or technical school is eligible to be a campus Girl Scout. Contact a Girl Scout Council in your desired area of work through the

Girl Scout Council Finder. Once you've located a council, fill out a Campus Girl Scout Certification Form and Commitment Statement.

Other opportunities for leadership in Scouting are around the world. Girl Scouts is seeking camp staff for Girl Scout summer camps in Italy and Germany. Staff positions include resident camp director, assistant camp director, program director, health service manager, unit leaders, assistant unit leaders, assistant cook and kitchen assistant.

Contacts

San Gorgonio Council Website

<http://gssgc.org/VolunteerDevelopment/VolunteerInterestForm.html>

Girl Scout Council Finder

<http://www.girlscouts.org/councilfinder/>

Campus Girl Scout Certification Form and Commitment Statement

http://www.girlscouts.org/join/campus/campusgs_certification_form.pdf

Nadia de la Cruz

Spanish Trails Area Executive

(909) 399-0808 extension 7319

ndelacruz@gsspanishtrails.org

Dawn Cuskey

Rancho Foothills Lead Organizer

(951) 768-4461

dawnskey@yahoo.com

International Camp Staff Opportunities

<http://www.usagso-na.org/camp.php>

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End Notes

¹ Daly, Mary. Gyn/Ecology, 1.

* All citations of Mary Daly are from Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism unless stated otherwise.

Preface: A Brief Girl Scout Synopsis

² Junior Girl Scout Handbook, 6. Girl Scout Promise:

On my honor, I will try:

To serve God* and my country,
To help people at all times,
And to live by the Girl Scout Law.

*The Girl Scouts see the word "God" as subject to interpretation and allow Scouts to substitute in any word that they may be comfortable with that describes a higher power.

³ Junior Girl Scout Handbook, 6. Girl Scout Law:

I will do my best to be

honest and fair,
friendly and helpful,
considerate and caring,
courageous and strong, and
responsible for what I say and do,

and to

respect myself and others,
respect authority,
use resources wisely,
make the world a better place, and
be a sister to every Girl Scout.

Introduction: "Be a Sister to Every Girl Scout"

⁴ Daisy is the first level of Girl Scouting. Girls ages five to six years old usually become Daisy Scouts at the same time that they begin kindergarten.

Methods: Internship as an Activist Volunteer

⁵ Harding, Sandra, 3-4.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ University of Redlands 2007-2009 Course Catalogue, 272.

⁸ Daly, Mary, 23.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Behar, Ruth, 4.

¹¹ Menchu, Rigoberta, xii.

¹² WMST 180.04 Student Proposed Internship

¹³ "be-ing" is Mary Daly's term for the participation in traditions to use the word being as a stagnant intransitive verb, she rewrites being as be-ing to show is act as "participation in being" as opposed to non-being. Beyond God the Father, 34.

¹⁴ Daly, Mary, 23. Emphasis added.

¹⁵ Girl Scouts of the USA. "Transforming the Girl Scout Movement," 1.

Informative Research Sources

¹⁶ Pipher, Mary, PhD., 38.

¹⁷ Impett, Emily, 132.

¹⁸ Ibid., 131.

¹⁹ Dicker, Rory and Alison Piepmeier, 5.

²⁰ Ibid., 124.

²¹ Ibid., 84.

²² Baumgardner, Jennifer and Amy Richards, 22.

²³ Ibid., xix.

²⁴ Daly, Mary, 357.

²⁵ Pipher, Mary, 44.

Personal Feminist Perspective

²⁶ Reuther, Rosemary Radford. Sexism and God-Talk, 18-19.

²⁷ "Patriarchy." Encarta World English Dictionary. 2001.

Critical Areas for Analysis in Girl Scouts

²⁸ Pipher, Mary, 62.

²⁹ Girl Scout Research Institute, 18.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ "Autonomy." Encarta World English Dictionary. 2001.

³² Pipher, Mary, 68.

³³ Girl Scouts of the USA. Implementing the Democratic Process, 9.

³⁴ Junior Girl Scout Handbook, 8.

³⁵ Girl Scouts of the USA. Essential Elements of a Girl Scout Corporation, 12.

³⁶ Girl Scout Research Institute, 14.

³⁷ Daly, Mary, 18.

³⁸ Historically, it is difficult to say when the use of the terminology of the Girl Scout movement came into being. In the 1970s Scouting was particularly progressive, hiring the first African American president of the company, Gloria D. Scott. However, the use of the term is applied to the historical path the Scouting has taken, and not to one particular change in time or place.

Southern California Girl Scouting: My Experience

³⁹ For a complete calendar of all events and meetings with Troop 1148 and other neighborhood functions see section VII of this portfolio entitled "Experience with Troop 1148: Personal Volunteer Calendar." (January-June).

Annual Council Meeting: Working the Business

⁴⁰ Girl Scouts Spanish Trails Council. Bylaws, 1.

⁴¹ Lorane Dick. Speech at Annual meeting.

⁴² Norton, Frank.

⁴³ Lorane Dick. Speech at Annual meeting.

⁴⁴ Rittmeyer, Brian, C.

⁴⁵ Girl Scouts Spanish Trails Council. Make it a Hit, 14.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ The remaining \$1.01 goes toward the cost of cookie production and the prizes girls receive for participating in the sale.

Rancho Foothills Leader Meeting: Styles that Reign Supreme

⁴⁸ I have decided not to use this person's real name, because I do not mean to draw a personal critique upon her, but to provide an example of a prominent mindset that exists amongst some volunteers within the organization.

⁴⁹ The Bronze Award is the highest achievement for Junior Girl Scouts. Similar in nature to the Gold Award, which is for Senior Girl Scouts, achievement of this award means that the Scouts have participated in a community service project and completed at least four badges pertaining to that project. This particular event was also a Bridging Ceremony, in which the Scouts were passing on from Junior Scouts to Cadet Scouts.

⁵⁰ Clark, Donald.

⁵¹ Girl Scout Research Institute, 9.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Albino, Judith and Toy Caldwell-Colbert.

⁵⁴ Harding, Sandra, 2-3.

⁵⁵ Narayan, Uma, 26.

International Day: Look-ism as a Public Performance

⁵⁶ Minor, Vernon Hyde, 163.

⁵⁷ Pipher, Mary, PhD., 25.

⁵⁸ Daly, 19.

“Creative Solutions:” Badge Project with Troop 1148

⁵⁹ Pipher, Mary, PhD., 40-41.

*Mary Daly also references this idea in Beyond God the Father, (pages 92-95). Daly sighting the omission of women from historical acknowledgment and participation in the canon as “The Great Silence,” “I point to this phenomenon of the wiping out of women’s contributions within the context of patriarchal history because it means that we must consciously develop a new sense of pride and confidence, with full knowledge of these mechanisms...” (93).

⁶⁰ Ibid., 41.

⁶¹ Ibid., 40.

Concluding Remarks: Is Scouting a 21st Century Feminism?

⁶² Davis, Olena Katytiak. From the poem “In Defense of Marriage.” Wisconsin, 1997, 58.

⁶³ Narayan, Uma, 7.

⁶⁴ Girl Scouts of the USA. “Transforming the Girl Scout Movement.” 1.

⁶⁵ Girl Scouts of the USA. Implementing the Democratic Process In Girl Scouting, 10. “We declare that the democratic way of life the democratic process shall guide all our activities.”

⁶⁶ Lorane Dick. Speech at Annual meeting.

⁶⁷ Pipher, Mary. 64.

⁶⁸ Garren, Cindy.

Annotated Bibliography

Baumgardner, Jennifer and Amy Richards. Grassroots: A Field Guide for Feminist Activism. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005.

Grassroots attempts to clear the air for young women who have yet to realize that their passions should not be divided. As the Resource Guide provided in the book's Appendix shows, there are many points of entry into a feminist/activist world. The book argues that anyone can be an activist. To become one, ask the question "what can I do to help?"¹ Baumgardner and Richards create an inclusive atmosphere for feminism encouraging young women of all different points of view to feel power in calling themselves feminists; for example they lay such perimeters as "you can be pro-life and be a feminist, but you couldn't actively undermine another woman's ability to have an abortion and call yourself a feminist."² Whether or not I would argue in favor or against Baumgardner's and Richards' definition of a feminist, I do think the book provides a positive outlook for young feminists. Grassroots addresses crucial questions about the connections between feminism and activism by linking the two: "When people express confusion about feminism or discomfort with the label, it is because feminism is presented as a concept or a theory and not action and experience. Activism and feminism aren't different concepts."³ In addition, Grassroots provides a helpful working definition of an activist, a definition that is best suited toward young girls: "An activist is anyone who accesses the resource that he or she has as an individual for the benefit of the common good."⁴ Grassroots lays the grounding I want to have in activism for my research, giving me access to concepts that are both realistic by academic standards and useful to the young girls with whom I will be working. For my field work

¹ Baumgardner, Jennifer and Amy Richards. Grassroots: A Field Guide for Feminist Activism. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005, xvii.

² *Ibid.*, 20.

³ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xix.

especially, a self-actualizing, positive outlook on activism is the best possible teaching ethic I could have for working with the troop. I have not decided yet if I will bring up feminism in my work with troop.

Daly, Mary. Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.

Gyn/Ecology is not easily summarized in one sentence. The book's central theme is discovering the continued history of violence against women, but the book's aspirations stretch far beyond a mere cultural analysis. They are cosmic. Among discourse on other topics such as the naming process, women's distaff, and Hag-ocracy, Gyn/Ecology is, "by and about women amazing all the male-authored 'sciences and womankind,' and weaving world tapestries *of our own kind*. That is, it is about dis-covering, de-veloping the complex web of living/loving relationships *of our own kind*. It is about women living, loving, creative our Selves, our cosmos."⁵ No one can really say it better than Daly herself.

Although, I have decided to focus my research on the Girl Scout organization, I still find a great interest in the language of the Girl Scouts and of feminism. From the ways in which the corporate bylaws are worded to the Girl Scout Promise, there are varying degrees of neutral and feminist-forward language. Mary Daly's work with language has not only been thought provoking for me it has been inspiring, near life-changing. Daly says we must "dispel the language of phallocracy."⁶ Her voice is adamant, courageous, and fun. She is not afraid to use pun to drive home her emphasis, and she has the disarming ability to put some of my own unarticulated thoughts and feelings into eloquent words. Her ideas are not only radical, they are

⁵ Daly, Mary. Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978, 11.

⁶ Ibid., 4.

necessary, and even though Gyn/Ecology was published in 1978 I find it to be very well suited to me. Due to time constraints, I do not intend to read Gyn/Ecology from cover to cover for this project, what I have read opens my mind to new ways of writing about my topic. I read Mary Daly because I am inspired by her determination to un-paralyze the American English language and to expose words that are routed in the worse kinds of “stag-nation.”⁷ In my research paper, I do not intend to use Daly’s new language explicitly, but certainly reading her work has caused me to think very carefully of my word choices and to be mindful of my voice. She shows me that sometimes we have to throw our cautions to the wind and let them go howling down the interstate, we have to be brave in our writing and in our Selves to let our true meaning come across. I am including Daly in my annotated bibliography because this semester and this project has been about exploring myself, and asking myself what difference I intend to imply to the world. How I will be a feminist leader, and what contributions I will make. Mary Daly asks me to be fearless. The more I read of her work, the more I feel the fear less.

Dicker, Rory and Alison Piepmeier, Eds. Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century. Lebanon: Northeastern University Press, 2003.

Catching a Wave deals with feminism in the 21st century, it is a collection of essays introduced and compiled by Dicker and Piepmeier. In their introduction, Dicker and Piepmeier discuss the popular forms that feminism takes today. They say that young women have more options in their lives than ever before; that young women seem sure they won’t experience sexism.⁸ In response Dicker and Piepmeier call upon young women to “wake up and recognize the inequalities and figure out what we can do to redress the balance.”⁹ The introduction also

⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁸ Dicker, Rory and Alison Piepmeier, Eds. Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century. Lebanon: Northeastern University Press, 2003, 3.

⁹ Ibid., 4.

provides some definition of the second and third waves. However controversial among feminists, it is important for my research to explore what the titles of 'second wave' and 'third wave' might mean, and their potential impact on young girls. Dicker and Piepmeier present the second wave as a more active, radical movement of women and show concern over the third wave's apparent lack of up-rising. The organization of the entire book is based on their belief that consciousness-raising is one of the primary concerns of feminists today:

Typically, the third wave is thought of as a younger generation's feminism, one that rejects traditional—or stereotypical—understandings of feminism and as such is antithetical or oppositional to its supposed predecessor, the second wave. The feminism we claim; however, aligns itself with second wave strategies for recognizing and addressing structural inequalities.¹⁰

The book is separated into five parts with multiple essays appearing in each. The sections are: Needing Feminism, Coming to Feminism, Recognizing Feminism, Redefining Feminism, and Doing Feminism.

The essays of this book that I have chosen are: "Reviving Lolita; or, Because Junior High is Still Hell," by Alyssa Harad, and "Voices and Visions: A Mother and Daughter Discussing Coming to Feminism and Being Feminist," by Roxanne Harde and Erin Harde. Both essays are helpful in exploring the juncture and separations between second and third wave feminism. Roxanne Harde says, "The boundary between the second and third waves is an indistinct blur rather than a clear break."¹¹ It is important for me to note the current definitions and ranges of feminism in the 21st century because I want to be clear on the color pallet that young women today are approaching, the spectrum of colors from which they will be able to paint their lives. I often ask myself, if I am a third wave feminist. I do not believe that I am. If the waves are looked at purely on a generational basis, then I think of the third wave as my older sister's generation, she is in her late thirties, I am only twenty-one, there are sixteen years between us, and although

¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹¹ Ibid., 124.

we are great friends, we look at the world in completely different ways. Despite the waves, Harad makes the point that “at the beginning of the 21st century no sound-bite version of ‘what feminist think’ or ‘what feminism is’ exists.”¹²

At this point I am not certain how much of my research on the waves of feminism will make it into my final paper, but I have found reading Catching a Wave to be very helpful for my research in expanding my mind and helping me ask questions that better place my concerns within the context of what other feminist scholars have expressed. In addition, all of the debates, worries, analysis, and definitions presented in this book lend to a great view of feminism in the 21st century and helps me shape my thoughts about it. If I do decide to bring up feminism with the Girl Scouts, knowing the answers to such questions as, “well, what do feminists do today?” will be very important.

Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. Essential Elements of a Girl Scout Corporation.
New York: First Impression, 1999.

Essential Elements provides a detailed accounting of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America’s corporate systems. As a registered national not-for-profit corporation, GSUSA participates in a national political and business scene. One of my original questions in researching the Girl Scouts was whether or not the corporation is looking out for girls on an individual level, and if the ideals of the corporation actually serve young girls. Essential Elements has been—for lack of a better word—essential in my research because it has been a source for detailed corporate policies and standards. First, the pamphlet describes the council charter which “defines the relationships between a council and Girl Scouts of the USA. It binds the elements of Girl Scouting across the nation into one large and cohesive Girl Scout movement

¹² Dicker, Rory and Alison Piepmeier, Eds., 84.

and gives it a common purpose.”¹³ This quote is of especial interest for me because of its particular language. It speaks of the charter as that which “binds the elements.” At first, I read this as a contractual binding, but the way the word is used echoes a scientific binding as if that of hydrogen and oxygen. Secondly, the phrase “Girl Scout movement” is very common in literature produced by GSUSA. The phrase echoes that of the women’s movement, and aligns Girl Scouts creating something to move toward instead of laying down static roots. The main purpose of the council charter is to “develop, manage, and maintain”¹⁴ Girl Scouting.

The literature on policies describes the reason for policies and their purpose. The language of this section is stacked with juxtaposing command and finesse. For example, policies “permit uniformity and consistency of action throughout the council,”¹⁵ while at the same time work to “answer a recurring question”.¹⁶ In addition, policies “remain in force until specifically replaced or revised”,¹⁷ but “*Because they are binding, policies that are restrictive should be kept to a minimum.*”¹⁸ I believe here the difficulty of corporation and a youth-centered group butt heads. The corporation is in place to serve the girls, but at the same time it must appease the business world by applying and following certain rules to retain its status as a non-profit organization. The issue comes about in the challenge of “clearly delineating” the way Girl Scout activities should be run without being too limiting to the possibilities.¹⁹ A final theme that is present in the Essential Elements is the importance of consistency. Consistency is mentioned on nearly every page of the pamphlet and is a goal and a purpose of nearly every system of the corporation, from the charter, to the standards. Standards are not strict rules, but “levels to strive

¹³ Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. Essential Elements of a Girl Scout Corporation. New York: First Impression, 1999, 12. Emphasis Added.

¹⁴ Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., 12.

¹⁵ Ibid., 14.

¹⁶ Ibid., 15.

¹⁷ Ibid., 14.

¹⁸ Ibid., 15. Emphasis not added, is quoted as appears in text.

¹⁹ Ibid., 16.

for and are more flexible than policies,” they “help people achieve effective results through consistent action.”²⁰

The light at the end of the tunnel is that GSUSA is aware of its influence, the liberating and limiting potentials. GSUSA’s laws try to create an open and welcoming environment: “the Girl Scout movement ‘shall ever be open to all girls and adults who accept the GS Promise and Law’.”²¹ While the policies and standards in the corporate handbook also attempt to encourage an open-process that gains the support of its membership before decision-making. I will end with a quote from Essential Elements that shows explicitly that GSUSA is taking into account their influence, “Council delegates should truly feel that the contributions they make influence the direction of the council and have some impact on the lives of girls.”²²

Faludi, Susan. Backlash. “Introduction: Blame it on Feminism.” Feminism in Our Time: The Essential Writings World War II to Present. Ed. Miriam Schneir. New York: Vintage Books, 1994. 454-468.

While working on an outline of the background research for 21st century feminism, I realized I may want to explore whether or not we are currently experiencing a backlash. With every great advance in women’s rights there has come a great backlash, but I needed to know more than that. I stumbled upon Susan Faludi’s work in my feminist reader, Feminism in Our Time. Although Faludi is writing about the backlash experienced in the 1980s, many of her points are relevant in 2007. The definition of backlash that Faludi creates is a good place to start: “The truth is that the last decade has seen a powerful counterassault on women’s rights, a backlash, an attempt to retract the handful of small and hard-won victories that the feminist

²⁰ Ibid., 17.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., 20.

movement did manage to win for women.”²³ Some of the counterassault that Faludi refers to still continues today with struggles over reproductive rights. Certainly, as Faludi points out, the wages of women in the work place are still unequal to those of men when Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton feels it necessary to include equal wages for women as one of her platform issues for the 2008 party primaries. Also, working to understand backlash has helped me think about the waves of feminism and identify areas of grey in between. It seems that *between* the generational outlines of the second wave and the third waves comes this full-throttle counterassault on women’s rights.

Faludi’s analysis works hard at answering the question of why backlash?

These outbreaks are backlashes because they have always arisen in reaction to women’s ‘progress’, caused not simple by a bedrock of misogyny but by the specific efforts of contemporary women to improve their status efforts that have been interrupted time and again by men—especially men grappling with real threats to their economic and social well-being on other fronts—as spelling their own masculine doom.²⁴

Even still, Faludi claims that backlash is not a conspiracy,²⁵ as she understands it to be procreated by mostly male fear over women’s advancements. One of the reasons for such severe backlash, she says, is usually set off because the possibility of reaching the full equality for women becomes possible.²⁶ I believe that feminists today are working hard toward their goals and are not hindered by an overwhelming backlash; however, I do think it is more difficult if one is just coming to feminism. Young girls, for example, are faced with many stereotypes about what a feminist is, usually ending up with the bitch/feminist coda that not only distorts women who are feminists, but also reveals deeper distortions of the images girls receive of themselves. When working with the Girl Scouts a clear understanding of feminism is important, but more than that

²³ Faludi, Susan. Backlash. “Introduction: Blame it on Feminism.” Feminism in Our Time: The Essential Writings World War II to Present. Ed. Miriam Schneir. New York: Vintage Books, 1994, 462.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 463.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 466.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 464.

a clear understanding of themselves is the true struggle. Whether we ever discuss feminism or not, it is a hope of mine that I can help the girls navigate the intense political and social stratification they will face as growing adolescents. I remember when I was growing up in the late 80s and 90s that I believed in the bitch/feminist coda, as Faludi says, I grew up in a time where “Identifying feminism as women’s enemy only furthered the ends of backlash.”²⁷ And like many women, even today, I didn’t believe there was anything left to fight for. As Faludi opens her first chapter with all the “victories” won by women and portrayed in the news she points out the underlying dogma of the media attentiveness to women’s *victory* that I, as a girl, never truly noticed (but did on occasion feel): “you may be free and equal now...but you have never been more miserable.”²⁸

Lopez, Kathryn Jean. “The Cookie Crumbles: The Girl Scouts go PC.” *National Review*. October 23, 2000.

“The Cookie Crumbles” is an anti-Girl Scout news piece written for Right wing conservatives who read the *National Review*. Ironically, despite the articles condemning tone, the factoids offered in it have been very helpful in my research, making me aware of different issues and accomplishments achieved by GSUSA and the time frame in which they occurred. The article aims to ridicule the Girl Scouts for not following in the footsteps of the Boy Scouts, who in recent history have fallen into controversy for their anti-homosexual policies and conservative religious fervour. In addition, the article claims the goal of the Girl Scout leaders is to fill the world with liberal feminists. It claims that the Girl Scouts have surrendered to “cultural forces” in hopes of becoming a more socially accepted organization.²⁹ At the same time, however, the

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 462.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 455.

²⁹ Lopez, Kathryn Jean. “The Cookie Crumbles: The Girl Scouts go PC”. *National Review*. October 23, 2000, ¶1.

article seeks to point out all of the ways the Girl Scouts are not politically correct. For example, they allow programs to be run in support of Gay Lesbian alliances who aim to teach Girl Scouts and their leaders to be more inclusive, the article quotes a spokesperson from Massachusetts where such programs have been held, she says the purpose of the program is “to educate us about overcoming barriers that may exist in our organization and instilling a culture that is inviting to all girls.”³⁰ Also, the article points out that the Senior Girl Scout Handbook encourages girls to “organize an event to make people aware of gender biases” or “help organize an Earth Day celebration”³¹ and with a tone of horror equates these programs to “Girl Scouts’ leaders hope to make their youthful charges the shock troops of an ongoing feminist revolution.”³² Aside from being entertaining in its ridiculousness, the article cites years in which revolutionary events have taken place in Girl Scout history, such as in 1993 when saying “God” in the Girl Scout Promise became optional.³³ And interestingly this article makes an illusion to Mary Pipher’s Reviving Ophelia, because this is one of my other sources I thought it may be relevant to include the quote as a possible door to further thinking on my critique of Mary Pipher’s work: “Victimization is central to the Girl Scout world view, as the organization continues to propagate the now discredited notion that the nation’s girls are a tribe of desperate Ophelias.”³⁴

*article citations will be tracked by paragraph instead of page number

³⁰ Ibid., ¶10.

³¹ Ibid., ¶5.

³² Ibid., ¶1.

³³ Ibid., ¶2.

³⁴ Ibid., ¶7.

Impett, Emily A., Deborah Schooler, and Deborah Tolman. "To Be Seen and Not Heard: Femininity Ideology and Adolescent Girls' Sexual Health." Archives of Sexual Behaviour 35.2 (2006): 131-144.

"To Be Seen and Not Heard" deals primarily with adolescent "sexual decision making."³⁵

The main point of the article is to study the links between the effect of relationships on girls and their sexual experiences. The article claims that inauthenticity in relationships where girls silence their own needs to reduce conflict is a cause of unsafe sexual behaviour.³⁶ The author's use results from their detailed study conducted on adolescent girls to support their thesis. Although I have decided not to bring sexual experiences into my research at this time, this article raises an issue that I have yet to explore: the trappings of femininity. "To Be Seen and Not Heard" states, "Girls experience immense pressure to behave in feminine ways, both in their own relationships with other people and in their relationships with their own bodies,"³⁷ making it clear that the expectations of femininity pressure girls to behave a certain way. For my purposes, I see this floating unnamed "pressure" serving as a crucial piece of the patriarchy. Further, the article states that "requisite knowledge" is needed for a girl to protect herself from such unwanted sexual experiences such as transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancy.³⁸ Likewise, I see that requisite knowledge of the patriarchy is needed for young girls to better see the truth of the pressures applied to them as girls, to better understand their hidden feelings and why they may feel un-free to express them.

³⁵ Impett, Emily A., Deborah Schooler, and Deborah Tolman. "To Be Seen and Not Heard: Femininity Ideology and Adolescent Girls' Sexual Health." Archives of Sexual Behaviour 35.2 (2006), 132.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 131.

³⁸ Ibid.

Narayan, Uma. Dislocating Cultures/Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism. New York: Routledge, 1997.

I have quoted Uma Narayan in the proposal for my research project as the epigraph to the section on my research.

Feminists all over the world need to be suspicious of locally prevalent pictures of 'national identity' and 'national traditions'...because they are used to privilege the views and values of certain parts of the heterogeneous national population...³⁹

This quote is useful to me because it explains my initial feeling towards the Girl Scout organization. As I go deeper and deeper into my work with the Girl Scouts, and the troop's positive influence and atmosphere, I want to remind myself that my original intent was to know whether or not GSUSA is a safe place for young girls to develop. I do not want my analysis of the organization to become a glowing praise-filled ode to scouting, but a purposeful critique of girls' options, girls' lives, and girls' choices. Narayan's quote stimulates me because it points to "nationally prevalent" pictures of identity which I believe the Girl Scouts to be. Being suspicious of the organization seems to be my duty as a researcher and a feminist.

Pipher, Mary, PH.D. Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls. New York: Riverhead Books, 1994.

Reviving Ophelia's primary objective is to confirm the struggles young girls face when they enter adolescence. Pipher's argument centers on a disappointment in culture (a loosely defined term that tries to initiate a blaming of the patriarchy). The analysis done in Reviving Ophelia was one of the first of its kind to validate the struggles of young girls and to name some of the battles they face. Pipher argues that adolescent girls are pressured to split into true selves and false selves, because the culture cannot accept them as fully actualized individuals.⁴⁰ The

³⁹ Narayan, Uma. Dislocating Cultures/Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism. New York: Routledge, 1997, 35.

⁴⁰ Pipher, Mary, PH.D. Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls. New York: Riverhead Books,

repercussions of the unaddressed issues of adolescence effect women whose unanswered adolescent questions about themselves carry over into their adults lives. Questions such as: “How important are looks or popularity? How do I care for myself and not be selfish? How can I be honest and still be loved? How can I achieve and not threaten others? How can I be sexual and not a sex object?”⁴¹ Carry over from adolescent girlhood into adulthood with especial repercussions for girls who are unable to retain their true self and who are less perceptive to the restraints culture has placed on them.

But the stakes are high for adolescent girls. Pipher points out that the decision to be true to herself can ostracize a girl from her peers, while rejecting the true self can make her more socially acceptable.⁴² Understanding the maelstrom young girls exist in is an important aspect of my research and field work with the Girl Scouts. When I was young, I encountered many of the extremely gut-wrenching experiences that Pipher’s research exposes as common-place for most adolescents. Pipher’s work is relevant in that it not only gives credit to girls for their perseverance; it encourages adults both male and female to acknowledge the anomalies of adolescence.

Reading Reviving Ophelia has given me insight into areas of the adolescent experience that I may not have considered before, at the same time the book has given me a way of thinking ahead about my communication with my Girl Scout troop. For example, Pipher notes that “What girls say about gender and power issues depends on how they are asked. When I ask adolescent girls if they are feminists, most say no. To them, feminism is a dirty word, like communism or fascism. But if I ask if they believe men and women should have equal rights, they say yes.”⁴³

1994, 22.

⁴¹ Ibid., 25.

⁴² Ibid., 38.

⁴³ Ibid., 41.

The stigma of feminism for young girls rises in other sources such as Reviving Lolita by Alyssa Harad—whose title is an allusion to Pipher’s work. The question of discussing feminism with the troop arises again and again as I annotate my sources. As a feminist, I think it would be difficult for me to see the girls move on to adolescence with the bitch/feminist stereotype. It would require conversation and communication between us to overcome the patriarchal-induced stigma.

Although I appreciate Pipher’s work and have gained insight from reading it, I am not without critique. Her argument resonates with me, but I worry about her packaging. She speaks often in generalizations, referring to girls as if they were the amassed group of capital “G” Girls. She does not address race or class issues in her research, which is a problem because at a time of social development such as adolescence race and class are explicit issues. Also, I am frustrated with Pipher’s “blame the culture” mantra, not because I defend the culture, but because I do not know what exactly she means by “culture.” Pipher fails to fully define the “culture” she is using for her argument. I think she is reaching for a critique of the media-driven patriarchy which mass produces negative images for and of young girls, but her argument lacks a grounded definition. Pipher allows other women to make her critique of patriarchy for her, such as Simone de Beauvoir whom she says, “believed adolescence is when girls realize that men have the power and that their only power comes from consenting to become submissive adored objects.”⁴⁴ Somewhere in the back of my mind I keep wondering if Pipher is afraid to point the finger at patriarchy, and because culture is a much more elusive, murky term, she uses it to keep her argument both safe and confused.

⁴⁴ Pipher, Mary, 21.

Rittmeyer, Brian C. '5 Girl Scout councils will merge.' McClatchy - Tribune Business News 30 October 2007. ABI/INFORM Dateline. ProQuest. University of Redlands, Armacost Library. 16 Oct 2007 <<http://0-www.proquest.com.library.uor.edu:80/>>

"Top 25 Women in Business: Cindy Garren, Driving Girl Scouts into the 21st Century." Northeast Pennsylvania Business Journal 1 March 2006: 43. ABI/INFORM Dateline. ProQuest. University of Redlands, Armacost Library. 16 Oct 2007 <<http://0-www.proquest.com.library.uor.edu:80/>>

I have listed these two articles together because my interest in them centers on the same issue, and being such short articles I thought they were more effectively placed together. The issue at hand is the nation-wide restructuring that GSUSA is currently performing. The restructure, which is also referred to as "realignment" in some literature⁴⁵ and a transformation in others,⁴⁶ started in 2006 and is scheduled to end in 2009.⁴⁷ The primary objective of the restructuring is to reduce the number of councils from 312 to 109 nation-wide.⁴⁸ A spokesperson from a Manhattan council is quoted in the Rittmeyer article, "Girl Scouts USA is trying to create a high-capacity Girl Scout experience. Before the realignment, there had been some inequity."⁴⁹ However, it is unclear exactly what kind of inequity occurred, as she goes on to say "By realigning, a girl in a farm town in Iowa will have the same Girl Scouting experience as someone in midtown Manhattan," I am curious at this statement because it seems to me that the needs of a girl in farm-town Iowa would differ slightly from those of a girl in Manhattan. I have not yet been able to glean from these articles whether or not the restructuring will better serve each individual girl, although that seems to be the intent. Another council CEO quoted in the Rittmeyer article says, "Our goal through this realignment is to have the girls remain unaffected until we have more to

⁴⁵ Rittmeyer, Brian C. '5 Girl Scout councils will merge.' McClatchy - Tribune Business News 30 October 2007, ¶5.

⁴⁶ "Top 25 Women in Business: Cindy Garren, Driving Girl Scouts into the 21st Century." Northeast Pennsylvania Business Journal 1 March 2006, ¶2.

⁴⁷ Rittmeyer, Brian, ¶5.

⁴⁸ Rittmeyer, Brian, ¶5.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

offer them.⁵⁰ While yet another CEO says that this event is a “historic transformation” for the Girl Scouts. This research is important to my project because it is a current review of Girl Scout affairs. I know that the Spanish Trails Council of which my troop is a part is merging with the San Gregorio council next year. At this time the repercussions for the councils are unclear, on the troop leader level not many people seem to know explicit details of the merge, this gives me an opportunity to ask questions about it at the Council and Neighborhood meetings I will attend next semester. The issue of a restructuring merger is very relevant to my research because it raises the question of the corporate structure caring for the individual girl. I hope in my field work I will be able to get a better understanding of what a “high-capacity Girl Scout experience” might be.⁵¹

Girl Scout Research Institute. Exploring Girls’ Leadership: Research Review. New York: Girl Scouts of USA, 2007.⁵²

Exploring Girls’ Leadership is a comprehensive review of the current research done on girls and leadership. The goal of this review and of other GSRI publications is to “develop program and policy, and contribute to the dialogue about what it takes to grow and sustain girls’ and boys’ leadership aspirations through adulthood.”⁵³ The review considers reasons why youth leadership is important, the processes that boys and girls identify with when taking on leadership roles, and strategies for successful leadership for girls in single-sex organizations. The review ends with ideas for further research.

⁵⁰ “Top 25 Women in Business,” ¶8.

⁵¹ Rittmeyer, Brain. ¶5.

⁵² I am putting this source last because its conclusions draw a nice conclusion to the thought process that has existed throughout my bibliography

⁵³ Girl Scout Research Institute. Exploring Girls’ Leadership: Research Review. New York: Girl Scouts of USA, 2007, 23.

One of the most interesting things about this source is its language. Where in other GSUSA publications such as Essential Elements the language was at times legal jargon or feminist-echoed, the language in Exploring Girls' Leadership is less varied. Almost all of it is promotes a feminist framework for girls' work in leadership. For example, the review summates that "For adults to be open to youth participation they often need to change the lens through which they view youth and their potential."⁵⁴ And later in the review the word "feminist" is actually used! Adapted from *The New Girls' Movement: Charting the Path*: Collaborative Fund for healthy Girls/Healthy Women by the Ms. Foundation, the review cites a chart of Leadership Development Approaches where the first sector is titled: "Voice/culture, Ideology: Cultural/Feminist."⁵⁵ More than just a small victory in word-play, the section lists the strategies for Voice/Culture as: "reclaiming voice, politicizing perspective on dominant culture, and opportunity," and the outcomes as: "self-empowerment, sense of possibility, personal development, community leadership, and reclamation of culture/society."⁵⁶ The information excites me because it acknowledges a whole batch of feminist thoughts that have been central to my research on the Girl Scout organization. Some of those thoughts being very specifically "perspectives on dominant culture" and "reclamation of culture/society."

As a research review, Exploring Girls' Leadership is not designed in a traditional manner, following a thesis, therefore summarizing the pamphlet is difficult; instead, I will point to one other section that held especial interest for me and my research. In surveying young girls, research cited in the review states that "Only slightly more than a third of girls (36%) are interested in being a leader when they are older."⁵⁷ Later, in the "Further Research" section the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

“Aspirational Gap” is introduced as a “disconnect between girls who see themselves as leaders today and their future leadership aspirations.”⁵⁸ I see these two ideas to be intimately linked. The review purposes further study on why girls who become leaders as adolescents and teenagers feel that they will not be leaders as adults? I propose that somewhere in the implicit experience of being a girl in the patriarchy the message comes across that girls no matter what your aspiration is, your goals for future and career, must all come to an end someday because you must settled down, get married to a man, and raise children. Without drawing the direct link, the review later lists a section on the further research of “young women, career paths, and derailment.”⁵⁹ It states, “Some girls and young women today have seen their mothers and other women in their lives reach high levels of educational and career success and then “opt out” or get “pushed out” of the workforce when it comes time to raise a family.”⁶⁰ Clearly, there are many messages being transmitted to girls at a young age about what they are capable of and how their futures will look. For the sake of my research, I think that an experience in leadership such as Girl Scouting is a positive way to encounter act the invisible pressure of patriarchy, but I also feel responsible as a feminist to work to expose the patriarchy and bring light to the messages girls receive but do not know how to translate and speak out against. I feel that young girls are being caught up in the crossfire of someone else’s war. Perhaps this is at the very core of my motivations to do this project. I remember thinking all the time about what my life would be like. For a long time I believed that I could be a writer and have a career, but I always thought about that day when I’d have to stop my career—I thought I’d better gain success quickly—because somewhere around age thirty it all had to come to an end. I knew at some point I would have to rejoin the patriarchy

⁵⁸ Girl Scout Research Instituted, 21.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 22.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

and have a family, I knew this mostly because I was told that this is what would make me happy.

Ironic.

Experiences with Troop 1148

Internship Journal

January 8, 2008

First meeting

Tonight was our first troop meeting. One girl was absent and another arrived late; therefore, I met (or re-met) almost all of the girls. Although they all live in a middle class neighborhood they all come from diverse backgrounds. Kelly⁶¹ is in 5th grade, she is Korean most of her parents' families still live in Korea. She hyperactive most of the time, and plays many different sports. Erica is also in 5th grade, she is the tallest of the group. She comes from a wealthy family with a working dad and stay at-home mom. Mostly, she is quiet, reserved, and polite. Christina is African American and is the most fashionable of the group, what strikes her clothing style and attitude. Her mom and dad both work corporate jobs and she has one older brother. Christina is interesting, the other girls point to her often when it comes to those who gossip and spread rumors, her personality seems to be a bit cattie, but she is usually bright and upbeat. Yvette is Latina and speaks Spanish at home. It is clear that she enjoys talking, especially at moments when she thinks she will get the most attention. Brienne is daughter to one of the other troop leaders, she is often quieter than all the others, but during our group activity tonight she seemed to exude bottled up energy. She wears glasses and has a round belly and short stature, she sometimes acts very self-conscious. Allison is my niece; even though I've known her since birth but working with her in the group adds a new level to our relationship. She is the tiniest of the group, some girls are eleven and some ten—she is ten, but still exceptionally petite for her age. Her personality in the group is almost meek, although when prompted to talk she usually articulates herself well. It is possible that because her mom leads the troop and now her aunt co-leads she tries harder to be well-behaved. Finally, Melissa is the newest troop member (beside

⁶¹ For personal safety, I am using pseudonyms for the girls in the troop.

me) she has olive skin and long black wavy hair, her mother speaks a Portuguese accent. Melissa is soft spoken and almost never speaks out of turn.

Tonight, while the other two leaders pulled girls aside one by one to finish other projects I sat with all the girls and discussed with them creating a code of conduct. To my surprise, all of the girls were responsive to the exercise and it became a great chance for me to discuss aspects of Girl Scouting with the girls, such as being a sister to every Girl Scout and respecting ourselves and our leaders. The other leaders were especially impressed with my repartee with the troop. Great first meeting.

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January 15, 2008

Second meeting

Tonight was my second night with the troop. First, we went over cookie sales information. This was interesting to me because it expressed the ideas money management, consumerism, and fundraising to the girls. Although, the question was raised about why the girls have to sell so many boxes (200 each girl, pre-sale, that is: before they even have boxes in hand) in order to see a viable profit. The answer: the troop only makes 65¢ on each \$4 box they sell; about 58¢ goes to the cookie itself and its packaging, and all the rest goes to the council. Needless to say, councils make hundreds of thousands of dollars from cookie sales each year. The general reaction of the girls was of feelings of inequity for the system. Here, I thought, the corporate enterprise of Girl Scouts was having a direct effect on the individualized girls in their reactions to the funds they work hard to receive and in their business partnership as sales representatives of Girl Scouts USA. Pre-sales begin on January 19th. The girls don't seem to understand why council needs all the money that they keep.

Next, I passed out the code of conduct, reviewed it with the group and then we all the

signed it, leaders and girls. Each girl went home with a copy of the code. Finally, we worked on an on-going project where each girl is making her own blanket. This project is part of a previous badge project the girls started in the fall. Soon we will begin preparing for International Day, a weekend fair-like event where troops from all over the Neighborhood have booths showing a county they learned about. Our troop is presenting Brazil, Melissa and her family will be a big help here. Already I have a poetry book by Brazilian poet, Adelia Prado, and CD of Brazilian music, and an art book of Brazilian art to share with the troop. They will also be learning a Brazilian dance to perform on the fair day. This weekend the troop is participating in a Cosmic Bowling overnight program thrown by the Neighborhood we will be locked in a bowling alley from 11pm to 6am with music and black lighting. I have now been fingerprinted, had a background check run and all the paperwork has been completed to make me a volunteer leader. Thus far, I am really enjoying my time with the troop. I am picking up little snippets of talk though, that there are issues within the neighborhood and that the council is poorly run. The general feeling seems to be that the merger of councils happening next year will not be a positive thing, but instead create more chaos and inequity amongst the Neighborhoods and troops. This could have a major effect on the girls.

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January 22, 2008

Third meeting

Tonight was a mellow evening. All of the girls were tired from the weekend's events and so we finished the blankets and discussed our schedule for the coming weeks. Over the weekend was a Neighborhood-wide Cosmic Bowling event where the troop stayed up overnight. The girls bowled and played in the arcade. From an observation standpoint what really caught my attention was the eminence of Girl Scout rules at the event, one of these being the strict

enforcement of dress code. Absolutely no tank tops are allowed at GS events, skirts are measured as well (not at every event, but could be if there was any occasion or question). In addition, young tagalongs, meaning siblings of a certain age (usually leader's daughters) are not allowed for insurance reasons. This was a problem at the bowling event, but no one from the Neighborhood reprimanded the leader in question, they ignored the breach as if there wasn't a three year old running around the alley. However, the tank top rule was in full effect. I've asked about the tank top rule on three separate occasions and each time received a different answer:

- 1) The leaders are not allowed to rub sunscreen on the girls and sleeved shirts cover their shoulders and chests from the sun (although obviously leaves their faces completely exposed).
- 2) Bra straps cannot be showing at Girl Scout events
- 3) They cannot make a rule that says young girls can wear tank tops but older girls cannot—in essence, they do not want young girls to see older girls' breasts.

I find all three of these reasons strange and lacking. All three have come from my sister, our troop's primary leader. And although I do not think her intent is to lie, it seems as though her three separate answers show that she really doesn't know exactly why the rule exists. This rule in particular interests me because it shows a hint of the corporation attempting to control or to command the bodies of young girls. I wonder if similar rules attempt the same reign over the body, and further, I wonder who creates the rule that says a small child cannot wear a tank top to any event in the height of summer, outdoors, in Southern California?

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January 29, 2008

4th meeting

I've been with the troop for four weeks now and as the newness of the routine wears off I am surrounded by the commonplace aspects of the troop life. One such aspect is represented in the leader-Girl Scout relationship that I have encountered. In one regard, the girls take the authority of the other two leaders more seriously because they are also mothers—a station which grants them authority. However, I notice that as mother-leaders these two women overlook the minutiae of the girls' needs. They do not give the girls the consideration of their age, for example, expecting the girls to give their full attention for an hour at a time while the leaders lecture. When the girls get antsy, the leaders get flabbergasted. But a simple stretch or a quick game would get the group back on track. Also, the leaders do not put much forethought into the delivery of information. Mostly, I think this is a constraint of volunteerism. The leaders often do not have enough time to set up a really extensive agenda for each meeting where each topic is shared in a new and interesting way. This is also a location issue, with the meetings being held in the troop leader's living room.

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February 2-3rd

Weekend Sleepover

This weekend was originally a cabin camping trip, but relocated to a sleepover at a leaders house when the weather was too extreme. It was an opportunity for the troop to get a lot of work accomplished at once. While it was fun, it was also exhausting because the girls were a bit too out of control, rambunctious, and had a hard time staying focused. I think this behavior was caused by many things. Everyone was lax in following of the rules: troop leaders had their other children present, we were only at the troop leader's house, so the illusion of going away

together was broken. Another factor could have been that the troop has not had an event in awhile and the protocol was relaxed. I am realizing that my expectations of the role of leader blend into other aspects of our roles in life more so than I thought they would—the role of aunt, mother, and babysitter all mingle with each other in this group even as the objectives look outward to the world and community the building blocks are as internal as those of a family, or a group of friends, but the goals are different.

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February 5-23th

5th-7th Meeting

& International Day

These weeks we have been preparing the troop for International Day, which was held on February 23rd. The girls have not been putting as much effort into the projects the leaders have planned as we would like. For the first time since the troop's inception there have been some serious disciplinary issues. The girls seem distracted and are not following direction or behaving well during the meetings or events. This issue is interesting to me because I am curious to see how the issues will be dealt with by the leaders. One of the options being discussed right now is to change the meeting schedule to 2 hours every two weeks instead of an hour and half every week. The leaders think that will show the girls that their misbehavior has serious repercussions and give everyone, leaders included, the chance to appreciate the time that the troop has together. This solution is long term; short term solutions have been less easy to decide upon. It seems that scolding the girls is having no effect. I think that the girls have become comfortable within the troop and with the leaders, which is a blessing and a curse. They are now more open to the troop and willing to interact with each other more freely, share parts of themselves and involve themselves in the growing process available to them within the Girl Scout forum; however, with

that comes some talking out of turn, rough housing, and overall ambivalence toward the work at hand. Their lackluster effort disheartens the leaders. This shows how the leaders have (or should have) little self desire in their efforts as leaders, in other words, it is not about the leader, but about the girls and when the girls stop caring the leaders are saddened, for what can they do but give up themselves? The troop is hanging in their however, and hopefully this rough patch will work itself out.

I have also become very aware of the public eye that rests upon the troop. Just this weekend at the International Day fair the girls were warned by the leaders that everyone was watching them, so they should be on their best behavior by not only setting a good example for the younger Girl Scouts who were in attendance, but show the other troop leaders and Neighborhood representatives at the event what a great troop they are. The girls are aware of the attention they get, and they know that they are one of the top performing troops in the Neighborhood. This in part comes from the great involvement of their main leader, Dawn. She has taken on two high level volunteer positions in the Neighborhood and is getting a lot of recognition for her work with the Council. It is interesting how the achievements of the leader bear down on the troop. Despite or in spite of all the added attention the girls performed awesomely at International Day and were rewarded with the top prize for having the best participation in the event for their knowledge of their country, the setup of their booth, and their performance in which they danced the Samba on stage. Still, I wonder about the attention the troop got for their performance and their leader's rising status in the organization. She is not shy in telling them to act well at events and do their best precisely because the pressure is on and others are watching. What kind of repercussions will this have on the girls as they grow? Coming

to understand that people are watching, and in some capacity (just as at this event), secretly judging what they do.

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March 11, 2008

9th Meeting

Tonight was a parent's meeting. We invited the girls' parents to attend our meeting in order to fill them in on our upcoming projects. I think that the original intention of this meeting was to warn the girls that their behavior was not adequate, and their parents would be brought in if they couldn't get themselves under control. Luckily, since they've known we were planning the meeting, their behavior has improved and we didn't have to make discipline top rung on the agenda. Although, it would have been interesting to see the way the troop leaders and parents approached dealing with the issue.

As it was, after all the parents left (all moms), Dawn complained that they would be calling her later. She said that they seem to listen to her, but the problem will come later, they do not like to speak up at the meetings; almost as if they're too shy. I wonder if this is because Dawn is very assertive and direct, possibly the other women view her as intimidating? Although it's interesting that we are teaching the girls to be able to speak up when they have a question and to not be intimidated, their mothers seemed to have missed that lesson. Now I am planning my badge project with the girls, which will become a project of my choosing that I feel ties into my research project and will help round off my time with the troop.

The most interesting moment of the evening, happened after our meeting had ended. Brianne was upset because she was taunted and "kicked out" of her group of friends for speaking up when one of them was unfair to her. Sadly, the leader of this group is in cahoots with one of the other scouts, Christina. Brianne was visibly showing she was displeased, but also a little

disrespectful at the meeting; she was scolded for this, but was also consoled by the troop leaders after Christina had already gone. She was understandably upset at being ostracized by her friends at school. It used to happen to me all the time, that dynamic exists at this age—girls will have a leader. The leader has to make some *other*, to have a scapegoat. Sometimes the scapegoat is a different girl each week, sometimes the same girl again and again. And although that girl is targeted because she is not a good follower, she cannot completely disassociate from the group for fear of complete dismissal from the social scene. These are my thoughts and feelings on my own social situation growing up, feminist psychologist Mary Pipher cites examples of the same experiences among young girls.

In all, I know what Brianne is going through, and worse, I don't know what to tell her to help. I can share my experience with her but how do I tell her that it won't end? I was haunted by that group of girls all the way through high school. They did some serious damage to me. How to save Brianne the same trouble? Not knowing the answer stresses me. Perhaps this is the reason I've been taking on this project. There has to be something I can do to help a girl like Brianne only that help doesn't ever reside on the surface of things.

*

April 8, 2008

Badge Project Meeting

Tonight I organized a two-hour meeting with the girls in order to complete a badge project with them. I chose the "Creative Solutions" project because I saw ways in which the goals of this badge coincided with the aims of my capstone project. With this project the girls were asked to think creatively in a variety of ways. We completed four stations and two group discussions which incorporated a total of six activities for the completion of the badge. The first discussion we had was based on research I had asked the girls to do on four women in history.

With this task each of the girls brought two facts about the lives of Susan B. Anthony, Jane Addams, Ida B. Wells, and Clara Barton. As we discussed these influential women in history, I asked the girls to remember them and think about them throughout the night as they were called upon to think creatively and make decisions. Next, I split the troop into two groups of four (Emily was absent, so we had one group of four and one of three). The groups went between the four stations in fifteen minute increments, the stations were Ordinary/Extraordinary, where the girls were asked to think of seven unique uses for everyday objects such as a sponge, paperclip, spoon, a hair tie, etc. The second group who went to this station asked if the shoebox that the items were stored in also counted as one of the items, and I said yes, glad that the girls were willing to think “outside the box” in this way.

Next, the girls went to a problem solving station called Local/Global where as a group they had to brainstorm one problem in their local community and how that problem might be solved and one problem in the global community and how begin to solve that as well. Girls came up with everything from kids stealing things out of other’s book bags at school to global warming and pollution. They offered suggestions of backpack locks, more recycling, drinking less bottled water, riding their bikes more often, and picking up litter on their school campus. The next station was called Shipwreck Island. The girls were asked to envision themselves shipwrecked on an island with one other person, who would that person be and what five items would you like to have with you on the island? Finally, there was a Chinese Tangram building station where everyone was asked to create their own Chinese Tangram out of construction paper. Later, when I asked the girls what they thought this activity was for they responded that it was to stimulate their minds by playing with a puzzle. The girls understood that it is important to be creative even when the task is to be very logical and mathematical.

Our meeting ended with a group recap of all the stations. This gave me the opportunity to ask the girls what the purposes of the stations were and what critical thinking they had done at each one. We shared the brainstormed ideas that all the girls had made with the entire group. Lastly, I asked them to keep their creative juices flowing as we completed the final task of the evening, which was to create a world of the future. I asked the girls stimulating questions about what the world of the future would be like for them, who would be in charge? Where would kids go to school? To my surprise, our conversation turned to questions about equality. I asked the girls what their future values would be, and they responded with “girls and boys being equal.” Each girl had a different opinion on how the boys at school thought that they were better than the girls, especially at sports. When I asked them why it upset them they said because girls can do what boys can do. I asked them to think back to Susan B. Anthony and women’s suffrage—a term I defined for them earlier in the evening, and we then discussed equality and why it was important to us. To my utter surprise, when I asked the girls if they felt women were treated as equal as men they all said an emphatic “Nooooooo.”

In hindsight, I believe I could take each one of these stations and spend a full two hours exploring each one. After we completed the full badge, I began to realize all the many ways I could incorporate this more fully into their lives. For example, at the “Local/Global” station I could give them specific scenarios such as peer-pressure at school and ask them to discuss solutions.

Personal Volunteer Calendar 2008

<i>Date</i>	<i>Day, Type of Event</i>
January 8	Tuesday, Troop meeting
January 15	Tuesday, Troop meeting
January 20-21	Sunday-Monday, Cosmic Bowling Sleepover Event
January 22	Tuesday, Troop meeting
January 29	Tuesday, Troop meeting
February 2-3	Saturday-Sunday, Troop Sleepover/International Day Prep
February 5	Tuesday, Troop meeting
February 12	Tuesday, Troop meeting
February 19	Tuesday, Troop meeting
February 23	Saturday, International Day
February 29	Friday, Bronze Award Ceremony
March 3	Monday, Neighborhood Service Team/Leader Meeting
March 4	Tuesday, Troop meeting
March 11	Tuesday, Troop meeting
March 18	Tuesday, Troop meeting
April 5	Saturday, Annual Council Meeting
April 8	Tuesday, Troop meeting (2 hours)
April 15	Tuesday, Troop meeting
April 19-20	Saturday-Sunday, Mall Madness Event
April 22	Tuesday, Troop meeting
April 29	Tuesday, Troop meeting
May 3	Saturday, Badge Project in San Dimas

May 6 Tuesday, Troop meeting
May 13 Tuesday, Troop meeting
May 14 Wednesday, Low ROPES Course in Redlands (tentative)
May 20 Tuesday, Troop meeting/Bridging Ceremony
May 27 Tuesday, Troop meeting
May 31-June 1 Saturday, Troop Event in Rancho Cucamonga (overnight)
June 3 Tuesday, Troop meeting
June 6-8 Friday-Sunday, Year-end Trip to Palm Springs

Appendix

Entry Points for Conversations in Girl Guiding Across the World:
WAGGGS Introspective

The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) is the international form of the Girl Scouting organization, the American corporation being GSUSA, or, Girl Scouts of the United States of America. WAGGGS “provides millions of girls and young women with non-formal education, giving them the opportunity to develop confidence, leadership and life skills.”⁶² This goal is carried out by bringing Girl Scouting, or Girl Guiding as it is called in most other countries, to the world. I have explored many elements of Girl Scouting in my senior honors project, “Scouting a 21st Century Feminism: Exploring Girl Scouts as an Activist Volunteer.” My focus now turns to Girls Scouts on an international level. WAGGGS has team members in United Nations positions that provide input on international issues of the rights of women and girls. This year was the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held February 25 through March 7. It was the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women which was titled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century.”⁶³ WAGGGS representatives presented a short statement on the status of women and children and their research on peace projects and the importance of consciousness-raising groups. This presentation shows the place that Girl Guides have in the global conversation on women’s rights.

In the U.N. statement, WAGGGS addresses some of their peacemaking projects that are implemented with Girl Scout values, among them the Amahoro Amani Project, Building Peace

⁶² "Statement submitted by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts. Commission on the Status of Women, 3.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1.

Among Children, and World Thinking Day. These projects represent a kind of global feminist effort sampled by Girl Scouts around the world. Through WAGGGS' three key principles, "learn by doing, volunteerism, and peer-education" these projects are carried out on a global scale.⁶⁴ These three principles are what WAGGGS refers to as "key aspects of non-formal education," whereas Girl Scouts in America have similar values, their wording differs from WAGGGS.⁶⁵ American Scouting focuses on four core values, "be the best you can, respect other people, build your own values, and learn leadership skills."⁶⁶

WAGGGS role in the U.N. is to promote the abilities of women and girls to take part in peace making initiatives, to raise awareness for violence against women and children, and to affirm their projects and participation in the global forum. Especially essential is the belief in women and children's ability to be involved. The exclusion of children's—especially girl children's—rights in times of war is especially important, "children are perceived to have nothing to offer by way of a solution, [the belief is that] they need not be included or informed in any way."⁶⁷ Girl Scout and Girl Guide opportunities in countries around the world—especially those conflicted with war, are crucial in promoting the abilities of children. One of the WAGGGS projects that highlights this explicitly is the Building Peace Among Children project.

The Building Peace Among Children project was conducted in eleven African countries, among them Zambia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Kenya, and Sierra Leon.⁶⁸ The goal of this project was to train young women from countries affected by war and conflict to be volunteer peace ambassadors.⁶⁹ For example, the Girl Guides project in Zambia was held for 24

⁶⁴ WAGGGS Voice Counts at UN.

⁶⁵ "Statement submitted by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts." Commission on the Status of Women, 3.

⁶⁶ Junior Girl Scout Handbook, 8.

⁶⁷ "Statement submitted by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts," 2.

⁶⁸ Working Toward Peace: Building Peace Among Children.

⁶⁹ "Statement submitted by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts," 3.

refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The objective of this training was to “build peace and conflict transformation skills, increase the level of knowledge, awareness and understanding of the transmission of HIV/AIDS, provide girls with opportunity of being part of the Guide family, and to discuss the way forward.”⁷⁰

The role of women in militarized governments is often dramatized in times of war and conflict. In The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo, documentary filmmaker Lisa Jackson interviews women who have been brutally raped by soldiers who participate in the civil war taking place in the DRC. The peacemaking effort made by Girl Guides in Zambia is of special interest to me and my work as a feminist because in February for the 2008 V-Day commemoration I participated in a project to bring Jackson’s film to the University of Redlands campus and educate people on the rape of women and girls in the Congo. Training young women ambassadors for peace not only contributes to the peace efforts in the DRC but shows those women and girls the value of their experiences, as does Jackson’s documentary. Jackson says “I traveled to the DRC, embarking on a voyage into a literal heart of darkness to find women who would bear witness to their own experiences and break the silence that envelops the subject of rape both in their country and around the world.”⁷¹

International Girl Scouts and Girl Guides also contribute to the global forum with “Our Rights, Our Responsibilities: WAGGGS Call to Action 2002-2008.” This document is aimed at awareness raising of basic human rights, to promote “active and positive responsibility for claiming those rights.”⁷² The sections of this document are “The Right to be Me, The Right to be

⁷⁰ Working Toward Peace: Building Peace Among Children.

⁷¹ Jackson, Lisa. The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo.

⁷² “The Right to Live in Peace.” Our Rights, Our Responsibilities, 4. *Note: I find it especially interesting that this title echoes the famous feminist multi-edition resource on women’s health Our Bodies, Ourselves. Like “Our Rights, Our Responsibilities,” Our Bodies defines issues and raises awareness on issues particular to women and girls. This feminist scholarly tool was first published in 1970 and has inspired a world-wide movement for women’s health. Its

Heard, The Right to be Happy, The Right to Work Together, The Right to Learn, and The Right to Live in Peace.”⁷³ Each section contains a “pack” that explains terms, designs projects, and begins to train leaders and girls on how to open the dialogue of the WAGGGS peacemaking projects. The “Right to Live in Peace” section, for example, has a list that allows adult volunteers and mentors to help young girls think about ways of action in peace resolving processes:

1. Learn to Know: perhaps you haven’t enough information or haven’t looked at the situation you are in from every angle...
3. Learning to Live Together: is about finding solutions that are based on a better understanding of everyone’s needs.
4. Learning to Be: is about being able to accept who you are and what you have done; it is about learning to accept that you can make mistakes; it is about having the confidence to move on even if this means accepting compromise.

Not only are these objectives feminist in nature they present methods that can be translated into the pre-epistemological questions.

Sandra Harding defines epistemology as how we know what we know; questioning who can be a “knower” in order to shift the weight of outcomes to legitimize certain knowledge.⁷⁴ The WAGGGS “Our Rights, Our Responsibilities” raises epistemological strengths in the Girl Scout process, exposing an inner method that we might call a feminist consciousness-raising. Having spent time as an American Girl Scout troop leader, I find WAGGGS’ documentation, peacemaking efforts, and conversation in the global community to be much more assertive than GSUSA’s publications and initiatives. Extreme times call for extreme measures, and it seems that in WAGGGS’ work with women and children subtly is valued less than action. With a common, high-stakes goal in mind each act becomes more critical. WAGGGS’ participation in the U.N. forum causes one to wonder why American Girl Scouting is so subdued. The statement

sister editions include Our Bodies, Ourselves: Menopause and Pregnancy and Birth, and the new Spanish language adaption Nuestros Cuerpos, Nuestras Vidas.

⁷³ Ibid. Emphasis added.

⁷⁴ Harding, Sandra. "Introduction: Is There a Feminist Method?" 3-4.

made by WAGGGS at the Commission on the Status of Women also includes information about World Thinking Day, which is a great way to begin to analyze the relationship between WAGGGS and American Scouting, because GSUSA celebrate World Thinking Day in the form of International Day, an event troop 1148 and I participated in this year.

World Thinking Day is held on February 22 of each year, this year celebrated the eighty-second World Thinking Day since its inception in 1926 at the Girl Guide/Girl Scout International Conference.⁷⁵ In 2008, WAGGGS celebrated World Thinking Day by promoting projects in Central America to bring clean drinking water to residents of third-world nations. Interestingly, when I started this paper I had difficulty finding information on Latin/Central American Girl Guides, but WAGGGS initiative shows the strong existence of these groups. The Central American projects reached Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama where Girl Guides did everything from save a river to begin consciousness-raising campaigns on healthy drinking water.⁷⁶

In the Spanish Trails Council of Southern California World Thinking Day is honored through the International Day fair. In Rancho Foothills, a neighborhood in the Spanish Trails council area, my troop spent three weeks studying Brazil. The purpose of this event is to draw attention to girls' lives around the world and to promote tolerance and world peace. In the Rancho Foothill neighborhood, participation in this event was very high, but the focus was not completely on peace or world tolerance. Very few Third World countries were represented at the event. Instead, European countries whose history could be presented as "peaceful" where the most widely represented. It could be that the leaders of this particular event forgot to promote peace and guide the focus toward an atmosphere more like that of World Thinking Day, but what

⁷⁵ About World Thinking Day.

⁷⁶ Water Projects in Central America.

if it was not an isolated incident? WAGGGS promotes “non-formal education,” but GSUSA promotes “single-sex environments” where girls learn about leadership. The level of seriousness in GSUSA seems to be lower than that of WAGGGS. WAGGGS seems more willing to tackle tough issues and to acknowledge a tough world.

The focus of WAGGGS on projects in Third-World and war conflicted countries has special impact on our understanding of Girl Guiding in the 21st century. Contemporary feminists deal with issues of globalization and how best to assist women in other countries without denying them their right to help themselves. They focus on affirming women’s voices, and supporting women’s participation in liberation movements of their own design. There is a lot of scholarly emphasis on the divide between Western feminists and Third-World feminists. One of the ways that this binary line is traversed is by affirming the experiences of women across borders, while at the same time turning critical attention toward what a border actually is. Views of sameness have to be done away with and commonality traded for solidarity as Amrita Basu notes:

Indeed, it was in part the assumption of sameness, which many assumed reflected an ethnocentric and middle-class bias, that incurred the resentment of many “Third World” women and generated deep divisions between women from the First and Third Worlds...Better communication between these groups of women at the 1985 Nairobi conference occurred once they abandoned the myth of global sisterhood and acknowledged profound differences in women’s lives and in the meanings of feminism cross-nationally.⁷⁷

Cross-culturally WAGGGS partners with organizations based in each country of focus. For example, the Girl Guide organization in the DRC is called Association Des Scouts et Guides Du Congo, and as in the U.S. the administrative branches are employed through this national organization as well as through WAGGGS. WAGGGS’ mission is to “enable girls and young

⁷⁷ Basu, Amrita, 3.

women to develop their fullest potential as responsible citizens of the world.”⁷⁸ WAGGGS has designed their constitution to ensure that this mission is carried out through the aim of the Girl Guide/Scout movement, which is to “provide girls and young women with opportunities for self-training in the development of character, responsible citizenship and service in their own and world communities.”⁷⁹ Amrita Basu shows that the movement-mission forum has historically been propagated by exclusion, “women’s exclusion from established institutions may make them particularly qualified to mobilize resistance through informal networks.”⁸⁰ This sentiment is repeated in works such as *The Greatest Silence* where Lisa Jackson asserts that women are the world’s most precious and valuable resource⁸¹ and carried out through the works of organizations such as WAGGGS.

With projects like *Building Peace Among Children and World Thinking Day* WAGGGS sets the stage for an activist movement in Girl Scouting. It seems that activism is a given in countries in conflict, but something less initiated in the U.S., even though we too are at war. I think that GSUSA is negligent in comparison to WAGGGS. Where my original assumption was that WAGGGS was the top tier of the Girl Scout organization whose guidelines governed all Girl Scout sectors below, it now seems to that WAGGGS and GSUSA are fairly autonomous from one another. The repercussions of that autonomy arise through the differing involvement of each organization in the global community. Perhaps the link between the two organizations needs to remain loose so that one does not stifle the other, as governments have been known to undermine women’s movements where lack of autonomy leads to co-optation and universalization.⁸² Still,

⁷⁸ “WAGGGS Policy Young Women and Decision Making,” 1.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Basu, Amrita, 10.

⁸¹ Jackson, Lisa.

⁸² Basu, Amrita, 10. *Note: the term “universalization” is credited to Mary Daly as one of the devices used to refute women’s issues in *Beyond God the Father*, pages 4-5.

there are definite advantages to WAGGGS' participation in the global community that GSUSA misses, and the ultimate repercussions of the slip lie with the girls who have a poor sense of their global responsibility. The end of the WAGGGS statement to the U.N. at the Commission on the Status of Women detailed steps that can be taken to begin to affirm women's rights in the world. WAGGGS not only defines Girl Guiding/Scouting as an effective way to begin this process, but "calls national governments to take stronger action to implement the provisions of the human rights conventions and fulfill their promises to the children of the world."⁸³ It may be time for WAGGGS to also call upon American Girl Scouts to do the same.

⁸³ "Statement submitted by the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts," 3.

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