

## *Dancing at the Crossroads*

At the crossroads of adolescence, the girls in our study describe a relational impasse that is familiar to many women: a paradoxical or dizzying sense of having to give up *relationship for the sake of "relationships."* Because this taking of oneself out of relationship in order to protect oneself and have relationships forces an inner division or chasm, it marks a profound psychological shift. We heard this shift as a change in girls' voices as they reached adolescence. In essence, we were witnessing girls enacting and narrating dissociation.

Women's psychological development within patriarchal societies and male-voiced cultures is inherently traumatic. The pressure on boys to dissociate themselves from women early in childhood is analogous to the pressure girls feel to take themselves out of relationship with themselves and with women as they reach adolescence. For a girl to disconnect herself from women means to dissociate herself not only from her mother but also from herself—to move from being a girl to being a woman, which means "with men." For women, being with girls at this time means witnessing this process and listening to girls re-sound voices which many women have silenced or forgotten. Girls' development thus poses extremely difficult questions for women. How will we respond when girls who are doing very well by most standards of psychological as well as educational growth speak of losing their voices and losing relation-

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ship? In the course of this work, we began to appreciate the reality of the impasse—not only its psychological consequences but also its potential to defuse women's political power.

Our journey into women's childhood—our joining women with girls rather than comparing women with men—led us to hear, as if for the first time, the clarity and strength of girls' voices and the extent of girls' relational knowing. And we noticed how rarely girls actually appear or speak in writings about women's psychology. Women's disconnection from girls in the psychological literature mirrors the inner division we have been tracing—the tendency for girls as they become young women to dismiss their experience and modulate their voices. At adolescence, girls' ordinary courage—girls' seemingly effortless ability, as Annie Rogers says, to speak their minds by telling all their hearts—tends to turn into something heroic.<sup>1</sup> For girls at adolescence to say what they are feeling and thinking often means to risk, in the words of many girls, losing their relationships and finding themselves powerless and all alone.

Over the years of our study, even as they became more sophisticated cognitively and emotionally, young girls who had been outspoken and courageous in both an ordinary and a heroic sense became increasingly reluctant to say what they were feeling and thinking or to speak from their own experience about what they knew. Honesty in relationships began to seem "stupid"—it was called "selfish" or "rude" or "mean." Consequently, a healthy resistance to losing voice and losing relationship, which seemed ordinary in eight-year-old girls and heroic by age eleven, tended to give way to various forms of psychological resistance, as not speaking turned into not knowing and as the process of dissociation was itself forgotten. Girls reaching adolescence adopted survival strategies for spanning what often seemed like two incommensurate relational realities. And girls enacted this disconnection through various forms of dissociation: separating themselves or their psyches from their bodies so as not to know what they were feeling; dissociating their voice from their feelings and thoughts so that others would not know what they were experiencing; taking themselves out of rela-

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relationship so that they could better approximate what others want and desire, or look more like some ideal image of what a woman or what a person should be. Open conflict and free speaking that were part of girls' daily living thus gave way to more covert forms of responding to hurt feelings or disagreements within relationships, so that some girls came to ignore or not know signs of emotional or physical abuse. And relationships correspondingly suffered. Girls, we thought, were undergoing a kind of psychological foot-binding, so that they were kept from feeling or using their relational strengths. Instead, these strengths, which explain girls' remarkable psychological resilience throughout the childhood years, were turning into a political liability. People, as many girls were told, did not want to hear what girls know. As girls' outspokenness or political resistance carried psychological risks, so girls' psychological resistance or not knowing had political as well as psychological consequences.

Witnessing these processes—seeing girls do well on tests of academic achievement, on standard measures of social and moral development, seeing them favored by their teachers and praised by their parents when they dissociated or dissembled—was deeply moving to us and to other women and men who were involved with us in this inquiry. As with the initial design of our study, we could not stay within the conventions of our profession and also listen seriously to what girls were saying. Girls' relational knowing made our own relational compromises transparent and also revealed the relational lies that are at the center of patriarchal cultures: subtle untruths and various forms of violation and violence that cover over or lead to women's disappearance in both the public world of history and culture and the private world of intimacy and love.

On a theoretical level, the evidence we gathered led us to consider early adolescence as a comparable time in women's development to early childhood in men's: a time when a relational impasse forced what psychoanalysts have called "a compromise formation"—some compromise between voice and relationships. Because this compromise removes or attenuates the tension between women's voices and the regeneration of patriarchal and male-voiced

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cultures, it tends to be seen as necessary and inevitable. In fact, it leaves a psychological wound or scar, a break manifest in the heightened susceptibility to psychological illness that boys suffer in early childhood and that girls suffer at adolescence. The timing of this loss of voice and this crisis of relationship can explain these asymmetries in women's and men's development.

In contrast with the murder at the crossroads that marks the Oedipus story and seals its relational deafness and blindness—Oedipus' need not to know what in another sense he knows (that his anger has become murderous and his love incestuous)—we offer a vision of women and girls dancing at the crossroads of adolescence, moving in relation to one another so that it becomes possible for girls and women to stay in relationship and to say what they know. In our interviews, we found that when women moved with girls, girls brought themselves into relationship with women and began to speak openly rather than trying to be good or bad girls. Women, coming into relationship with girls, became noticeably more radical—quicker to spot false voices and also to differentiate between real and idealized relationships. Thus a new kind of dance began between girls and women.

First steps in this dance came from the moves made by women who joined our project at Laurel School—psychologists and teachers who began to change their practice as we had, when they realized that they could do what they were doing only by not knowing what girls heard and saw. Patricia Flanders Hall, a psychologist and the former Dean of Students at Laurel School, writes about this process:

We could not avoid recognizing that [girls'] behavior reflected a similar kind of behavior among women at the school. We were not open with each other in public settings and, like the girls, had silenced ourselves beyond the walls of our classrooms or offices or in the presence of authority . . . We did not publicly disagree with policy, with each other, with men, with the Head of the School or the lunch menu. Above all, we began to fear that we were teaching girls to do exactly the same thing, and were perpetuating the same feelings of loss and inauthenticity that we

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recognized had colored our lives at the school. Clearly, how could we address questions of silencing without acknowledging and understanding our own silencing?

### Women and Girls

Pat Flanders Hall was part of a group of sixteen women who, in the course of this project, began a series of three retreats to explore our relationship with our practices as psychologists, teachers, and administrators and also our relationships with the women and girls with whom we worked.<sup>2</sup> Judy Dorney joined the two of us as participants from the Harvard Project and took a leading role in charting the course of the retreats. Denise Andre, Claudia Boatright, Renee Bruckner, JoAnn Deak, Terri Gafinkel, Nancy Franklin, Louise (Skip) Grip, Marilyn Kent, Linda McDonald, Susie McGee, Sharon Miller, and Almuth Riggs joined Pat from Laurel. Reflecting on the outcome of the first retreat, Pat writes, "It took a very long time to exercise a modicum of courage to speak about this absence of authentic communication, and the resistance [to speaking] we mounted as a group of intelligent, educated women was remarkable." For the women as for the girls at the school, "being 'nice' to everyone was a familiar standard"—a seemingly safe way to navigate the relational waters of a middle-class, mainly white, largely female environment. As a member of the school's administration, Pat knew that in the presence of conflict her job was "to 'facilitate,' and that meant to prevent things from getting out of hand . . . [and] 'getting out of hand' meant any expression of feelings that could be construed as critical or disruptive to the smooth functioning of the school." And yet how can a girls' school function smoothly and without conflict if girls are becoming educated in the most basic sense—that is, learning to feel deeply, to think clearly, to draw out the implications of what they know through experience, to have the courage of outspokenness. A smoothly running girls' school within a patriarchal society and culture seemed an oxymoron.

After the first retreat, after moving into relationship and taking

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the first steps in speaking our feelings and thoughts, Pat writes about her own experience and that of others in returning to their work at the school. "We all sensed a frustrating 'lid' that we had put back on our conversations [after the retreat] and the bonds that had begun to form were only shared by eye contact in the hallways." Predictably, the conflict did not go away because the women did not talk about it or name it at the time. Instead, as the retreat process continued, women began listening to girls more seriously and took what they heard more deeply into themselves. The difficulty of this process becomes apparent in Pat's description:

It was first with a sense of shock and then a deep, knowing sadness that we listened to the voices of the girls tell us that it was the adult women in their lives that provided the models for silencing themselves and behaving like "good little girls." We wept. Then the adult women in our collective girlhoods came into the room. We could recall the controlling, silencing women with clarity and rage, but we could also gratefully recall the women who had allowed our disagreement and rambunctiousness in their presence and who had made us feel whole. And we recognized what it was we had to do as teachers and mothers and therapists and women in relationship. Unless we, as grown women, were willing to give up all the "good little girl" things we continued to do and give up our expectation that the girls in our charge would be as good as we were, we could not successfully empower young women to act on their own knowledge and feelings. Unless we stopped hiding in expectations of goodness and control, our behavior would silence any words to girls about speaking in their own voice. Finally, we dared to believe that one could be intelligently disruptive without destroying anything except the myths about the high level of female cooperativeness.

Asking then, "What did we do with what we learned?" she continues:

We first looked at disagreements among ourselves, and discovered that to take such a risk enhanced our relationships with each other. We looked beyond those relationships to the workplace and recognized that we had to bring this risk to our professional efforts

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or continue to suffer a sense of frustration that was not worse because it had been named. We recognized that this is frightening work that cannot be done alone by a single woman but can only be successful in the supportive bonds of community. We also recognized that the sanctuary of a retreat setting allowed us to understand our knowledge and feelings with a clarity not possible in hierarchical work settings. And we agreed that the understandings we had reached sometimes conflicted with the vision of the school that we cared about and that we could not bring this knowledge back into our school effortlessly or without pain.

It was with girls that the women first began to experiment with change: "The easier time to begin to listen and speak in new ways was when we were working with the girls, and we all felt a sense of knowing wonder when they responded so quickly to us." Claudia Boatright, a most courteous and also scrupulously organized teacher, found herself permitting a loud personal argument in her classroom and was astonished to be thanked by the two girls for not interrupting them when it reached its natural conclusion. In another class, Claudia actively resisted her impulse to close off an emotionally tense conflict over a heated political question. She had come to see confronting conflict openly with strong feelings in public as essential to young women's education. Like Noura and her friends talking in loud voices on the phone and taking the time that they needed, the young women in her class spoke passionately about the Palestinian question, confronting rather than avoiding or defusing a political conflict that was confusing, frustrating, complex, and emotional. As Claudia resisted her impulse to defuse this emotionally volatile classroom conflict, so she also let the class run over and continue beyond the end of the hour.

Across a range of ages and contexts, women began listening to their own voices and also to the voices of girls. Strong voices and open disagreement still aroused discomfort, but we found ourselves hearing and encouraging girls' strengths. Linda McDonald, a pre-school teacher, responded to a girl who came to her troubled by the behavior of the boys on the playground by encouraging her to speak directly to the boys and to use her "big girl voice." Nancy Franklin,

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an upper-school English teacher, stayed with her student when the student wrote about Andrew Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress" in a way that posed a radical challenge to conventional readings. Rather than interpret the poem from the point of view of the poet who "is trying to convince a reluctant young lady that they should make love while there is still time," her student, Anjli, "read it from the viewpoint of an innocent but perceptive and language-sensitive young girl" like herself. Anjli "called the poem morbid and found it terrifying and chilling." When Anjli received negative comments and low grades from Nancy Franklin's colleagues at other schools in a cross-grading exercise designed to ensure consistency of standards, Nancy chose to stay with her student and challenge the standards. Where her colleagues wrote "WRONG," Nancy said, "I don't think Anjli is wrong." Where her colleagues concluded that Anjli did not understand *carpe diem*, Nancy found in Anjli's response to the poem a new appreciation of the poem's power and a fresh reading.

Anjli's experience of hearing her feelings about the poem called wrong, and her identification with the young woman in the poem called "a misreading," are common enough experiences for girls and young women in schools and universities. Recent research shows what, as women, we remember—that in a myriad of ways girls and young women are given the message that their experiences and knowledge are not heard or welcomed in the classroom.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps we should not be so surprised when we hear Allisar, fifteen, tell the woman who interviews her that she has never experienced work that she loved. "See, that is what I want," she explains. "I want to do some work that I love doing, but I don't know if it is in my nature to love work." To Allisar, who radically splits work and love, education has little to do with personally trusting or believing: "I don't think you have to trust anything to get a good education. I don't think you have to trust any facts. You can know about them, but you don't have to believe in them to get a good education." Allisar has never had a teacher who, she says, "really makes you think and care about what you are learning," who asks the "type of questions that really makes you think so you feel exhausted" . . .

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"that really revitalizes and massages your brain" . . . that would "relate everything down to the personal level . . . how is it going to affect you . . . That's how you get out the real emotion," she adds, "you know, feelings to understand or want to learn more about something." When girls are disconnected from what Audre Lorde calls "the erotic root and satisfactions" of their life work, girls' education can become, as Lorde might predict, "a travesty of necessities."<sup>4</sup>

Taking in the voices of girls like Anjli and Allisar, we began to move more authentically with one another and to become more willing to voice conflict and openly disagree. Listening to girls' voices, particularly in the time before adolescence, affected many women in ways that were unexpectedly powerful. Small voices began to give way to stronger voices, not knowing began to yield to memories of knowing, then of needing not to know or not to say what one felt and knew. And women began to speak in public and to act on the basis of what they knew through experience—to trust their own experience and the experiences of girls and other women.

At the center of this process, many women found themselves drawn by girls' voices into remembering their own adolescence and began to recall their own experiences of disconnection or dissociation at this time.<sup>5</sup> Such remembering seems essential if women are not going to justify or reimpose on girls losses which they have suffered. To reopen the question as to whether losses of voice and of relationship which many women have experienced are in fact necessary or inevitable, women have to experience the present as different from the past—to feel that now they are not without power or all alone. For this reason, the retreats, the opportunity to think and feel with other women, seem essential. Women's ability to ask new questions about voice and relationship and girls' development depend on experiencing ourselves as able to speak and also to stay in relationship with women—to feel sadness and anger without experiencing these feelings as overwhelming or as endangering relationships.

To answer Anna's question, then, what we have gotten out of this work with girls is an appreciation of the relational impasse girls

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experience at adolescence and a new understanding of women's psychological development, a relational theory that offers an explanation of developmental asymmetries between women and men, and a sense of an opening—a possibility for preventing psychological suffering and initiating societal and cultural change.

The girls in our study who keep their strong voices direct our attention to their mothers, but their mothers do not fit conventional images of good women. Anna's mother is strong in her relationship with Anna, but in describing this relationship Anna speaks of her mother's screaming at her and she feels her mother's feelings "gnawing at her." Eighteen-year-old Nawal, when asked how she has changed, describes the changes in her relationship with her mother which led to what she calls "my big realization":

Okay, my Mom has black, curly wild hair, really dark skin. Dresses like, she wears a huge silver earring, does not fit the stereotypical Laurel mother image, does not. This is a woman who comes in from the senior luncheon and she says, "Nawal, am I dressed okay?" . . . and her hair was down and curly and she had enormous earrings, huge necklace, this black kind of fitted sundress thing, sandals, a lot of jewelry, and everyone was staring . . . And I love the way she dresses, and I love the fact that she is different . . . but when I was younger, it used to bother me, and I hated being Arabic. I hated being different, and I hated having an Arabic name. And I was really almost embarrassed by my Mom.

When Nawal's mother asked her directly, "Do you really want me to be like everyone else?" Nawal took the question seriously. "I thought about it for a while. At first I [thought] 'Yah,' and then I was like, 'Wait.' I thought about it and I tried to picture my mother like that. And I just couldn't . . . It makes me shudder, because that's not her." For Nawal, it was important to speak publicly about her realization. Devoting her senior speech to this subject, she voiced in the school's open assembly her resistance to American standards of beauty—the standards that led Nawal, a dark-skinned Arabic young woman, to wish for "long, long blond hair [and] blue eyes" and to judge herself and her mother as ugly or not beautiful. Nawal cried after her speech, her friends cried with her, and she

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felt "this weight was lifted and I finally said what I had to say to this school."

Nawal's comment echoed almost precisely the words of women teachers who spoke of feeling that they were working under a great weight in teaching what they were supposed to be teaching rather than what they felt it was important for girls to learn and know. For many reasons, it was harder for these women to finally say what they had to say to the school, and yet some of them did so by the end of the project. And the women's voices were in fact disruptive and associated with substantial changes in the lives of some of the women and also in the school.

As we witness so many of the perfect girls in our study become the perfect woman—the modern superwoman Catherine Steiner-Adair writes about or the "angel in the house" whom Virginia Woolf describes<sup>6</sup>—we feel ourselves tempted momentarily to forget or discount the resistant voices of younger girls, the girls who say what they are feeling and thinking, the girls who hold to what they are experiencing, the whistle-blowers in the relational world. In reentering girlhood and remembering images of perfection and various forms of psychological foot-binding that are imposed on girls at the time when they become young women, we found ourselves turning to the girls in our study who, because of color or class, live in the margins, who are so clearly at odds with the dominant models of female beauty and perfection as to reveal the cultural hand behind the standards.<sup>7</sup> These girls often spoke in loud voices, and among them we found many of our staunchest resisters. Like Anna and Nawal, they tend to have close confiding relationships with their mothers—relationships in which both mother and daughter speak, where they engage in open conflict and give voice to their feelings of anger and sadness, where both mother and daughter can feel the power they have to affect one another and thus the depths of their connection and love. It is for this reason that Nawal chooses her mother over the model: she cannot imagine a relationship with a model.

The daily reality of difference gives these girls sharp eyes for shallowness, for false commitments, "phony" relationships, and

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abuses of power, and gives their voices a strength and a clarity we found stunning. But for some there is also the painful reality of living in two worlds. The African-American girls, in particular, feel enormous responsibility to prove themselves in this microcosm of white society and, as Jenice says, "to wipe away some stereotypes that people have of blacks."<sup>8</sup> And yet because getting ahead is associated in this culture with being white, and since, as Jenice knows, "everyone's trying to get ahead," she resents that "as a black person I have been forced to assimilate." "Many of the people [here] really don't know that much about blacks," she explains, "and I think that blacks usually find out more about the ways that whites live than the other ways around." But "going to Laurel and going back to the black community" is also "really hard" for Jenice, because "blacks perceive me as someone who is trying to be white." Jenice feels the tensions and ambivalence and social pressure Signithia Fordham and John Ogbu describe of other black adolescents—their struggle between loyalty and identification with the black community and the "burden of acting white" if they act on their desire to excel in school.<sup>9</sup>

Jenice resolves this tension by finding strength in her relationship with her mother and listening to elders in her community who teach her to question what she is being taught, to wonder "what isn't written down" in her history books, who encourage her to transform her experience in school, "which wasn't a rewarding feeling," by insisting that school make "some kind of allowances for the way I think about something." As a result Jenice worked hard to "make sense" in her own mind and to "make order out of" her own experience. By the time she was eighteen and a senior, Jenice's goal was to continue on with school and rewrite history: "As far as education is concerned . . . I don't know that I felt as strong a commitment before . . . I mean, I know that a lot of young black students don't have the confidence in themselves that they should . . . and if they knew the things that blacks had done, it is something to be proud of, and I think it would help to advance the black race in general. And I feel some obligation."

Our dance with girls at adolescence began to move in new



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directions as our project ended. At a national conference where we were presenting the results of our study, we suddenly missed the girls.<sup>10</sup> Their voices were so central to the findings we were presenting and were now powerfully affecting a large group of women and men. Carol decided to stay over in Cleveland for the weekend and to go to school on Monday morning to speak with the girls who were now thirteen and seventeen and who had been in the study for five years. We wanted them to know how strongly their voices were affecting other people and also to ask them how they wanted to be involved, now that we were writing about the work and presenting it in public.

The response of the thirteen-year-olds was clear: "We want you to tell them everything we said, and we want our names in the book."<sup>11</sup> With the seventeen-year-olds, it was far more complex: They sat silently in rows listening, and then answered by saying that they did not like us speaking about them behind their backs, that they wanted us to tell them everything we were saying about them, and then they would tell us whether or not they agreed and how they wanted to be involved. They wanted to go on retreat with us for a day. They wanted us to show them exactly how we did this work. We readily agreed.

Three of us—Lyn, Carol, and Pat—sat on the floor of a community center facing a room full of eleventh grade girls, some sitting cross-legged, some sprawled on their stomachs, a few sitting in fold-out chairs they found leaning against the walls. We had begun the retreat that morning by asking the girls to join with us by entering the process of our research. Our work rested on the belief that girls' voices were worth listening to, that it was possible for women to learn from girls and also necessary to listen to girls in order to understand women's psychological development. Since the girls' voices they would be listening to were their own voices or those of their classmates, these issues were issues of relationship in an immediate way. We asked girls to notice if they found themselves denigrating or trivializing or making fun of what girls were saying, and to ask themselves why they were doing this. We then explained our voice-centered method, the importance of listening to each

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girls' voice carefully by following the speaking self, the I who thinks and feels, through the interviews. Then we passed out excerpts from interviews with girls at different ages. We asked the girls to work in small groups, to listen for the voice of the girl speaking in each excerpt, and to describe what they were seeing and hearing and also how they would explain any changes or differences in the girls' voices. Now, after lunch, we sat together to talk about what they and we heard in these excerpts.

The girls clearly saw the empirical basis on which we had built our interpretation, and also experienced our way of working, but not all readily agreed with our interpretation of the changes in girls' voices. "We can relate to everything these people said," offered one girl, speaking for her group, "but not necessarily for the same reasons." "We were saying," said another girl,

how we thought it was really strange that Victoria had this idea so powerfully in her mind and then we started . . . relating it to us and how we felt about Mr. and Mrs. things, and we were talking about how we wish there had been some background . . . about why she had come out and said this . . . You know, was she closer to her mom than she was to her dad. Or was she feeling her ideas . . . and she couldn't find her own self and she wanted to be an individual . . . And then we started relating to it . . . and how she was maybe trying to find herself and that she was saying how she didn't understand how her mom could find herself . . . when she didn't really have her own name.

Like seasoned researchers, these girls struggled to describe what they heard and what might account for the differences in the girls' voices: was it age, background, relational crises, personal experiences? "The one thing we noticed in this, as much as we really didn't want to admit it," said yet another girl, "was that we see how you can get the idea that we're confident when we're younger . . . [The older girl we read] didn't base her decision on what she wanted. She based her decision on what other people wanted . . . what other people felt. But the second grader . . . she just said, that's what I want."

And as they began listening to the voices of the younger girls, these young women were moved by what they were hearing—and

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surprised in ways that we found familiar. They too had forgotten these voices. They too called these honest voices "rude" and "mean." And hearing them again, they began to talk more freely about their own experiences and to remember what happened to themselves. Together we began to speak about the central questions of loss and prevention. "I mean," said one girl, "you have to have a distinction between [something superficial] and what you really, deeply, believe in. And that's what I don't understand. What stifles us from saying things like that."

As the conversation moved to the ways expectations of model looks and perfect girls affect girls' voices, Liza—herself outwardly perfect and cool—asked us what seemed, by the tone of her voice and the expression on her face, a most pressing question—a question about herself that she hoped psychology might answer for her:

I would just like to know from you as psychologists or people with that kind of degree, is there such a thing as a person who is not necessarily perfect but who has everything together all the time? Not appears to but just does mentally, psychologically? Is there such a person? Is that possible?

A quiet settled over the room. The question was so real, so recognizable. Can there be a person, ever, who could be the girl everyone seems to want, not on the surface, but inside—who could really be her? The answer seemed obvious, perhaps—but the implication hung in the air—if the long journey did not end with perfection, what was all this expended energy about and for whose benefit?

For women to enter into relationship with girls means to break false images of perfection, to invite their most urgent questions into conversation, into relationship. One of the most difficult questions for the women teachers was whether it was legitimate for them to show girls their sadness and their anger and also whether they could reveal such feelings without losing control of themselves and of the girls. It seemed easier and also safer for women to try and model perfection for girls—perfect women, perfect relationships—and yet women's images of perfection were at odds with what girls know

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about women and experience in relationships. Thus women's success in being perfect role models for girls depended in part on girls' tacit agreement not to know what they know—their willingness to suspend their disbelief. Sensing women's fears about showing themselves in relationship, girls often were willing to withhold their feelings and thoughts in order to have "relationships" with their teachers. At the end of the day, when we were joined by some of the teachers who had been involved in the retreat process, this agreement unraveled. As the teachers expressed their wish for closer relationships with the girls, the girls pressed for authentic relationships with the women who teach them.

The teachers began by saying how deeply affected they had been as they began to listen more closely to what girls feel and know. Responding to this opening, one girl said that she preferred her men teachers because they "treat us like people" and "bring themselves into their teaching." The women were naturally taken aback by this observation. One offered a psychological explanation: mothers and daughters, she knew from experience, can have a hard time at adolescence. Perhaps these girls were projecting these conflicts with their mothers onto their relationships with their women teachers. The girls stayed with what they were saying, and one girl explained that, in fact, her own relationship with her mother was very close. Her problem with her women teachers was that they were not bringing themselves into their teaching and they were not treating girls "like people."

For women to bring themselves into their teaching and be in genuine relationship with girls, however, is far more disruptive and radical than for men. It means changing their practice as teachers and thus changing education. The wish on the part of both girls and women for more authentic relationships with one another and an appreciation of and also the difficulty in working out such relationships appropriately ended the day.

But we continued our conversations with girls. Anna and Neeti, whose voices had exemplified contrasting pathways of girls' development in our conference presentation, took copies of our paper home with them. We asked them to read the paper, especially the



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sections pertaining to them, and tell us whether they felt they were sufficiently disguised and also where they found themselves in disagreement or having strong feelings about what we were saying. Lyn would then meet with them and discuss the paper and their responses. Both girls showed the papers to their mothers and talked about it with them. Neeti's mother then spoke with Lyn at a meeting for parents. The paper had led Neeti and her mother to speak more openly with one another, so that Neeti was less alone and less hidden. Anna's mother showed the paper to Anna's father as a way perhaps of revealing to him what Anna knew and how she felt and thought about his violent outbursts.

We continue our relationship with some of the girls who have now left Laurel for college, and we remain connected to many of the women teachers. For ourselves, we are left with difficult questions about our practice as psychologists and also with a sense of discovery, of finding an opening in women's psychological development—a place where girls' development and women's psychology powerfully join. Girls' strong voices and healthy resistance to false relationship speaks directly to the relational conflicts and problems that many women suffer. Our work with girls has clear implications for preventing psychological suffering in women, and also opens relational avenues through which women can recover their strong voices and their courage.

We are acutely aware of the need to listen to girls and explore relationships between women and girls in different settings. But what we have learned about women's psychology and women's development from our work with these one hundred girls is the power of beginning with girls' voices. From listening to girls at the edge of adolescence and observing our own and other women's responses, we begin to see the outlines of new pathways in women's development and also to see new possibilities for women's involvement in the process of political change. When women and girls meet at the crossroads of adolescence, the intergenerational seam of a patriarchal culture opens. If women and girls together resist giving up relationship for the sake of "relationships," then this meeting holds the potential for societal and cultural change.

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