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Meeting at the Crossroads

1

A Journey of Discovery

Anna is twelve. She is tall and slender. She looks at me, her green eyes intense, her pale skin somewhat flushed. It is my first interview after lunch, and she is waiting for me at the room when I arrive. We chat about the day. She has a concert tonight and a test tomorrow, and this concerns her. We begin the interview, and she seems somewhat wary. It takes me some time to feel comfortable. She responds to some of my questions with lengthy answers, to others with terse, almost abrupt acknowledgment. By the end of the interview, we are feeling tired. After we finish, I ask her if she has any questions for me. She wants to know why we are here—What do we hope to learn? What do we get out of this?

This scene—a girl, wary and curious, and a woman, also curious, listening, taking in a girl's voice, a girl's questions, and following that voice as it mingles with her own thoughts and feelings—is at the center of this joining of women's psychology with girls' development. We begin with twelve-year-old Anna because she stands at the edge of adolescence.¹ We will mark this place as a crossroads in women's development: a meeting between girl and woman, an intersection between psychological health and cultural regeneration, a watershed in women's psychology which affects both women and men.

In speaking of early adolescence as a crossroads in women's lives, we call up old stories about crossroads—in particular, the Oedipus story. The murder at the crossroads—Oedipus' killing of his father, Laius—has come to symbolize the strife between fathers and sons within a patriarchal civilization: the fight over who holds power.

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Psychologically, this murder is rooted in the abandonment of Oedipus by his parents in early childhood—the radical separation decreed by his father and enacted by his mother, Jocasta, who gives the child to the shepherds. The consequence is a relational deafness and blindness.

Our studies of women's psychological development began with listening to women's voices and hearing differences between the voices of women and men.² Privileged men often spoke as if they were not living in relation with others—as if they were autonomous or self-governing, free to speak and move as they pleased. Women, in contrast, tended to speak of themselves as living in connection with others and yet described a relational crisis which was inherently paradoxical: a giving up of voice, an abandonment of self, for the sake of becoming a good woman and having relationships. This early work left us with a profound sense of unease. In one sense the women in our studies seemed to know what they were doing—to see the folly in trying to connect with others by silencing themselves. In another sense, they seemed not to know. It was when we decided to follow women's psychological development back through girls' adolescence and then further back into girls' childhood that we came to witness a relational crisis in women's psychology—a comparable crisis to that which boys experience in early childhood—and to unravel a long-standing mystery in girls' development.³

For over a century the edge of adolescence has been identified as a time of heightened psychological risk for girls. Girls at this time have been observed to lose their vitality,⁴ their resilience,⁵ their immunity to depression,⁶ their sense of themselves and their character.⁷ Girls approaching adolescence are often victims of incest and other forms of sexual abuse.⁸ This crisis in women's development has been variously attributed to biology or to culture, but its psychological dimensions and its link to trauma have been only recently explored.

Our journey into this hitherto uncharted territory in women's psychology—this land between childhood and adolescence—has been guided by girls' voices. Over a period of ten years, our project

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has taken us into private schools for girls, inner-city schools, coeducational day and boarding schools, large urban high schools, and boys' and girls' clubs in culturally diverse neighborhoods.⁹ Listening to girls, we hear a naturalist's rendering of the human world—detached accounts of what is going on in relationships. Girls watch the human world like people watch the weather. Listening in to the sounds of daily living, they pick up its psychological rhythms, its patterns. From girls, we heard a child's frame-by-frame description of what happens in the world in which they are living, a more or less articulate tracing of how life goes, psychologically.

Anna's questions are questions about relationship, and more specifically about our relationship to this work: Why are we here? What do we hope to learn? What do we hope to get out of this? These questions can be answered simply: we hope to learn about women's psychological development by joining women with girls. From girls, we hope to learn about girls' experiences, girls' feelings and thoughts. In previous work, we listened for differences between women's and men's voices and followed changes in women's voices as they moved through crisis and through time.¹⁰ Together with Jean Baker Miller and her colleagues Judith Jordan, Irene Stiver, and Janet Surrey, we found that an inner sense of connection with others is a central organizing feature in women's development and that psychological crises in women's lives stem from disconnections.¹¹ Yet, in light of a growing and diverse body of empirical and theoretical work, our interviews with younger girls have proved invaluable in highlighting a fundamental paradox in woman's lives: While connection and responsive relationships are central to women's psychological development and to women's ways of knowing, as Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule have described, continuing observations suggest that adolescent and adult women silence themselves or are silenced in relationships rather than risk open conflict and disagreement that might lead to isolation or to violence. Listening to seven- and eight-, ten- and eleven-year-old girls, we—working with our colleague Annie Rogers—have heard in girls' voices clear evidence of strength, courage, and a healthy resistance to losing voice and relationship,

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even in the face of difficult relational realities. Against the backdrop of adolescent and adult women's voices—the voices which have in the past defined women's psychology—the young girls we have been listening to are striking as they speak freely of feeling angry, of fighting or open conflict in relationships, and take difference and disagreement for granted in daily life.

Our surprise in discovering the strengths in girls' voices and the revision this implies for theories of women's psychological development suggests that adolescence is a time of disconnection, sometimes of dissociation or repression in women's lives, so that women often do not remember—tend to forget or to cover over—what as girls they have experienced and known. As the phrase "I don't know" enters our interviews with girls at this developmental juncture, we observe girls struggling over speaking and not speaking, knowing and not knowing, feeling and not feeling, and we see the makings of an inner division as girls come to a place where they feel they cannot say or feel or know what they have experienced—what they have felt and known. Witnessing this active process of not knowing swirl into confusion in the back and forth of our interview conversations between girls and women, we began to listen in the moment and to trace in the transcripts of our interview sessions how girls struggle to stay in connection with themselves and with others, to voice their feelings and thoughts and experiences in relationships—to show what Annie Rogers has called "ordinary courage," the ability "to speak one's mind by telling all one's heart."¹² And we saw this struggle affect their feelings about themselves, their relationships with others, and their ability to act in the world. The sounds of this struggle in girls' voices re-sounded similar struggles in ourselves and other women; listening to girls, we began once again to know what we had come not to know.

After taking in the voices of younger girls, we had a new way of understanding the losses and confusion we heard in adolescent and adult women—a way of documenting both what was lost and girls' resistance to these losses. Our research raises a major question about the relationship between women's psychological development and the society and culture in which women are living: Are these losses

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of voice and relationship necessary, and, if not, how can they be prevented? The hallmark of this loss in women's lives and also in men's is the move from authentic into idealized relationships. Recent work in psychology documenting the capacity of infants to know relational reality—to respond to breaks in human connection, to pick up when connection falters or stops¹³—grounds our observation that girls in general continue to develop this capacity up to the time of their adolescence, and then they show signs of losing their ability to know what is relationally true or real. In tracing this process, we will join the problems which have been seen as central to the psychology of women—the desire for authentic connection, the experience of disconnection, the difficulties in speaking, the feeling of not being listened to or heard or responded to empathically, the feeling of not being able to convey or even believe in one's own experience—with a relational impasse or crisis of connection which we have observed in girls' lives at the time of their adolescence.

In this book, then, we record a journey of discovery. At the heart of our narrative are the voices of nearly one hundred girls between the ages of seven and eighteen. They were students at the Laurel School for girls in Cleveland, Ohio, during the years 1986–1990. Because the Laurel School is a private day school, the girls can be seen as fortunate; they have access to many of the privileges which this society offers those who are born into favorable conditions or who are particularly talented or motivated to succeed. Although most of the girls come from middle-class or upper-middle-class families and the majority are white, it is important to emphasize that about 20 percent of the girls are from working-class families and are attending the school on scholarship, and that about 14 percent of the girls are of color. In this group of girls, color is not associated with low social class, and low social class is not associated with educational disadvantage.

Given their fortunate and privileged status in many respects, one might expect that these girls would be flourishing. And according to standard measures of psychological development and educational progress, they are doing extremely well.¹⁴ Our study provides clear

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evidence that as these girls grow older they become less dependent on external authorities, less egocentric or locked in their own experience or point of view, more differentiated from others in the sense of being able to distinguish their feelings and thoughts from those of other people, more autonomous in the sense of being able to rely on or to take responsibility for themselves, more appreciative of the complex interplay of voices and perspectives in any relationship, more aware of the diversity of human experience and the differences between societal and cultural groups. Yet we found that this developmental progress goes hand in hand with evidence of a loss of voice, a struggle to authorize or take seriously their own experience—to listen to their own voices in conversation and respond to their feelings and thoughts—increased confusion, sometimes defensiveness, as well as evidence for the replacement of real with inauthentic or idealized relationships. If we consider responding to oneself, knowing one's feelings and thoughts, clarity, courage, openness, and free-flowing connections with others and the world as signs of psychological health, as we do, then these girls are in fact not developing, but are showing evidence of loss and struggle and signs of an impasse in their ability to act in the face of conflict.¹⁵ Thus, while in one sense the girls we have studied are progressing steadily as they move from childhood through adolescence, in another sense adolescence precipitates a developmental crisis in girls' lives. In other words, the crossroads between girls and women is marked by a series of disconnections or dissociations which leave girls psychologically at risk and involved in a relational struggle—a struggle which we heard and sometimes experienced as enacted with us in our interviews with girls, a struggle which is familiar to many women.

Meeting at this crossroads creates an opportunity for women to join girls and by doing so to reclaim lost voices and lost strengths, to strengthen girls' voices and girls' courage as they enter adolescence by offering girls resonant relationships, and in this way to move with girls toward creating a psychologically healthier world and a more caring and just society. In providing this account of our meeting with a particular group of girls and describing the relation-

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ships that developed between girls and women, we report a way into what has been a dark continent in women's development—a crisis of relationship which has been covered over by lies. The horror, psychologically speaking, which is at the center of this crisis is the realization that girls are not only enacting dissociation but also narrating the process of their disconnection—revealing its mechanism and also its intention. The girls in our study, as they approached adolescence, were finding themselves at a relational impasse; in response, they were sometimes making, sometimes resisting a series of disconnections that seem at once adaptive and psychologically wounding: between psyche and body, voice and desire, thoughts and feelings, self and relationship. The central paradox we will explore—the giving up of relationship for the sake of "Relationships"—is a paradox of which girls themselves are aware. Psychologically, girls know what they are doing and then need not to know, in part because they can see no alternative. In reporting work which in its very nature is relational and therefore open-ended or incomplete, we bring to others the evidence from our work with girls and women—voices which we believe are worth listening to, in part because of the questions they raise. From this work, we take the strong conviction that resonant relationships between girls and women are crucial for girls' development, for women's psychological health, and also for bringing women's voices fully into the world so that the social construction of reality—the construction of the human world that is institutionalized by society and carried across generations by culture—will be built by and acoustically resonant for both women and men.

The Underground

In beginning this work, however, we were not aware of these dimensions of our study. We came to Laurel School to continue our exploration of women's psychological development by including younger girls and to test the effects of our conversations with young women—their potential educational value and their usefulness as a preventive or therapeutic intervention. In our previous studies we

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had no way of knowing whether the changes we observed were due to the nature of our conversations with women—the way we approached girls and women, the questions we asked, the way we listened and responded to what they said and to what happened between us in the course of the interview session—or whether it was simply our presence as psychologists or psychologists from Harvard, or simply the experience of being interviewed regardless of approach or method. Following standard procedures of research design, we randomly assigned twelve- and fifteen-year-old girls (all of the members of the seventh and tenth grades) to experimental and control groups. With the experimental group, we would use our own approach: an interview composed of a series of questions which were open-ended and designed to encourage people to take us into their psychological world by exploring with us their feelings and thoughts about themselves, their relationships, and their experiences of conflict. With the control group we would use a standard psychological method, by asking girls to respond to a series of hypothetical dilemmas and standardized probe questions. We predicted that it was the relational nature of our conversations with girls that was responsible for the effects we had observed—clinical improvement, developmental progress, a strengthening of voice in relationship.

We joined our interest in exploring systematically the potential benefits of our research interview with our continuing investment in discovering where girls and women experienced conflict in their lives and how they moved in the face of relational problems. Leah Rhys, who was then head of the Laurel School, encouraged us to bring our ongoing project on women's development into the school and involve the full age range of girls at the school. Thus we also decided to interview all of the six- and nine-year-old girls (members of the first and fourth grades) and set up a longitudinal, cross-sectional design by interviewing and then following all of the girls in the first, fourth, seventh, and tenth grades. Our goal was to extend our investigation of women's development to younger girls, to continue to explore changes in adolescent girls over time, and to look for connections between our interview data and standard measures

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of personality development, social growth, cognitive and emotional capabilities. We planned to use academic records, teachers' evaluations, disciplinary records, and girls' own assessments of their experiences as ways of corroborating our interview data.

Yet we proceeded ambivalently with this plan. Our wish to do good psychological research led us into assumptions about control and objectivity and concerns about validity and replicability which left us with a sense of discomfort and unease. The source of our discomfort came over us like a wave as we entered the school to conduct the first set of interviews: the halls were alive with activity, with girls of all ages and from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, dressed in every variation of green and white, working together, eating together, moving from class to class. Over the course of the day, we—a group of thirteen women,¹⁶ most of us strangers to the students—became increasingly aware that we were being watched, labeled ("the tall one," "the young one," "the 60s looking one"), and compared by the girls. Not privy to our lives, our thoughts and feelings—as we soon were to theirs—we were, understandably, regarded with curiosity and suspicion.

And soon after our arrival, as is often the response to situations of inequality, we saw signs of an emerging underground. Within an hour after the first round of interviews, the word was out: there are two interviews—the personal one and the one with the "little stories." The girls responded to our research by aligning themselves against this strange intrusion. In private, we later discovered, they shared their memories of the questions with one another and their parents, reassured their soon-to-be-interviewed friends, began to prepare for their own interviews as best they could by taking in bits of information gathered here and there and rehearsing their "lines." And we could not miss the irony. We came to the school to learn from girls; our work depended on girls' willingness to speak to us from their experience; we hoped that by taking girls' voices seriously we could arrive at a better understanding of women's psychology, and yet we came with a research design that, by definition, presumed no relationship that we would call real relationship—between ourselves and the girls, among the girls, between the girls

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and their teachers and parents. We had come to the school to understand more about girls' responses to a dominant culture that is out of tune with girls' voices and for the most part uninterested in girls' experiences, which objectifies and idealizes young women and at the same time trivializes and denigrates them, and yet unwittingly we set into motion a method of psychological inquiry appropriated from this very system. Constrained by our own design, we found ourselves losing voice and losing relationships in our own research project. "The master's tools," Audre Lorde warns us, "will never dismantle the master's house."¹⁷

Let us add here that this was not our first visit to the school—that by most psychologists' and educators' standards, we were very much in relationship. We had traveled to Laurel many times before we began interviewing the girls; we met with administrators and with the women and men on the faculty; we sat in on classes, consulted with teachers and psychologists working at the school about the phrasing of our interview questions, talked with girls about their thoughts and feelings about being involved in this project, spoke at an Upper School assembly, and answered girls' questions about the interview process, confidentiality, and the research project. Our previous successes and failures left us with a keen sense of the value of working collaboratively; we had learned the importance of involving the people with whom we were working at every level of activity, the need to provide choices and to be sensitive to and work with the particular nuances, climate, atmosphere of the school or community or clinical setting in which we were working. Our own project at Harvard was a collaborative working group of women and men, faculty and students, and we were, we thought, especially sensitive to girls' desire to know about the process, about the nature of the questions we would be asking them, about the safety of the relationship, about our reasons for being at Laurel.

Moreover, some years earlier, we had begun to confront questions of distance and disconnection in our practice as psychologists. We saw our voice-sensitive method lose its psychological resonance when we attempted to bring it into line with standard research practices and to create mutually exclusive categories of analysis.

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Specifically, attempts to create either/or categorizations resulted in simplistic and ultimately untrue ways of describing both women's and men's experiences. To call women connected and men separate seemed to us profoundly misleading; to say that men wanted domination and power while women wanted love and relationship seemed to us to ignore the depths of men's desires for relationship and the anger women feel about not having power in the world. And yet we were consistently hearing differences in the ways in which women and men speak about themselves in relationship and also seeing differences in the positions of women and men in the world.

In trying to bring our work on psychological theory and women's development into line with the practices of our field—to use widely accepted methods and thus to render our work comparable to that of others—we struggled with the problems inherent in commonly used methods of psychological assessment. We wished to create a way of working that sustained other people's voices and our own—to voice the relationship that was at the heart of our psychological work. We were looking for a way to capture the layered nature of psychological experience and also the relational logic of psychological processes. We were trying to understand and respond to and also sustain in our analysis the complex associations people make as they struggle with difficult experiences of conflict in relationships or speak about difficult moments in their lives.¹⁸ Yet although our way of working was centered on voice and listening and thus was akin to clinical and literary methods, our attempt to bring this work into line with standard practices of psychological research broke connection in a myriad subtle and not so subtle ways. Holding firmly to the same questions for each girl, for example, prevented us from following girls to the places they wished to go. We—neutral outsiders, strangers on a train—would ask the questions (provide the stimulus) to which the participants (we had stopped calling them "subjects," which really means, in psychology, "objects") would answer (respond). Then we, the knowing but hidden (powerful, god-like) psychologists, would interpret these responses in the hope of finding in them something true or meaningful (from our view-

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point). Although questions of truth and power and interpretation continuously occupied us, when push came to shove, we fell back on the safety and predictability of old methods—the way we were trained to do psychological work. And although we spoke about the importance of context, of the particularities of a person's life or story, we continued to justify the appropriation of that story into our terms.

Yet as we proceeded with our "experiment" at Laurel, we began to sense that by staying with our method we were in danger of losing the girls. Because we were in some relationship with the school, the girls, and ourselves, we were attuned to what was happening around us. What did it mean, given what felt to us like careful preparation and honest communication, that our presence in the school caused a kind of subterranean shock wave (subterranean for, to the untrained eye, it was barely visible and no one was speaking openly about what was going on) that rippled through the surface calm and quiet of daily activity? What did it mean that our research design, rather than encouraging girls' voices, caused them to scramble for information, to join with those they could trust to tell them what to expect and how to prepare? What did it mean that our presence caused the girls to withdraw their thoughts and feelings, clutch them tightly to themselves like some old familiar handbag full of prized belongings, the contents of which are brought forth and displayed only to the most trusted people in the most private places? Within hours of beginning our research with girls on the experience of being listened to, we had simply become a new version of something to guard against, someone to protect themselves from, to be suspicious of, to be warned against. Perhaps most insidiously we became another reason for girls to feel bad or feel judged—because they were not being open enough with us, not able to speak freely in our presence, not courageous enough or clear enough to contribute to what was generally regarded in the school, and perhaps by them as well, as important work on women's psychology and girls' development. We felt this, and then we overrode our own feelings. As women we found this easy to do.

These impressions, however vivid and pressing in the moment,

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however alive in our research group immediately after the first round of interviews, faded somewhat over the next year as we began what we then considered to be the more important work of data analysis—the slow, deliberate process of transcribing tapes, taking in and interpreting girls' voices. But in September of the second year, a singular event in the life of the study occurred: an event that would bring these passing impressions and questions about relationships to the very center of our work.

We had made the increasingly familiar journey to Cleveland at the beginning of the second year of the project to talk with the faculty and staff at the school about what we were learning from our interviews with the girls. We gathered in the Middle School library, the walls covered with bright paintings, mobiles floating overhead depicting scenes from the girls' favorite books. The faculty sat in rows with a long aisle running down the center of the room. Reflecting our relationship to the school at that time, we sat in front on a just slightly raised platform.

We spoke about an initial finding of the research: that many of the girls had publicly agreed to an honor code in which they did not believe. In the privacy of our interview sessions, girls spoke about their responses to honor code violations, describing the relational problems they faced.¹⁹ Because they did not see any way to speak of these problems in the public arena, many girls had taken matters of public governance into a private world of relationships and settled them in private places. Drawing on their extensive psychological knowledge of relationships and feelings, they often arrived at complex and creative solutions to difficult relational problems. Yet these solutions, although sometimes elaborate, were unknown, and therefore unacknowledged and unappreciated, within the public world of the school.

We suggested that to educate girls who as women would be likely to participate fully as citizens of a democratic state, it seemed necessary to encourage girls to treat matters of public governance as political matters, to bring their relational knowledge into the public arena, and to speak openly of their differences and their disagreements. At this, Louise Grip, an upper school teacher, sitting

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in the front row, to our right, raised her hand. "How can we help girls learn to deal with disagreement in public," she asked—scanning the faces of her colleagues, women and men—"when we," meaning now women, "cannot deal with disagreement in public ourselves?" Her question electrified the room. Afterwards, outside in the hall, another teacher spoke of her eleven-year-old daughter, who said that she was angry at her mother because when her mother and father disagreed, her mother always gave in. "I was so humiliated," the teacher said; "I was so ashamed."

The initial discomfort we felt when we entered the school with our experiment came flooding back. Like the teachers and administrators in the school, we had been tracing the visible activity and movement of the girls in response to our presence, choosing to ignore the low rumblings of trouble and respond only to their compliance, to welcome their cooperation and their public courtesies. Like the honor code system in the school, we had imposed a structure that had created the need for an underground. The word "collaboration" we used so freely to describe our work now seemed to take on a darker meaning. While as researchers we could question the discrepancy between the surface reality of girls' compliance with the school's honor code and their underground knowledge from a safe, professional distance, we now recognized our unwitting contribution to this discrepancy in girls' lives. Not wanting to collaborate in silencing girls' public voices, we began to take our study, as it was designed, apart and listen to the girls who expressed frustration with the limits we imposed on relationship. We began to hear girls' anger at feeling used when we asked them to fill out standard psychological measures, we began to hear their questions and their requests to spend more time with us so that we could talk together about what we were finding, their wish for a chance to add to and disagree with our interpretations, their desire to know what we were saying about them in public settings and to say how this made them feel.

We had come to this school to study girls with clear questions and a research design to implement, with a sense of our role and authority, and we found ourselves increasingly in the throes of an

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ever-changing and uncertain relationship, moved along by deep feeling for the girls we were coming to know more intimately from one year to the next. Questions that were once distinctly ours were transforming as we began to take in questions posed by the girls and the women at the school. No longer steeped in a dispassionate discipline of testing and assessment, we entered into relationships which changed with each new encounter, and we began to learn from the girls and the women who were now joining us in this study.

Clearly we needed a different way of working and a method which did not interfere with our ability to listen to ourselves and to others but which enabled us to bring our knowledge as women and as psychologists into relationship with our work. And since part of what we know as women has to do with the pervasiveness of androcentric and patriarchal norms, values, and societal structures, such a practice would be both responsive to others' voices and yet resistant to the dominant voices, the cultural overlays that serve to drown out, mute, or distort the voices of those with less power or authority. We needed, it seemed, to create a practice of psychology that was something more like a practice of relationship. Acknowledging our own power to listen and name and potentially distort the words of others, we sought to create a responsive and resisting practice that was tied to a way of listening to others. Thus we created a "Listener's Guide" that had, built in, the space for a girl to speak in her own voice and thus to refuse the established story of a white, middle-class heterosexual woman's life, a story all girls in this culture—whether they are white or of color, rich or poor, heterosexual or lesbian—struggle against, albeit in different ways. Our goal was to create a collaboration and a relational method that, rather than upholding the usual lines of division, provided a way to come into relationship with another person.

We could not have made this move without the girls—without their insights, their questions, their resistance. As we moved into more genuine dialogue with one another and with the girls in the study, the girls in turn invited us to join them in deeper levels of understanding. Our work gained a clarity we had not experienced before. Out of what could be seen as a collapse in form—a letting

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go of our planned research design for the messiness and unpredictability and vulnerability of ongoing relationship—a way of working emerged which felt more genuine and mutual, precarious at first, disruptive, unsettling to those of us used to our authority and control in professional situations and in the conduct of psychological research.

This book reports our journey of discovery. Listening to girls and to ourselves over the five years of this study, we heard something we had not heard before. In the next chapter, we present our Listener's Guide—a voice-sensitive way of working that allowed us to follow girls' thoughts and feelings and to hear girls' struggle at adolescence. Then, following the presentation of our method, we turn to a developmental narrative, listening to girls at three different ages speak about themselves and their relationships and then following individual girls over time, listening closely to the changes in their distinct voices from one year to the next, addressing at times our successes and failures in responding to what girls feel and think and therefore know. Listening to these girls over the five years of the study, we attempt to describe the psychological parameters and the developmental or educational implications of the struggle we heard as they moved from childhood into adolescence—a struggle most visible and audible at the edge of adolescence. We interpret this struggle as a healthy resistance to losses and disconnections that are psychologically wounding.

In elucidating how a group of girls travel through childhood and adolescence and reporting on our own journey of discovery as well, we will focus on the tension between political resistance and psychological resistance. The tendency for a healthy resistance to turn political and for a political resistance to turn into a psychological resistance becomes central to our understanding of the difficulties and psychological suffering that many of these privileged or fortunate girls experience. At adolescence, we saw women's psychological development becoming inescapably political.

Although it seems at first counter-intuitive that women would learn from girls, we have been profoundly affected by the girls who took part in our research. We do not claim that these girls are

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representative of girls in general, but that their voices are worth listening to and taking seriously. From this particular group of girls we have learned about some of the darker places in women's development, including the processes of dissociation and disconnection which play a central role in women's psychological lives. By joining our understanding of these girls' development and its implications for the psychology of women with the creation of a psychology that is a practice of relationship, we are brought face to face with difficult questions of truthfulness and authenticity in relationships between girls and women and among women as well. Widening the conversation to include ourselves and our profession, we have found ourselves in the presence of what Adrienne Rich calls amnesia—the silence of the unconscious. More specifically, we came to remember the forgetting of our girlhood by going back through the disconnections of adolescence. Truth, Rich adds, is "not one thing, or even a system" but "an increasing complexity,"²⁰ and in this work we attempt to move to deeper understanding by staying with the complexity of what girls know from their experience and not abandoning what we—in part through this work—have come to know ourselves.

The Harmonics of Relationship

In the early spring of 1988, prior to the third year of interviews, we and our research group—Elizabeth Debold, Judy Dorney, Barb Miller, Annie Rogers, Steve Sherblom, and Mark Tappan—gathered for our weekly project meeting.¹ In retrospect this particular meeting was significant, since we began to name the tension we had been feeling about the research design of the study. Sitting around an oblong wooden table in a small windowless seminar room, those of us who had interviewed the girls began to articulate what first felt like a general feeling of concern and a vague sense of loss: the outspokenness and resilience of the younger girls seemed to be in jeopardy, and we had been unable or unwilling to express the sadness and disappointment we were feeling. Many of the questions we had asked, moreover, did not seem right; they were no longer useful, they seemed to be cutting off girls' voices, preventing them from speaking from their experiences.

In the face of this emerging awareness, we considered the costs and benefits of continuing with our research design: if we repeated the questions we had asked the previous years, we would gain a standard comparison, but at the risk of ignoring what we were seeing and feeling and turning away from our emerging questions, perhaps even at the risk of losing the girls. The answer suddenly seemed clear—we would stay in relationship with the girls and move where they seemed to be taking us, change our design and rewrite our questions so that we could explore the changes we were hearing in

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girls' voices. We would give up the experimental and control groups and talk with all the girls in a more open-ended, flexible manner.

Giving ourselves the freedom to stay with our feelings and articulate our most pressing questions, we had to face more difficult issues: What, in fact, did the girls seem to be struggling to say? Where were their moments of silence and resistance, their moments of pleasure and ease? What questions would we ask to encourage their voices? Over the course of hours, we attempted to sort out which questions worked and also to create new questions that we felt addressed directly what girls seemed to be saying indirectly over and over. For example, we heard girls at the edge of adolescence imply that what they were experiencing seemed at odds with what others were calling reality. After a long discussion, Annie Rogers phrased the question: "Can you tell me about a time when what you were feeling and thinking was not what others were saying and doing?" Elizabeth Debold and Judy Dorney, who had been reading girls' responses to questions about their ways of knowing,² guided us as we developed new questions that we felt would draw out girls' experiences of knowing and not knowing—recognizing that girls became more engaged when asked to speak and tell stories about their lives. In addition to these changes in the content of the interviews, we decided to let go of the self-imposed pressure to cover every question on the interview protocol. Instead, we would use questions as openings, as pathways into relationships with girls in which they would feel free and able to speak their thoughts and their feelings. We would follow the associative logic of girls' psyches, we would move where the girls led us.

This decision to listen to ourselves and to the girls led us away from standard procedures for analyzing interview data and to the creation of a voice-centered, relational method of doing psychological research. Initially, our approach in listening to women's voices and the voices of psychological theory had been clinical and literary, and this approach led us to hear and specify differences between women's experiences of self and approaches to relational conflicts and the conceptions of self and morality that were prevalent within psychology, institutionalized within society, and part of the domi-

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nant culture.³ Women's voices, in articulating a connected sense of self and approaches to conflict that centered on strengthening or maintaining relationship, were different voices within a male-voiced world. In an effort to bring this work into line with standard practices of psychological research, Nona Lyons created a coding system to explore further the contrasts between a connected sense of self and a separate sense of self and the relationships between different conceptions of self and the moral voices of justice and care.⁴ When we engaged more deeply with the psychological struggles we were hearing and feeling in listening to girls, we returned to a more clinical and literary approach and listened for movement within the interview session, for stops and starts, for silences and struggles. And we turned our attention to developing and formulating a systematic method for interpreting these movements and listening to the complexities of voice in relationship.⁵

Voice is central to our way of working—our channel of connection, a pathway that brings the inner psychic world of feelings and thoughts out into the open air of relationship where it can be heard by oneself and by other people. The physicality of voice—its sounds, resonances, vibrations—gives our work its naturalistic grounding, and the re-sounding by girls of voices that may have been muted or covered over by women is key to the physics of relationship and the relational nature of our psychological work. Voice, because it is embodied, connects rather than separates psyche and body; because voice is in language, it also joins psyche and culture. Voice is inherently relational—one does not require a mirror to hear oneself—yet the sounds of one's voice change in resonance depending on the relational acoustics: whether one is heard or not heard, how one is responded to (by oneself and by other people).⁶

As we listened for voice (girls' voices and our own) and followed girls' moving in and out of relationship with us and our moving in and out of relationship with them, we began to hear girls enacting and describing psychological processes such as dissociation and found ourselves witnessing the onset of relational struggles that plague many women. Voice became key insofar as girls feel pressure to become selfless or without a voice in relationships, and the

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experience of self in the sense of having a voice became central to girls' experience of authentic relationship. Following girls' voices, we listened for girls' sense of themselves—the way they spoke of themselves, the presence and absence of an "I" in their stories of relational conflicts. Morality, or the voice that speaks of how one should or would like to act in relationships, became of interest to us at this point primarily insofar as moral language carries the force of institutionalized social norms and cultural values into relationships and psychic life. Listening to girls' voices, we heard the degree to which morality, in a male-voiced culture and a male-governed society, justifies certain psychologically debilitating moves which girls and women are encouraged to make in relationships and creates internal as well as external barriers to girls' ability to speak in relationships and move freely in the world.

Over the course of many meetings, many conversations, we came to the way of working that guides our interpretations of the interviews in this study, a method that centers on voice and that offers a guide into relationship with another person.

Centering on Voice

Four questions about voice attune one's ear to the harmonics of relationship: (1) Who is speaking? (2) In what body? (3) Telling what story about relationship—from whose perspective or from what vantage point? (4) In what societal and cultural frameworks? To ask who is speaking tunes one's ear to the voice of the person as a distinct voice, a new voice—a voice worth listening to. To ask about the body, about the relational story which is being told, and about the societal and cultural frameworks is to inquire into differences that are psychologically meaningful—one's body, one's experience of relationships and how one tells that story at a particular time, one's societal position, one's cultural groundings. These questions about voice reveal the dominant voice in the field of psychology (the voice generally taken to be not a voice but the truth) to be oracular, disembodied, seemingly objective and dispassionate. Yet, paradoxically, this "objective and disembodied" voice has pre-

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sumed, at least implicitly, a male body, a story about relationship that is, at its center, a story about separation, and a society that men govern within the framework of Western civilization. By listening to women and to girls and bringing their voices into the center of psychological theory and research, we are changing the voice, the body, and also the story about relationships (including the point of view on the canonical story), shifting the societal location, and, by the work itself, attempting to change the cultural framework. In essence, we have been reframing psychology as a practice of relationship by voicing the relationships that are at the heart of psychological inquiry and growth.

To ask what relationships are good or beneficial for girls and for women—as we asked in setting out to discover whether our research interview was preventive of psychological problems or served to encourage psychological health and development—is also to ask about ourselves and our practice. As psychologists, we are in positions of some authority and power, able to (licensed to) treat people, assess people, test people, write about people in ways that affect their lives, their feelings and thoughts about themselves and about others, their economic and social opportunities. Questions about voice, authority, truth, and relationships, which may be academic within other disciplines, become, within the field of psychology, highly personal and highly political questions.

Recasting psychology as a relational practice, we attend to the relational dimensions of our listening, speaking, taking in, interpreting, and writing about the words and the silences, the stories and the narratives of other people. Our way into relationship with another is through the avenue of voice, and we have built into our method the space for a woman or girl to speak in her own voice. Since each voice is different and every relationship is, by definition, a fluid, ever-changing, and unique experience, we have created a “guide to listening”—a pathway into relationship rather than a fixed framework for interpretation.

Maintaining voice, and therefore difference, we ask not only who is speaking but who is listening, and this relational understanding of the research process shifts the nature of psychological work from

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a profession of truth to a practice of relationship in which truths can emerge or become clear. Instead of holding as an ideal a no-voice voice or an objective stance—a way of speaking or seeing that is disembodied, outside of relationship, in no particular time or place—we seek to ground our work empirically, in experience, and in the realities of relationship and of difference, of time and place. Our claim, therefore, in presenting this work is not that the girls we spoke with are representative of all girls or some ideal sample of girls, but rather that we learned from this group of girls and young women, and what we discovered seemed worthy of others' attention.

Our effort to find ways of speaking about human experience in a manner that re-sounds its relational nature and carries the polyphony of voice, as well as the ever-changing or moving-through-time quality of the sense of self and the experience of relationship, has led us to shift the metaphoric language psychologists traditionally have used in speaking of change and development from an atomistic, positional, architectural, and highly visual language of structures, steps, and stages to a more associative and musical language of movement and feeling that better conveys the complexity of the voices we hear and the psychological processes we wish to understand. At times we pick up and extend metaphors that girls and young women we interview use in describing their experiences, at times we draw on language used by women poets and novelists who write about girls' and women's lives, at times we draw from music a language of voices, counterpoint, and theme.⁷ We make these shifts in metaphor in full awareness that androcentricity is deeply rooted in the language of psychology and that the metaphoric quality of that language is often given the status of reality or truth.

We know that voice, as a channel of psychic expression, is polyphonic and complex. Our Listener's Guide lays out both a literary and a clinical approach—a method or way of working that is responsive to the harmonics of psychic life, the nonlinear, recursive, nontransparent play, interplay, and orchestration of feelings and thoughts, the polyphonic nature of any utterance, and the symbolic nature not only of what is said but also of what is not said.

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We know that women, in particular, often speak in indirect discourse, in voices deeply encoded, deliberately or unwittingly opaque. As white heterosexual women living in the context of twentieth-century North America—as women whose families in childhood were working-class and Jewish, respectively—we know from our own experience about certain strategies of resistance, both the dangers of an outspoken political resistance and the corrosive suffering of a silent psychological resistance. We also know about capitulation—about complicity and accommodation. Therefore, our Listener's Guide—as well as being a relational method, responsive to different voices—is also a feminist method, concerned particularly with the reality of men's power at this time in history and its effects on girls and women as speakers and listeners, as knowers and actors in the world.

We provide, below, a general description of our Listener's Guide and the way it enables relationship by taking in another's voice. In doing so, we attempt to clarify the literary, the clinical, and the feminist nature of our method. Then we address three questions: Why use this method? What can it offer a listener interested in exploring psychic life? How can it help someone who is invested in the process of healthy psychological development—a parent, a teacher, a therapist, a friend—to hear and follow the clarity, confusion, encouragement, and discouragement of voice and relationship? Listening to Neeeti, a student at Laurel, first at twelve years of age and then at thirteen, we follow her voice and listen to the ways her voice guides us into her relationships and brings into our relationship with her a rendering of what we have come to identify as a critical moment or crossroads in women's psychological development.⁸ We suggest that the moments where Neeeti struggles to know what she knows and to speak her feelings and her thoughts reveal the canonical no-voice voice that girls take in to be a real voice—that is, Neeeti's experiences of relational impasse make clear what is tacit, what goes unsaid because it is so much a part of the culture that it is assumed to be real and taken for granted. Embedding voice in a body and in a relational and societal context thus paradoxically allows girls' and women's voices (and those of others

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who struggle to speak and be listened to within the current framework) to be heard and at least partially understood. The fact that Neeeti is bi-cultural and of color may underscore these realities and these differences for her.

A Listener's Guide

Guided by our voice-sensitive method, we listen to a person's story at least four times. In this way, we begin to sort out different voices that run through the narrative and compose a polyphonic or orchestral rendering of its psychology and its politics. We use the term "listening" to describe our way of working because it joins our conversations with girls with our listening to audio-tapes and reading over interview transcripts. Our voice-centered approach thus transforms the act of reading into an act of listening, as the reader takes in different voices and follows their movement through the interview.

In the course of many years of interviewing or speaking with people about their lives, we have come to appreciate the power and the complexity, as well as the oddity, of this experience for both speaker and listener: two strangers, sitting together, speaking together—sometimes for the first time, sometimes for the only time—one initiating the conversation by asking questions, the other responding, separated always by the quiet murmuring of the tape whirring and running its course. There is something strange and fascinating in the way these separations can fade into intense conversation over the course of an hour or more. When a conversation has different meanings for the people engaged in it and especially when one of the two has the power to structure the meeting, it is important to ask whether there can be genuine dialogue. The interview, to be sure, is a conversation of a different sort from the conversations we are used to in everyday life: it is both private and public, informal and formal, lived in the present but preserved for the future.

Although, as we have explained, we came to Laurel with an agenda, carefully worked out and in part recorded on the pages of

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questions we brought to our interviews, our explicit reason for talking with the girls was to learn from them about girls' experiences. Over the years of the study, conversations that were at first somewhat stilted and formal became more relaxed, more mutual—in part because the girls came to know us and feel more comfortable, in part because we revised our questions and shifted our approach. We became more curious and less directive, more interested in following the girls' lead; they in turn became more invested in teaching us what they know, more disruptive, more outspoken, and also more playful, warmer, more genuinely in relationship. As a result, our later interviews were distinctly different from the earlier ones—more clearly in the spirit of genuine back-and-forth conversation, more dialogue than question and response. This shift affected the development of our Listener's Guide and also turned our attention to the relational dynamics of the interview process, the dramatic nature of this meeting between a girl and a woman. Embracing our participation in the interview led naturally to questions about the nature of these relationships—the importance of acknowledging our power to shape or expand the dialogue, the ways in which we came to love and care about the girls and to feel their connection with us, the ways in which our feelings and thoughts and experiences moved in response to what we were taking in and affected the ways we spoke with girls, and the ways we interpreted the interviews and heard their voices.

The four listenings suggested by our guide are ways into the complexity of voice and relationship. Working with audio-tapes and transcriptions enables us to sound and re-sound, trace and retrace voice(s) through the interview process. At the same time, we note the myriad shifts that occur in moving from the present moment of the relational drama to the audio-tape of the conversation, to the written record or transcription.⁹

Listening for the polyphony of voice, we hear the voice of the speaking self or first-person "I" and the relational voices that carry different ways of being in relationship. Individual words and phrases are meaningless in and of themselves to explain the "living utterance,"¹⁰ because the living language, like the living person, exists

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in a web of relationships. A person's meaning becomes clear only if the relational context of speaking is maintained. By voicing the relational context of human living and also the dialogic nature of speaking and listening, our method offers a way of tracing and untangling the relationships that constitute psychic life, including our relationships with the people involved in our studies and our responses to their experiences and stories.

The first time through the interview, we listen to the story the person tells: the geography of this psychological landscape, the plot (in both senses of the word). Our goal is to get a sense of what is happening, to follow the unfolding of events, to listen to the drama (the who, what, when, where, and why of the narrative).¹¹ Like a literary critic or a psychotherapist, we attend to recurring words and images, central metaphors, emotional resonances, contradictions or inconsistencies in style, revisions and absences in the story, as well as shifts in the sound of the voice and in narrative position: the use of first-, second-, or third-person narration. In this way, we locate the speaker in the narrative she tells. In addition, this first listening requires that we reflect on ourselves as people in the privileged position of interpreting the life events of another and consider the implications of this act. An awareness of the power to name and control meaning is critical; and to avoid abuses of this power, we name and think about the meaning of our own feelings and thoughts about the narrator and about her story. In what ways do we identify with or distance ourselves from this person? In what ways are we or our experiences different or the same? Where are we confused or puzzled? Where are we certain? Are we upset or delighted by the story, amused or pleased, disturbed or angered? Writing out our responses to what we are hearing, we then consider how our thoughts and feelings may affect our understanding, our interpretation, and the way we write about that person.

The second time through the interview text, we listen for "self"—for the voice of the "I" speaking in this relationship. We find this listening for the voice of the other to be crucial. It brings us into relationship with that person, in part by ensuring that the sound of her voice enters our psyche and in part by discovering how she

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speaks of herself before we speak of her. Thus we include her voice in our description of her, attempt to know her on her own terms, discover the resonances in our own psyche, respond to what she is saying emotionally as well as intellectually. Like Adrienne Rich, who describes her own process of coming to know the work of Emily Dickinson, we encounter not simply a text but rather the "heart and mind" of another; we "come into close contact with an interior—a power, a creativity, a suffering, a vision—that is *not* identical with [our] own."¹² As the other's words enter our psyche, a process of connection begins between her thoughts and feelings and our thoughts and feelings in response, so that she affects us and we begin to learn from her—about her, about ourselves, and about the world we share in common, especially the world of relationships.

Once we let the voice of another enter our psyche, we can no longer claim a detached or objective position. We are affected, changed by that voice, by words that may lead us to think or feel a variety of things—that may turn our thoughts in new directions and may cause us to feel sad, or happy, or jealous, or angry, or bored, or frustrated, or comforted, or hopeful. But by taking in the voice of another, we gain the sense of an entry, an opening, a connection with another person's psychic life. In this relational reframing of psychology, relationship or connection is key to psychological inquiry. Rather than blurring perspective or clouding judgment with feelings, relationship is the way of knowing, an opening between self and other that creates a channel for discovery, an avenue to knowledge.

These first two listenings—for the plot and for the voice of the "I" or self—bring the listener into responsive relationship with the person speaking and thus are key to what we mean by calling our approach a relational method. Moreover, in emphasizing the importance of becoming an empathic and responsive listener, we connect our way of working with empathic approaches to psychotherapy and reader-response approaches to literary analysis. But in so doing we are mindful of Patrocinio Schweickart's critique of such approaches for making no claims to feminism and thus neglecting

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"issues of race, class and sex," and for giving "no hint of the conflicts, sufferings, and passions that attend these realities."¹³ Our *responsive* Listener's Guide, in attending to realities of race, class, and sex (who is speaking, in what body, telling what story of relationship—from whose perspective, in what societal and cultural frameworks?), is therefore also a *resisting* Listener's Guide, that is, a feminist method. As resisting listeners, like Judith Fetterley's resisting reader, we question "the very posture of the apolitical"; we give "voice to a different reality and different vision . . . [bring] a different subjectivity to bear on the old 'universality'" and thus politicize it.¹⁴ In listening to girls' and women's voices, we listen for and against conventions of relationship within a society and culture that are rooted psychologically in the experiences of men.

In the third and fourth listenings, then, we attend to the ways people talk about relationships—how they experience themselves in the relational landscape of human life. In working with girls and women, we are particularly attentive to their struggles for relationships that are authentic or resonant, that is, relationships in which they can freely express themselves or speak their feelings and thoughts and be heard. And we are also attuned to the ways in which institutionalized restraints and cultural norms and values become moral voices that silence voices, constrain the expression of feelings and thoughts, and consequently narrow relationships, carrying implicit or explicit threats of exclusion, violation, and at the extreme, violence.¹⁵ As resisting listeners, therefore, we make an effort to distinguish when relationships are narrowed and distorted by gender stereotypes or used as opportunities for distancing, abuse, subordination, invalidation, or other forms of psychological violation, physical violence, and oppression, and when relationships are healthy, joyous, encouraging, freeing, and empowering. Because girls come up to a chasm between what they know about relationship through experience and what is socially constructed as Relationship within a male-voiced culture, and because women struggle with this experience/"reality" split, it is particularly important to name not only the vulnerabilities inherent in relationship but also

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the dangers in the prevailing conventions of relationship.¹⁶ Specifically we are referring to the encouragement of self-sacrifice or self-silencing and the holding out of purity and perfection as conditions for relationship and the mark of good women, in the case of the feminine ideal, and, in the case of the masculine ideal, the encouragement of self-aggrandizement and the desire to be in the dominant position, to be in control.

As resisting listeners, we thus are aware of, and through this awareness attempt to extricate ourselves from, the constraints of a patriarchal logic, to create a space to define or "revision" the experience of self and the nature of relationship in a way that is in tune with the voices of both women and men. We do this by listening in the interviews for signs of self-silencing or capitulation to debilitating cultural norms and values—times when a person buries her feelings and thoughts and manifests confusion, uncertainty, and dissociation, which are the marks of a psychological resistance. We also listen for signs of political resistance, times when people struggle against abusive relationships and fight for relationships in which it is possible for them to disagree openly with others, to feel and speak a full range of emotions. This process of voicing, as Kate Millett says, "a system of power [so] thoroughly in command, it has scarcely [a] need to speak itself aloud,"¹⁷ provides, we suggest, a way to move beneath the prevailing conventions and to understand how those not heard as full human beings within such a system exist and resist, how they create and maintain their humanity both above ground and underground.

Our voice-centered method thus is an attempt to maintain the relationships which are central to the process of psychological growth and also the process of our inquiry by maintaining voice and thus articulating difference. Within the societal and cultural contexts in which we are working, our method strives, as Fetterley puts it, "to expose and question that complex of ideas and mythologies about women and men which exists in our society,"¹⁸ and also "to see," as Rich says, "the assumptions in which we are drowned."¹⁹ In pursuing these relational truths and realities (the need for both

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self and other to have a voice, the social and cultural context of speaking and listening), we have learned from our work with girls and women, from other psychologists who have stayed with women's voices,²⁰ and from feminist literary critics who have contributed to what Rich calls "revision"—"the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction."²¹ In Virginia Woolf's terms, we are attempting "to find new words and create new methods"²² by bringing women's voices into psychology and thus creating a new voice for psychology—a voice more resonant with people's lives.

Voicing Resistance

To illustrate the use of our Listener's Guide, we turn to Neeti, a twelve-year-old girl of Indian descent, the daughter of a biochemist and an executive, a seventh grader at Laurel School. Using this method, what can a responsive, resisting listener say about Neeti's experience of herself and her relationships? Here we listen to Neeti speaking at age twelve, and then a year later at age thirteen.

Listening the first time, we hear Neeti tell a story of relational conflict in which she is willing to take on an intransigent camp guide, and risk getting yelled at, on behalf of her homesick cousin:

When we were at camp [two years ago], I went to camp with my sister and my cousin, and he was really young . . . He was, like, maybe seven, and he got really, really homesick. It was overnight. And he was, like, always crying at night and stuff. And we had this camp guide who was really tough, and I was kind of afraid of him . . . And he said, "Nobody's allowed to use the phone." And so my cousin really wanted to call his parents. And it was kind of up to me to go ask the guy if he could. So, either, like, I got bawled out by this guy and asked, or I didn't do anything about it. And he was my cousin, so I had to help him. So I went, so I asked the guy if he could use the phone, and he started giving me this lecture about how there shouldn't be homesickness in this camp. And I said, "Sorry, but he's only seven." And he was really young, and so he finally got to use the phone. So he used the

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phone, and then we had a camp meeting, and, um, the guy started saying, "Any kid here who gets homesick shouldn't be here." And he didn't say my cousin's name, but he was, like, almost in tears.

Neeti's story, it seems to us, is about her cousin's homesickness, the intransigence of a camp director, and her decision, despite her fear, to help her cousin call his parents. The conflict was, she says succinctly, "me saving myself or saving him." She decided to help her cousin because "nothing bad was going to happen to me"; the camp director might intimidate her and hurt her feelings, but he "can't beat me up or anything." Neeti realized that "it was worth, like, letting [my cousin] talk to his parents . . . My cousin was screaming, has nightmares . . . He wasn't being able to have any fun and he paid for [the camp] . . . He was like almost sick, you know. That's why I guess they call it homesick." The camp director, she thinks, "was really callous." Looking back, Neeti says that it's obvious that her decision was right, at least for her. "It might not be for you or somebody else, but it's helping out my cousin and that camp director, it's a rule, but people are more important than rules." Besides, she notes, the camp director was contradicting himself; they say, "We're here to help our kids, to make them have fun." Her cousin, she observes, "wasn't having fun, he was just contradicting the whole slogan."

Listening to this narrative of relational conflict, we note that Neeti states the problem on several levels: as a conflict between saving herself and saving her cousin, as a conflict between people and rules, and as a conflict between doing nothing and doing something in a situation where she sees the possibility of doing something to help. The relationships mentioned are Neeti's relationships with her cousin, with herself, with the camp director, and with her friends, as well as the cousin's relationship with his parents. A possible contradiction in the story is between Neeti's sense that the right thing was obvious and she did the right thing, and her experience of conflict.

As we take in Neeti's voice, we respond to Neeti's story, recording places of connection and disconnection between Neeti's experience

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and our own. As listeners, we ask ourselves what we know about Neeti from this story and what this might mean for our interpretation. Through this connection, we draw attention to the powerful act of one person, the listener, interpreting—"naming"—the experience of another who only speaks within a narrative about a conflict that she lived. In Neeti's case, we recall our own experiences of summer camp and how powerful the counselors were, how the rules which were enforced sometimes seemed arbitrary and unfair. As white, educationally advantaged women, we also wonder about Neeti's ethnicity and how this affects her choice or her sense of obligation to protect her young cousin, or if Neeti's privilege gives her confidence that the system will protect her—confidence we do not remember having at that age. In this way we attend to what we know and don't know about Neeti, and what she knows about herself, to raise questions about her telling and interpretation of the story.

The second time through the story we listen to the way Neeti speaks about herself. Returning to the beginning of her narrative, we now listen for Neeti as the feeling, thinking, acting "I," as the protagonist in her drama of relational conflict. Here is Neeti's story in first person:

I went to camp . . . I was kind of afraid of him . . . and I was really afraid of him . . . It was kind of up to me . . . Either, like, I got bawled out by this guy and asked or I didn't do anything about it . . . I had to help him . . . So I went, so I asked . . . I said, "Sorry, but he's only seven" . . . I said, "This guy can, he can intimidate me but he can't beat me up" . . . I'll realize . . . I have to do this . . . I mean . . . I'm sure, I was sure . . . He was my cousin, you know, and we've always been kind of close . . . Either I helped him out or, I helped my, or I didn't, like that was for him, or I couldn't go for myself because I didn't want to be like . . . I was really afraid . . . It was me saving myself or saving him . . . I mean . . . nothing bad was going to happen to me . . . So I realized . . . so I guess he did kind of realize . . . I mean I would never see that guy again . . . But I lived . . . I lived with my cousin . . . I would never see that guy again . . . It's just like my feelings

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being hurt and I hate being yelled at . . . I guess . . . I'm sure . . . the way I saw it . . . So I don't . . . I guess . . . I guess . . . I know . . . I was really surprised . . . I felt really good but I felt really bad . . . I did something for him . . . And it's kind of like a victory . . . I'm sure . . . I don't know what it was . . . It's obvious that was right . . . it is for me . . . I felt it . . . I could have gotten out of it easily . . . It wasn't my feeling . . . I wasn't feeling what he was feeling . . . I did have a little empathy, but, you know, not that much . . . I could have gotten out of it and said "I'm not going up to that camp director" . . . I almost felt like he did in a way, so I did, I did go up, you know, because I felt miserable having him feel miserable.

Neeti's voice carries the sound of a candid, confident, psychologically astute and shrewd twelve-year-old, concerned about her cousin and also about herself, indignant at the camp director's lack of concern, sure of her perceptions and judgments, stubborn, determined, and capable of making intriguing observations: "Either you feel it, like all the way, or you just, like, recognize it" (referring to the difference between her response to her cousin's homesickness and that of her friends).

Attending to how she speaks about herself in this drama, we hear Neeti's fear of the camp director ("I was afraid of him," she says three separate times) and also her clarity: Although the camp director says "kids are having fun," she sees that her cousin is not having any fun and she goes with her perceptions. Neeti's ability to do this rests in part on her certainty that, although the director, who is "a big bully and he can have anything the way he wants it," might yell at her, he cannot physically hurt her. Knowing this, Neeti speaks from her experience, saying what she sees and hears: She sees her cousin's obvious distress; she *hears* his crying and screaming at night. And, taking in the evidence of her senses, she trusts her experiences to guide her understanding: "He was like almost sick, you know. That's why I guess they call it homesick." At the risk of being yelled at, and in the face of the camp director's admonishments, which are supported by the camp rules, Neeti finally determines that "I have to do this." This sense of imperative comes in

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part from Neeti's experience of relational reality, especially her sense of herself in relationship with her cousin.

Listening a third time, we hear Neeti speak about a relationship with her cousin that seems genuine to her. Neeti describes her understanding of this relationship and her response to her cousin who is in great emotional distress:

He was really young. He was like maybe seven, and he got really, really homesick. It was overnight. And he was, like, always crying at night and stuff . . . And so my cousin really wanted to call his parents . . . And he was my cousin, so I had to help him . . . And I said, "Sorry, but he's only seven" . . . He was, like, almost in tears . . . The right thing was to go because it was for my cousin's good, you know. And he wasn't going to die or anything but, you know, he's like afraid to go to camp now, because he's like nine now. And he's like, he doesn't want to go back . . . This guy can, he can intimidate me, but he can't beat me up or anything . . . I'll realize that that's just the way he is, but I have to do this . . . just help [my cousin] out . . . The conflict was that, like, it was like, he was my cousin, you know, and we've always been kind of close . . . It was me saving myself or saving him . . . Nothing bad was going to happen to me . . . He felt a lot better . . . My cousin was screaming, has nightmares, and it was really bad, he was with all his friends . . . My cousin lives seven minutes away from us, so I lived with my cousin, but I would never see that [camp director] again . . . [What was at stake was] kind of like the ego, you know, it's like nothing physically and nothing that anybody else would see. It's just like my feelings being hurt and I hate being yelled at . . . But my cousin, he was like feeling really, really low . . . really bad. He was like almost sick . . . It's like, either you feel it, like all the way, or you just, like, recognize it, you know? . . . It's helping out my cousin and that camp director, you know, it's a rule, but people are more important than rules . . . He was just a little kid . . . My cousin wasn't having fun . . . He was, like, really close, but I wasn't feeling what he was feeling, so like I did have a little empathy but, you know, not that much . . . He was, like, very miserable and I almost felt like he did in a way, so I did, I did go up, you know, because I felt miserable having him feel miserable.

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Listening in this way, we hear Neeti speak of her relationship with her cousin—"we've always been kind of close"—and her feelings in response to his pain—"I did have a little empathy but, you know, not that much . . . I almost felt like he did in a way." Neeti's attunement to the feelings of her cousin and her response to his feelings are tied in with her own feelings because her cousin's unhappiness affects her. His feelings are not the same as her feelings, as she states clearly; he is not she. Implicitly resisting conventional notions of selflessness and self-sacrifice associated with feminine ideals of love and caring, Neeti's voice draws the listener's attention, instead, to her knowledge of human relationships and psychological processes, knowledge that suggests close and careful observations. And when the camp director does not acknowledge her cousin's distress, when he responds by giving her a lecture "about how there shouldn't be homesickness in this camp," we hear Neeti's resistance to his view when she points to the visible signs of her cousin's distress and replies, "Sorry, but he's only seven."

Listening, finally, for what Neeti identifies as false relationships, as relationships in which people cannot speak or are not heard, we hear Neeti focus on the camp director and express her feelings about his power over her and her cousin:

We had this camp guide who was really tough and I was kind of afraid of him . . . and I was really afraid of him. And he said, "Nobody's allowed to use the phone." And so my cousin really wanted to call his parents . . . So either, like, I got bawled out by this guy and asked, or I didn't do anything about it. And he was my cousin, so I had to help him . . . So I went, so I asked . . . and he started giving me this lecture about how there shouldn't be homesickness in this camp. And I said, "Sorry, but he's only seven" . . . We had a camp meeting . . . and, um, the guy started saying, "Any kid here who gets homesick shouldn't be here" . . . And the right thing was to go because it was for my cousin's good, you know . . . Like, I said, "This guy can, he can intimidate me, but he can't beat me up or anything." And I, I'll realize that that's just the way he is, but I have to do this . . . I hate being yelled at . . . He wasn't being able to have any fun and he paid for it,

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so he had to do something . . . The way I saw it at that time was this guy is, like, a big bully and he can have anything the way he wants it. So . . . I guess it was kind of big, letting, giving in for him . . . He goes on . . . his, like, his reputation, you know, see that was a rule and he couldn't break it, but he said, "Yes, but," and then he started giving us the lecture . . . But I did something for him, my cousin, and it's kind of like a victory, you know, it's like you won over this guy, so be happy . . . The camp director had another point of view. He was probably like, "Kids always get homesick and what difference does it make, he's not going to die," you know, but he wasn't that kid . . . And so he had a totally different point of view from my cousin and I . . . He was really callous . . . It's a rule, but people are more important than rules . . . They were saying, "Well, we're here to help our kids, to make them have fun," but my cousin wasn't having fun, he was just contradicting the whole slogan.

Neeti reasons empirically from her own experience as she notes the absurdity of a situation in which the camp directors say, "We're here to help our kids, to make them have fun," and she sees that her cousin "wasn't being able to have any fun and he paid for it." She watches a camp director place his concern with reputation over the misery of a seven-year-old, and take advantage of the fact that the seven-year-old is under his direction while he "can have anything the way he wants it." Neeti presents a complicated understanding of rules as structures that maintain order in relationships. She sees that the camp director's pride or sense of his reputation was contingent on "a rule and he couldn't break it"; thus, again, she makes, albeit inadvertently, a psychologically astute comment about the internalization of rules and standards. She also alludes to her faith in the protective power of a system of justice, when she says that the camp director could intimidate her and hurt her feelings but he "can't beat me up or anything." And we hear Neeti's resistance to oppressive authority in the form of the "callous" camp director who plays by the rules without exception: "People," Neeti says firmly, "are more important than rules."

As listeners, we are struck by Neeti's courage and ability to stray

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with what she knows about relationships in the face of pressure not to know and not to see and hear. We are also impressed by her clarity about her own thoughts and feelings and her intricate knowing of the psychological and social world. Speaking of her decision to act on behalf of her cousin, she says: "It wasn't my feeling, my cousin's, but he was, like, really close, but I wasn't feeling what he was feeling, but I did have a little empathy, but not that much. . . . But he was, like, very miserable and I almost felt like he did in a way, so I did, I did go up because I felt miserable having him feel miserable." Here Neeti makes a distinction that reveals the full extent of her relational capacities. She contrasts empathy—that is, feeling another's feelings—with responsive relationships—responding to another person's feelings with feelings of her own. This distinction is rarely made in the psychological literature.

Listening to Neeti's age-thirteen interview narrative, we hear her tell a very different story of relational conflict. This year Neeti tells a story about feeling trapped in a scene that is not of her own making, which is not what she wants. We listen as she describes the conflict in her own terms: "One friend I have and she is supposedly my best friend, you know, and I don't talk to her, because like everybody hates her in class . . . I mean I don't even like her." The dilemma, Neeti says, is "that I don't like this girl at all, that I absolutely hate her, but I don't know how to act because I have to be nice."

Surprised already by the change we hear in Neeti's voice, we listen a second time to her story, attending to the way she speaks about herself in this relational drama. We now hear Neeti's ambivalence: "I can't say anything to her, because she'll be hurt, so I have no idea what to do." We hear her speak and then retract what she has said: "this is me, not really." We listen to a sharp increase in her use of the phrase "I don't know" as she knows and then does not know what she feels and thinks, what she can know and speak about.

Listening to Neeti speak about her understanding of relationships in this situation, we now hear her describe what sounds like a series of fraudulent relationships based on her desire not to hurt or upset

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anyone—her "friend," her friend's mother and sisters who, she says, are friends with Neeti's mother and sisters. Unable to speak what she feels and thinks, Neeti describes a false and "suffocating" closeness that feels like "being married" to someone she does not love. Unspoken, unvoiced, and thus taken out of relationship, her thoughts and feelings have come to seem out of proportion and out of perspective—too large or too small, too monumental or too trivial. Unable to gauge her friendship with this girl (is she her best friend or someone she hates?) or know what she wants, it feels impossible for Neeti to be in this relationship. What she wants to say now is to her unspeakable: "I hate you. Please leave me alone." What she wishes for openly is an end to conflict.

Unlike at age twelve when she spoke her thoughts and feelings in relationship, when she drew from her experience and thus clearly distinguished between what she knew to be true from experience and what authorities said was the case, now Neeti seems to have taken in a conventional, authoritative voice and is modeling herself on the image of the perfectly nice and caring girl. Giving over the evidence of her own experience—that she and her "friend" are both suffering in this idealized form of relationship—Neeti struggles to authorize, to give voice to, to name, even to know her thoughts and feelings. This shift in Neeti's voice over time is, in fact, exemplar of a loss of voice, a struggle with self-authorization, and a move from real to idealized relationships characteristic of girls we have listened to using this voice-centered approach, as they move from childhood to adolescence.²³

With our Listener's Guide we draw attention not only to the powerful act of one person interpreting—"naming"—the experience of another but to the implications of such an act for those who tell psychologists stories about their lives. A relational practice of psychology moves beyond a revisionary interpretation of voices or texts. Such interpretation, in fact, ought to mark only the beginning of a dialogue, the initial move by the listener toward the forming of questions, and ultimately toward a relationship in which both people speak and listen to one another. Rather than focusing on objects to be studied or people to be treated, judged, tested, or

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assessed, we speak about authentic or resonant relationships, that is, relationships in which both people can voice their thoughts and feelings, relationships that are as open and mutual as possible, in which partially formed thoughts and strong feelings can be spoken and heard. In creating a method that allows for (and encourages) a polyphony of voices, we cannot, in a relational practice of psychology, cut off or appropriate the voice of the person speaking, especially if her voice is discordant with our own. A shift from encouraging (enforcing) consensus or agreement to engaging diversity creates the possibility for real rather than fraudulent relationships with those with whom we engage in our work.

We spoke with Neeti over the course of five years in formal interview settings. And during that time we listened and interpreted and wrote about the changes we heard in her voice as she spoke about herself and her relationships. Since then we have been in dialogue with Neeti about our interpretations and our writing. Our relationship with her has moved forward and changed; we have learned from her and she has learned from us. In the course of a day-long retreat we met with Neeti and other members of her eleventh-grade class to discuss this research. After talking with us about her response to a paper we wrote, Neeti wrote us a letter: "At first I was overcome with a helpless feeling of self-exposure," she said. "I was struck, for it never occurred to me that what I had been saying for the past five years of interviews was of any importance . . . It was an odd feeling to see my voice in quotes."

Neeti then conversed with us about our interpretation of the changes in her life. She told us of her dismay when at fifteen she was asked to write an essay called "Who Am I?" and she realized she did not know. Unhappy with her "fascination with the perfect girl" and her "fraudulent view" of herself (phrases from our writing that resonated with her feelings about herself), Neeti spoke of a "voice inside" her that "has been muffled": "The voice that stands up for what I believe in has been buried deep inside of me."

Neeti, whose relational world seemed to us to have darkened over time, continues to surprise us with her resilience, her determination to be heard clearly, her perceptiveness, and her ongoing struggle

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with conventional feminine ideals. "I do not want the image of a 'perfect girl' to hinder myself from being a truly effective human being," she writes, "yet, I still want to be nice, and I never want to cause any problems." Neeti is caught in a paradox between wanting relationship and feeling that in order to have relationships she must muffle or bury her voice. Although she sees the impasse clearly, she cannot see a way out.

A relational psychology informed by literary theory, by the insights of feminist literary critics, and by clinical insights about psychodynamic processes—that is, a voiced, resonant, resistant psychology—offers an opening, a way of voicing the relational nature of human life. As psychologists working with people rather than literary critics interpreting texts, we have to ask why, as Neeti moves from age twelve to age thirteen, does speaking about what she feels and thinks in her relationships, once so simple and genuine for her, become so fraught with difficulty and danger? As we saw, Neeti struggles to hold on to her experience—to know what she knows and to speak in her own voice, to bring her knowledge into the world in which she lives—in the face of authorities, conventions, and relational conflicts that would otherwise lead her to muffle her voice and bury what she most fervently wants and believes in: the possibility of authentic or genuine relationship. As psychologists who are women, who were once girls, we struggle to hold on to what we know about relationships and feelings, about psyches and bodies, about political and social realities, and about the ways in which women's voices have been trivialized, dismissed, and devalued. In so doing we use our authority and power to make it easier for girls' and women's voices to be heard and engaged openly in relationship—to encourage the open trouble of political resistance, the insistence on knowing what one knows and the willingness to be outspoken, rather than to collude in the silencing and avoidance of conflict that fosters the corrosive suffering of psychological resistance: the reluctance to know what one knows and the fear that one's experience, if spoken, will endanger relationships and threaten survival.