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Reflections: A Theatrical Journey Into The Lives Of Adolescent Girls

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REFLECTIONS: A THEATRICAL JOURNEY INTO THE LIVES OF ADOLESCENT
GIRLS

by

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a difficult time for young women. Their bodies are changing and they are being asked to conform to a new set of feminine standards if they are to be accepted (Pipher 39). Studies have found that girls experience a decrease in self-esteem during this time. They are less likely to speak their minds openly and honestly, which can lead to depression and a feeling of falseness. As young women attempt to comprehend this turbulent time in their lives, they often find strength through positive relationships with others as well as from their own knowledge and self-awareness.

Reflections is a one-woman show that investigates the current challenges associated with adolescence. The play uses short monologues as well as songs from musical theatre repertoire to tell the story of three separate and unique women. The protagonist of *Reflections* is an eleven-year-old girl whose personality and sense of self changes drastically during the course of the show. At the beginning of the show, she speaks her mind freely and openly and is unafraid to express her true feelings. When she discovers there are consequences to acting this way, she immediately alters her behavior to ensure her peers accept her. When she witnesses her sister's strength and becomes aware of her mother's intelligence, she realizes she no longer wants to act in ways that do not reflect her true feelings. Her sixteen-year-old sister wants so badly to be accepted that she has begun altering her appearance in dangerous ways in order to fit in. Their mother is struggling to comprehend how to raise two daughters in a culture that does little to support and nurture adolescent girls.

Reflections: A Theatrical Look at the Lives of Adolescent Girls outlines each

characters distinct journey, using research and analysis to support their stories. In the

end it offers advice on how to prevent young women from losing their sense of self

during adolescence. This part of the document will present a companion piece to the

production in the form of a theatre workshop. This workshop will give young women the

opportunity to explore important issues in a safe space. Participants will be able to

express their thoughts and feelings without fear of retribution and can begin to

investigate ways to challenge social forces that oppress them.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Theatre is an art form that seeks to inspire and influence its audiences. Lev Vygotsky argues that the arts are cultural tools that humans use to organize their experience and construct the meanings with which they classify their world (Holloway and LeCompte 394). The theatrical world is particularly useful in that it provides its audiences with representations of current society. When patrons see their lives reflected in the work onstage, they find comfort in the fact that they are not alone in their experiences.

Reflections was written as a way to express my feelings regarding adolescent women. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines adolescence as the period of psychological and physical development from the onset of puberty to maturity. It is a difficult period for both genders but young women appear to experience significant distress during this time. As young women enter this period of their lives, the gender role expectations for them intensify. One such expectation is that they create and maintain relationships with important figures in their lives specifically their peers (van Daalen-Smith *Feminist Analysis* 153). But for girls to have valuable relationships, they must gain approval from others. As a result, they exhibit false self behavior in order to gain this approval. False self-behavior occurs when young women change their behavior in ways that do not reflect "what they really think or feel" (Harter et al. *Model of the Effects* 366). When young women suppress their beliefs and opinions, they may experience depression as a result of not expressing themselves openly and honestly (Pipher 38).

In the past fifteen years, a number of studies have been published outlining what happens to women during adolescence. Perhaps the most well known book is *Reviving Ophelia* (1994) by psychologist Mary Pipher. In this mass produced book, Pipher argues that as girls enter adolescence they completely lose their true selves, replacing them with a false and inauthentic self. This substitution often results in depression and destructive behavior, including cutting and eating disorders. Pipher believes adolescence is a time when parental and community intervention is crucial in preventing a young girl's loss of self.

Another well-known book is *Schoolgirls* (1994) by journalist Peggy Orenstein. Orenstein spent a year in two California public middle schools observing and speaking with young women. She was interested in using participant observation to further support the recent study done by the American Association of University Women, which found that young women's self-esteem steadily decreased as they entered adolescence. *Schoolgirls* gives many examples of how this loss of self-esteem occurs and offers ideas as to why it may be happening.

In the past five years, two interesting books were published that view girls and adolescence in a very different way. *Queen Bees and Wannabees* by Rosalind Wiseman written for parents, particularly mothers, of teenage girls, offers advice on how to raise teenage daughters. Unlike *Reviving Ophelia*, which appears to treat young girls as victims, Wiseman describes adolescent girls as perpetrators of harmful behaviors that aim to marginalize and subjugate other girls. She explains how a young woman's quest for popularity and acceptance often leads to various forms of bullying. Rachel

Simmons expands on this theory in her book *Odd Girl Out*, which explains how girls use verbal and covert forms of bullying to gain status among their friends. Through gossip, insults, and avoidance tactics many young women aim to make their fellow female classmates as miserable as possible. Both authors argue that young women's need to be popular has causes them to become vicious and harmful tyrants.

As I read all four of these books, I could not help but feel that none of them were representing young women in accurate and realistic forms. They were being labeled as either "victims" or "perpetrators" with no acknowledgement of the middle line between the two labels. I was troubled with the tendency to label young women as "victims" without acknowledging the strong sense of power that many girls achieve through extracurricular activities such as sports or theatre. I felt more attention had to be paid to the reasons why young women were bullying their peers and what they had to gain from doing so. It seems these authors wanted so badly to label young women that they neglected to take context into account. I immediately decided the characters in my show would not be stereotypes but would rather be multi-dimensional representations of realistic women.

Reflections is about a family of women whose stories intertwine to create a explicit depiction of the difficulties associated with adolescence.   Each character is struggling to understand her place in the world. The protagonist is an eleven-year-old girl who is on the cusp of adolescence. She is not yet ready to make the sacrifices she has witnessed her older sister make and wants to believe she can behave in ways that reflect her true thoughts and feelings without consequences. Although she recognizes

that she may have to alter her behavior in order to meet the approval of others, she intends to remain true to herself for as long as she can. The girl's older sister has already reached the stage where she has begun exhibiting false self-behavior in an effort to win the affections of her peers, specifically her male crush. She drastically alters her appearance and her behavior in order to impress others and achieve the norm expected of young women. The girls' mother is struggling to raise two daughters in a culture that does little to nurture its children and where the media plays a larger role than both community and family in influencing our youth (Pipher 182). She does not know what to say to her daughters to help them combat the dangerous social forces that cause them to self-destruct.

In her research on adolescent girls, Lyn Mikel Brown found that there are many examples of young women who were quite aware of their developmental journey. They understood when they were being themselves and when they were displaying false self-behavior in order to maintain relationships or fulfill someone else's definition of "appropriate" feminine behavior. They continued to act this way regardless of the fact they were aware that their behavior was not reflecting their genuine selves (qtd in Llorens 42). When I created the characters in *Reflections* I wanted them to be aware of the ways in which they were altering their behavior in order to please others. I did not want them to be passive victims of an oppressive culture but rather active individuals who made conscious choices. This made the moments when they decided to change their harmful behavior that much more poignant because they were doing it from a place

of strength and knowledge. These were not easy decisions but the characters made them because they were neglecting themselves at the expense of others.

I created *Reflections* to give voice to women who do not always have the opportunity to speak honestly of their experiences. When young women display false-self behavior, they often deny themselves the right to speak openly about their thoughts and feelings. This loss of voice leads to a feeling of disconnection from oneself. *Reflections* is a way for me to represent three multi-dimensional characters with unique voices. These characters are by no means perfect but they are realistic. Ideally, young women will watch the show and see parts of themselves in the characters. They will realize they are not alone in their struggles as they relate their problems and issues to the lives of the characters. Parents of adolescent girls will also realize the difficulties their daughters face during this time in their lives and hopefully will be more willing to talk to them about their problems. Overall, I hope that every single audience member is touched by the bravery and strength displayed by the characters. I believe that theatre can awaken the minds of its patrons and cause them to take action regarding the future of young women.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the past fifty years, women have made huge strides against their oppression in patriarchy. Women have made economic, social, and legal gains that have seemingly allowed them to thrive in a culture that demeans and devalues women. Many people say we have entered a "post feminist" era, where men and women are given equal opportunities and women are no longer considered subordinate to men. The reality is that women are still treated as second-class citizens. Holloway and LeCompte argue that:

> Despite decades of being told that they were as good and capable as boys and being shown female role models in every kind of occupation, insufficient time has elapsed, and insufficient social structural change has occurred to overcome patterns of socialization favoring traditionally rigid and subordinate roles that have marked the status of women for millennia. (391)

As a result of living in patriarchy women are oppressed in more subtle and covert ways, which makes the reality of their oppression that much harder to recognize (Pipher 27). Although women may believe they are no longer oppressed, their experiences reflect a much different reality. They struggle to understand their place in a world that continues to objectify, devalue and demoralize them. Young women have a particularly difficult time adjusting as they transition out of childhood and begin to comprehend what it means to be a woman in Western culture.

<u>Gender and Adolescence</u>

From birth, men and women are socialized into distinct gender roles. By the age of five, children are able to identify sex-role distinctions and express sex-role preferences. They understand what constitutes appropriate behavior for their individual gender and recognize that men and women have distinct traits (Weitzman et al. 1125). However, girls are given much more freedom in how they enact their gender roles during childhood. In their research on the psychology of young women, Gilligan and Rogers found that "Young girls show striking capacities for self-confidence, courage, and resistance to harmful norms of feminine behavior. Up until the age of 11 or 12, girls are quite candid about what they think, feel, and know" (42). When girls reach adolescence, however, they feel more pressure to conform to strict gender roles, which often results in a tendency to lose some of their expressive and resistant qualities.

The demand to conform to strict gender roles is explained through a theory known as the gender-intensification hypothesis. This theory states that as girls transition out of childhood, the expectations regarding specific gender roles increase. Young women are expected to exhibit what is classified as "feminine behavior" regardless of how they behaved in the past (van Daalen-Smith *Feminist Analysis* 21). Bepko and Krestan, as cited by van Daalen Smith, identify a Code of Goodness that they believe women are socialized to live by. This code states that women must always be polite and selfless and should remain ladylike in terms of how they dress and act. As well, women must always be of service to others in order to make relationships work

(153). Girls internalize this code and believe that in order to become successful adults, they must strictly follow it.

Adolescence is an important time for identity formation. During this time, both young men and women become aware that they must relinquish certain aspects of themselves in order to form identities that conform to certain personal and societal expectations (Llorens 10). Identity formation not only requires self-analysis but also involves understanding the response of others, primarily on the basis of status and role. A person's appropriation of others' definitions and evaluations of her or him is imperative during the years when identity formation is most crucial (Bush 190). The expectations placed on young women are quite different than those placed on young men, as exemplified in the ways both private and public institutions, such as schools and the family, are structured. Consequently, men and women experience different and distinct identity formations (Heilman 182).

Famous psychologist Erikson believes that identity formation is more stressful for adolescent girls because the future roles they aspire to and that are expected of them are devalued by boys and the general culture (Bush 191). Both genders face unique challenges when negotiating their own identity formation. Girls, however, are more vulnerable to negative messages found in the media as well as less certain about their economic futures (Heilman 183). Unlike boys, who view adolescence as time to open up and expand the possibilities around them, girls often shut down and view their gender as something that will hold them back (Miller 19).

In the past forty years, research has documented how young women suffer from feelings of inadequacy and a lack of self-worth when compared to men. Llorens cites a number of examples where young women claim they would have preferred to be born men. Young women also believe that masculine traits are more positive than feminine traits and that young men are more likely to be rewarded for their behavior (29). On a more measurable scale, research shows that girls manifest depression at twice the rate of boys and acquire eating disorders at ten times the rate of boys (Llorens 2). As they transition into adolescence, girls are less likely to take risks and replace much of their curiosity and optimism with self-criticism and self-doubt (Pipher 19). They become much more concerned with the interpersonal aspects of their lives as well as their physical appearances and, as a result, their self-esteem plummets.

Women and Relationships

During adolescence, young women become aware of the importance of creating and maintaining relationships, often times at the expense of their own sense of self. In her PhD dissertation van Daalen-Smith explains that: "Gender-role prescriptions rooted in patriarchal western culture place expectations on girls and young women to attend to relationships at the cost of self" (160). The self is defined as "becoming one's own person" and "a separation of oneself from others" (Miller 11). This definition does not fit into the experience of women who are socialized to be defined by and live in relation to others. A definition of self that encourages separation from others leads to a quest for power over others and power over natural sources. Many feminists claim that a

women's ability to attend to relationships should be celebrated as they allow for a more care giving and altruistic society (Miller 25). Although it is correct to say that women's attention to relationships is valuable, it often operates in such a way as to further subjugate them.

Women are expected to make relationships work at all costs. This expectation is problematic because it prevents women from expressing themselves fully and honestly out of fear of disrupting important relationships (van Daalen-Smith *Feminist Analysis* 153). Often, women will suppress their true feelings in order to appease others, which can lead to feelings of loss and a lack of authenticity (Miller 21-22). When a women's sense of self is developed in the context of creating and maintaining important relationships, the self suffers. As girls enter adolescence, classmates and boys become the most important relationships in their lives. They separate themselves from their parents and focus on pleasing their peers and winning the approval of members of the opposite sex (Pipher 67).

<div align="center">Outside Approval</div>

As young women begin to realize the value of relationship building, they begin to invest a large amount of time in gaining the approval of their peers, particularly boys. In many instances they will change or alter their behavior in order to make the best impressions and win the admiration of others. Rosen and Aneshensel identify a phenomenon known as the "Chameleon Syndrome." This is defined as "an essentially accommodative response to an environment perceived as hostile to inappropriate sex role behavior" (605). The authors use the metaphor of a chameleon because these

reptiles change themselves in order to blend in and defend themselves from harm. They do not live in their own color but rather alter their appearance to fit into their surrounding. Van Daalen-Smith believes this is the perfect metaphor for being other-defined rather then self-defined. Girls learn to monitor their behavior within their relationships in order to ensure that conflict is avoided (*Feminist Analysis* 162).

When young women experience conflict with others, they believe they have failed themselves. Their intense focus on upholding relationships leads to a feeling of disappointment if they are unable to achieve this task (Llorens 47). Thus, they adapt their behavior to blend in and meet the needs of others. Young women must always remain aware of how they respond to others so that if something they say or do is looked at with disapproval, they can change their behavior (Rosen and Aneshensel 606). Cox, Stabb and Bruckner explain how this phenomenon operates:

> Girls' and women's relational orientation implies a kind of permeability or penetrability wherein the woman is trained to allow others' influence to become a part of her. It implies malleability and openness to being changed by another rests at the heart of friendship. Women become highly skilled at absorbing the impact of others' statements of opinion or feeling (82).

Maintaining friendships becomes of utmost importance to young women and they will often sacrifice their own points of view in order to satisfy their peers.

Chameleon behavior is an essential part of keeping friends for young women. It allows them to avoid disagreements, and the nonexistent differences among friends gives the illusion of a perfect relationship. Girls may not be expressing their true feelings and actions but they are satisfied because their friendships have remained intact. Young women also place a lot of emphasis on gaining the approval of the young men in their lives. In order to do this they must conform to the narrow gender roles expected of them. They are expected to hold back their intelligence and be quiet and polite (van Daalen-Smith 21). Many young men do not appreciate assertiveness or competitiveness in women and prefer them to remain passive and demur (Rosen and Aneshensel 606). Rosalind Wiseman asserts that when girls pretend they are weak and unintelligent, they win attention and validation from boys (210). Girls must also place intense focus on their physical appearances in order to please both their female peers and their male suitors.

During adolescence, a young women's self-concept is increasingly affected by her own evaluation of her physical appearance. Self-esteem is defined as the primary, global evaluative component of self-concept; it consists of the individual's global positive or negative attitude toward himself or herself (Bush 190). Girls understand that in order to achieve a positive self-concept, modern femininity requires a certain degree of exhibitionism (Brumberg 107). They acknowledge they are constantly being evaluated according to their physical appearance and focus huge amounts of energy on their exterior in hopes of meeting the standard of beauty required by Western society. This

standard causes many young women to obsess about their weight, which often leads to disordered eating or in certain extreme cases, bulimia or anorexia.

The Need to Express False Self-Behavior

In her groundbreaking book, *Reviving Ophelia*, Mary Pipher argues that the psychological stress of adolescence causes girls to split into what she calls "true selves" and "false selves." The pressure from various cultural forces and a need to be socially acceptable leads girls to deny certain thoughts and feelings. The pressure comes from a variety of sources, including school, magazines, music, television, advertisements and movies. Pipher views the false self as the part of the self defined by cultural expectations rather than by individual needs and desires (38). She believes this loss of self is what leads to depression, anger, and disordered behavior such as eating disorders and cutting (150).

The statement that young women lose their "true selves" in the process of entering the adult world is somewhat extreme. Adolescence is a time when girls are exploring a number of different roles. They are struggling to understand who they are and recognize that their behavior changes depending on who they are around. It may be more accurate to discuss this time in their lives according to the false-self behavior they exhibit rather than making blanket statements regarding their entire selves. The origins of false self-behavior can be discussed in three different contexts, although the social psychology explanation will provide particular insight to this research. The clinical literature claims that false self-behavior occurs when people are alienated from any

sense of a real or validated core self. This often happens when parents do not validate the self in childhood as well as in adolescence. The developmental literature claims that false self-behavior is a dimension of normative role play. People will change their behavior based on whom they are around in ways that are not necessarily detrimental to their core selves. The social psychology literature argues that false self-behavior is exhibited in order to impress or win acceptance from others (Harter et al. *Model of the Effects* 361).

The social psychology model takes into account the difference between what they call "high self monitors" and "low self-monitors." High self-monitors adapt their behavior according to whom they are around. This is slightly different than the developmental model of false-self behavior in that they are not necessarily displaying healthy behavior that takes into account normal role play.   High self-monitors alter their behavior to conceal an inappropriate emotional state and appear as if they are experiencing an appropriate one. As opposed to low self-monitors who express their behavior based on their own internal thoughts and reactions, high self-monitors mold their behavior to fit certain situations (Snyder 527). High self-monitors will often alter their behavior in order to please others, regardless of whether or not they themselves believe in what they are doing or saying. People with a high need for approval are usually those who tend to alter their behavior from situation to situation (Snyder 528). This phenomenon is similar to that of the Chameleon Syndrome where young women change their behavior to avoid conflict and maintain their relationships (Harter et al. *Model of the Effects* 361).

Harter et al. has worked extensively on what she describes as the difference between false self-behavior and true self-behavior. In her work with adolescent girls, she discovered that girls classify true self-behavior as "my true feelings" and "saying and doing what I really think and feel." They described false self-behavior as "being phony", "not saying what I really think or feel" and "putting on an act" (*Lack of Voice* 154). Much of what is described by Harter concerns a "lack of voice" among young women. Many young women will neglect to speak their minds and rather stay silent or distort what they say in order to please others. They may want to express themselves openly and honestly but are concerned that this might negatively affect their personal relationships (Van Daalen *Feminist Analysis* 20). Many young women may stop expressing important emotions such as anger, sadness, frustration and dissatisfaction in order to ensure their relationships remain intact. When they stop expressing these emotions, they eventually disconnect entirely from them, which can lead to depression and other disordered behavior (Van Daalen *Feminist Analysis* 6).

The social psychology model for false self-behavior recognizes that the "self" is different depending on whom a person is around. Adolescent girls often ponder what represents "the real me" considering they are constantly altering their behavior depending on who they are around. They often exhibit behavior with one person who is different and contradictory to the behavior they exhibit with others. They may be sullen with their parents but rowdy with their peers or self-conscious on dates but comfortable with their friends (Harter et al. *Lack of Voice* 153). They are aware that different people want different "selves" from them and in order to please everyone they must alter their

behavior depending on whom they are around. These different self-presentations often lead to feelings of inauthenticity and falseness (Harter el al. *Model of the Effects* 360).

Young women are frequently aware when they are altering their behavior to please others. They ruminate over their problems and recognize that they must make crucial decisions regarding how they present themselves (Llorens 41). In her research on young women, Gail Gardner discovered that girls who conformed to societal prescriptions for behavior were more popular and less depressed then non-conforming girls (Van Daalen *Feminist Analysis* 252). Young women recognize they will often benefit socially from exhibiting false self-behavior. They understand they may be sacrificing their own opinions and beliefs but at this pivotal time in their lives, social approval appears more important. Unfortunately, these girls do not realize the harmful affect this behavior has on their identity formation.

In his well documented work, psychologist Erikson states that a sense of identity is based on an inner sameness or integrity. He describes three ways in which people gain a strong sense of self: the actions they make are defined by certain values and expectations that order one's behavior, an experience of inner sameness as extending over time, and the support from a community of important others (cited in Llorens 19). Young women have trouble with all three of these identity-forming criteria. The values and expectations they possess are often discounted in order to appease others whose values and expectations may differ from their own. They struggle to experience a feeling of inner sameness, since they are constantly modifying their behavior based on whom they are around. Finally, they struggle to find support networks in a culture that

demands they follow strict gender-role expectations and act according to the standards set out by their peer groups.

In their research, Harter et al. found that young women who emphasized the importance of their physical appearance and acted strongly upon their feminine role orientation were more likely to exhibit false-self behavior (35). This directly correlates with the gender-intensification hypothesis in that as young women become more aware of the gendered expectations set before them, they begin to realize that they must suppress certain behaviors in order to win the approval and acceptance of others. It makes sense that the women who most strongly identify with their gender roles are the most likely to display false self-behavior and in turn experience a loss of voice.

CHAPTER THREE: THE GIRL'S JOURNEY

The central character of *Reflections* is an eleven-year-old girl transitioning out of childhood into adolescence. This section explores the girl's journey and examines how she deals with this challenging stage of her life. Erik Erikson defines adolescence as a period between eleven and eighteen years of age when people become more concerned with how they appear to others, specifically their peers. This is in stark contrast to childhood, when they are more concerned with their own learning and education. Numerous studies have shown that girls between the ages of nine and thirteen speak openly about their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs and possess a strong sense of personal autonomy (Cormier and Iglesias and Iglesias 25). This type of behavior is evident in the behavior of the central character of *Reflections*. From the first moment she appears, she is unafraid to share her every thought and concern with the audience. She is energetic and full of life and refuses to accept that her own identity may be at risk. She sees how much her sister has changed and makes reference to the fact that she does not want to become like her.

Before the onset of puberty, young women are free to explore gender roles without the fear of being judged by others. They are given permission to act as androgynous individuals; their behavior is not dependent on fulfilling certain gendered expectations. At this point, they are less likely to be punished for refusing to exhibit a "feminine" self (Pipher 18). The onset of puberty creates a higher demand for both boys and girls to begin acting in gender-specific ways (Hill and Lynch 202). This often has a detrimental affect on both genders, but girls seem to be particularly vulnerable to these

expectations. Some of these demands include being polite and competent, acting and appearing ladylike, making relationships work without complaint (Pipher 39). *Reflections* echoes the ways that, according to Pipher, girls become less confident in themselves and image becomes of utmost importance in their lives while childhood memories fade into the background (19).

In *Reflections,* the girl has observed how much her sixteen-year-old sister has changed in the past five years. She states: "My sister used to be a lot of fun that is before she turned thirteen. Then she became really moody or "angst ridden as my mom likes to say. She's sixteen now and moodier the ever." Before she became a teenager, her sister was a lot of fun and never cared about what other people thought of her. The game the girl is playing at the top of the show is one that her sister taught her four years ago. Unfortunately, shortly after she taught the girl the game, her sister refused to play it anymore, claiming it was a kid's game. The regrettable fact is that the sister may have very much wanted to continue playing this "kid's" game but she felt it could potentially affect her reputation in a negative way. During an interview in the documentary "Run Like a Girl" a teenage girl speaks about the pleasure she gets from playing double Dutch. Although she sees that many people believe she is too old for it, she continues to gather strength and confidence through her participation in this activity (Cassidy). The girl is similar to this young woman in that she continues to play this game regardless of the fact that both her mother and her sister claim she is too old for it. Her confidence and self-assurance is still intact enough to allow her to disregard other people's opinions.

Although she still perceives herself as a child, her body is starting to go through certain biological changes that occur most often between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Girls are menstruating earlier than they ever have before, which can be problematic in that their emotional and cognitive skills do not develop as quickly as their physical selves. Their bodies may be maturing faster but their minds are still formulating valuable skills, which can become dangerous in a society that is less nurturing to young women (Brumberg 5). Girls also experience significant physical changes during puberty, which often leads to changes in how they view themselves (Hill and Lynch 202). It is likely for girls to become disgusted with certain parts of their body as is seen in the part of the show when the girl mentions the increase in body fat on her inner thighs. Normal physiological changes during this time cause girls to gain more body fat but these normal changes are often considered undesirable, leading young women to become concerned and disgusted with their changing bodies (Kilbourne 61). Often girls who go through puberty at an early age experience a drop in confidence and self-esteem (Hill and Lynch 202).

From the beginning of the show, it is clear the girl is confident in herself but aware of the fact that her changing body signifies the end of her childhood. She realizes she will likely have to start caring more about what other people think of her. She is concerned her acne will lead others to ridicule her at school, as she has seen this happen to her sister. She also understands that her flat chest will prevent her from getting the type of attention she may someday desire. Her worries mirror research findings that girls who develop breasts at a slower rate than the rest of their peers often

experience negative reactions (Simmons, Blyth and McKinney 232). It is around this time in a young women's life that peer and social approval become of utmost importance and they start looking for acceptance from outside sources (Meenkashi, *Articulating Adolescent Girls* 8). In the song "Feelings" she asks "Is there some tidbit that will please them?", implying that she does in fact care what other people think (Harnick 2). However, she is not yet at a stage where she has allowed other people's perceptions of her to control her behavior. She may have moments where concern over her changing body and other people's perceptions of her cause her anxiety and doubt, but she is unwilling to drastically change her behavior in order to meet other people's approval.

As she experiences these changes in her body, she is thankful to have her sister around. She does not trust her mother to help her through this difficult time because she believes her mother will not understand her problems. She also has a very low opinion of her mother and does not view her as an intelligent or capable human being. Her response to her mother reflects that around the time girls enter adolescence, they separate from their mothers in order to take the necessary steps towards becoming an adult. By breaking away from their mothers, girls attempt to claim independence and individuation (Pipher 103). This separation is a significant reason why the girl feels antagonistic towards her mother. By separating herself from her mother, she gains confidence in the knowledge that she is growing up and becoming more self-sufficient.

One of the main source of the girl's disdain for her mother is that she does not work outside of the house. Girls grow up today believing that men and women are

equal and that their economic futures are secure as long as they work hard (Heilman 191). The girl assumes that success can only occur outside of the private sphere and believes that her mother is not smart enough to succeed in the workforce. She is confident, however, that she will not follow in her mother's footsteps and that her future will be filled with great opportunity and fulfilling challenges. In the song "I'm One of the Smart Ones" she expresses these sentiments: "Got it figured, got it planned. How's my future? Grand!" (Ebb 2).

The girl truly believes that she can be anything she wants to be as long as she puts her mind to it. This confidence is one characteristic of childhood that fades as young women become more aware of the constraints placed on them due to their gender. As girls' sense of self dissipates, they begins to believe that she does not have the abilities to succeed in certain fields regardless of the fact that the opportunities are there (Orenstein xxxii). They become less confident and more pessimistic in terms of her future economic security. She may be more inclined to depend on men for their future wellbeing creating a greater need to fulfill the beauty myth and gain male approval (Heilman 196). Preadolescent girls often do not deal with uncertainty and trepidation concerning their futures. They are often filled with confidence and ambition, many times changing their minds every week as to what they are going to be when they grow up (Pipher 18). Similarly, the girl is so confident she will succeed in life she can't help but look down on her mother's decision to be a housewife.

Although she often turns to her sister for advice, the girl is concerned that her sister is spending so much time on her appearance in order to gain acceptance from

others. Often girls spend so much time worrying about their physical appearance that they miss out on other valuable experiences. Cultural expectations regarding gender roles result in particular characteristics of women being favored over others. Society demands that women focus on maintaining their appearance above all other tasks. Unfortunately this means that certain talents in young women are encouraged to develop while others are discouraged and may never come into fruition (Pipher 26).

The girl is distressed when she realizes her sister's friends and classmates are all "clones" of each other. She is even more upset when she sees her sister no longer cares about being an individual but only wants approval and acceptance from her peers. This reflects research that many teenage girls have been taught at an early age that they are supposed to love and accept themselves but don't know how to when it is other people's approval that dictates whether or not they will be accepted (Sheridan 25). Everyone is trying to fit in and be accepted so they lose any aspect of themselves that is unique and different (Haag 5). In order to fit in, girls must follow strict protocols regarding how to dress, how to talk, and how to act.   They become "female impersonators" who stop thinking "Who am I?" and "What do I want?" and start thinking: "What must I do to please others" (Pipher 22)?

Unfortunately, many girls will go to extremes in order to gain approval from their peers. The girl is shocked and disgusted when she discovers her sister's best friend has written a nasty note about her in order to gain acceptance from the popular crowd. Her sister's former friend most likely knew that what she was doing was wrong but was more concerned about her relationship with the popular kids. Teenage girls will often go

against their own beliefs and judgments in order to fit in and be accepted (Haag 70). Unfortunately, bullying has become an increasingly prevalent form of gaining popularity and avoiding isolation. By bullying others, girls ensure they are part of a group and therefore will not be the one who is verbally and indirectly assaulted (Simmons 35). Girls may also turn to bullying out of a repressed hostility at not being able to express their anger regarding "appropriate feminine behavior." Girls will often appear sweet and innocent while simultaneously hurting others through covert measures including gossiping, spreading rumors, and giving others the silent treatment (Crum 43).

Another way to gain popularity is through the attainment of a boyfriend. The girl notices that her sister's peers are obsessed with finding boyfriends before anyone else. Girls will compete with other girls for the attention of boys and value relationships with boys above anything else in their lives (Kilbourne 259). In her well-known advice book, *Queen Bees and Wannabees*, Rosalind Wiseman identifies the three main reasons why girls are so concerned with attaining a boyfriend: they offer an increase in a girl's sense of self-worth, a higher status among friends, and assurance that they now fit into teen culture (235). Overall, it seems that having a boyfriend leads to approval from others, which is highly coveted in a teenage girl's life.

After observing her sister and her sister's classmates' behavior, the girl vows she will never conform to what other people expect of her. She is adamant about remaining true to herself and never allowing others to determine how she will dress or act. "Everybody Says Don't" is a song about standing up for yourself and going against accepted norms of behavior. The rules of femininity demand that women often deny

themselves certain emotions, anger being one of them. Often young women will suppress their anger out of fear they will labeled a "bitch" or alienate themselves from others (van Daalen-Smith *Guide to Understanding* 2). Girls also learn that their opinions are not necessarily as valued and supported and in turn they choose to remain silent rather than face being called inappropriate, rude, or wrong (Harter, Waters and Whitesell 155). In this song, the girl is aware of these limitations but refuses to listen to them.

At this point in the play the girl has not yet acknowledged that she is at the stage where the rules of femininity apply to her. She is defiant about remaining true to herself and expressing her opinion. She encourages others to stand up for themselves and believes every small step will lead to larger possibilities. Unfortunately, she is not yet aware of the consequences of going against the norm. As Pipher describes in *Reviving Ophelia*: "Girls can be true to themselves and risk abandonment by their peers or they can reject their true selves and be socially acceptable" (38). It is not until she discovers there are consequences to staying true to yourself that she begins to question whether it is really possible to be herself without risking being ostracized for it.

When the girl discovers she has received a low rating from the boys in her class, she begins to question whether being herself is truly the best option. She realizes there are consequences to maintaining her integrity, the most apparent one being the loss of others' approval. One of the major characteristics of false self-behavior is how people verbally express themselves. When asked the difference between false self-behavior and true self-behavior a group of girls explain that true self-behavior means "saying

what you really think" and "expressing your true opinion." They state that false self behavior is characterized by "expressing things you don't really believe or think", "not stating your true opinion" and "saying what you think other people want to hear" (Harter, Waters and Whitesell 154)."

At the beginning of the show, it is clear the girl says exactly what she thinks and believes in songs such as "I'm One of the Smart Ones" and "Everybody Says Don't." She expresses true self-behavior as she speaks out against conformity and mediocrity. When she discovers the boys have been judging all of the girls based on their looks, she acknowledges this is wrong but is unable to stand up to any of them. Similarly, in her research on women and relationships, Miller found that girls expressed fear of losing important connections in their lives if they spoke in ways that would contradict the views of others (20). This silence is characteristic of false self- behavior. The girl is afraid that by standing up to them, she will be ostracized and therefore chooses to stay silent.

The girl knows she is contradicting her previous statements when she puts on her mother's make-up and her sister's push-up bra. These two acts signify she is ready to change her outward appearance in order to please others. She is willing to adapt her behavior in order to gain attention from the boys in her class. She is so pleased with the results of this transformation that she eventually decides the benefits of being accepted outweigh the positives of non-conformity. By gaining the approval of others, she gains a sense of power, something many young women achieve when they feel they are one step closer to achieving the cultural standard of beauty (Heilman 195).

During adolescence, many girls worry about whether or not they are displaying behavior that truly represents their true selves (Harter, Waters and Whitesell 153). Although the girl is happy with the immediate response to her transformation, she wonders if she will be truly content in the future. In the first section of "Reflections", the lyric reads: "Now I see if I wear a mask, I can fool the world" (Zippel 2). She is pleased with this revelation and realizes that as long as she goes along with what is expected of her, she will fit in with her fellow classmates. Yet she also realizes that by pretending to be someone she is not, she is sacrificing a part of who she is. The song is a testament to the constant internal struggle she faces as she transitions out of childhood into a more turbulent time in her life. However, she remains hopeful about her future, as echoed in the lyric: "I won't pretend that I'm someone else for all time" (Zippel 4). She believes this is only a brief period in her life and she will be able to overcome the conflicts within herself with time. Unfortunately, she does not realize that the longer she suppresses her true self, the more likely it is that she will no longer understand this self. There is a danger she will slowly start to believe that the false-self behavior she displays is representative of who she truly is.

The girl is lucky enough to have a support system that helps her retain her true self. With her mother and sister's guidance, she is able to avoid letting approval from others control her life. Similarly, scholars have determined that a major factor that influences the occurrence of false self behavior is whether or not adolescents believe they have strong support systems. The level of approval they get from their parents and their peers will affect the type of behavior they display (Harter et al. 372). The girl

realizes her family will be her support system and that her mother and sister will approve of her actions regardless of whether or not she conforms to what her peers expect of her. She can turn to her family to seek guidance and advice when needed; they don't judge her and offer her space to learn from her own mistakes.

In "Here's Where I Stand" the girl explains to her family how important it is for them to let her make her own choices. This sentiment is echoed in the lyrics: "Love me but don't tell me who I have to be (Ahrens 3) and "Help me to move on but please don't tell me how" (Ahrens 4). Rather than trying to fix her problems, the girl asks for comfort and understanding. She sees how hard her sister struggled before she realized she was harming herself. Yet, she also recognizes how much power her sister gained when she made her own decision about ending her eating disorder. She realizes that in order to make a smooth transition out of childhood, she needs to make her own decisions. She needs to come to her own conclusions about the cultural expectations that are expected of her and learn how to negotiate them on her own terms. However, she is lucky enough to have a solid support system that will provide guidance and encouragement as she navigates through this difficult part of her life.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE SISTER'S JOURNEY

While the girl is on the cusp of childhood and still exhibits behavior associated with this phase in life, her sister is immersed in a social world where she must fulfill certain gendered expectations in order to be accepted. She has already gone through puberty and understands the demands associated with becoming a feminine self. At sixteen she knows the value of acting a certain way in order to gain the approval of her peers. However, she is not yet aware of the difficulty of trying to achieve a high social standing and what she might have to sacrifice in order to accomplish this goal. As her story progresses her innocence and hope fades as she realizes how difficult it is to successfully navigate through this turbulent time. She begins displaying false self-behavior in order to be accepted but struggles with depression and shame as a result of this behavior.

Since she was a little girl, the sister has had a strong friendship with the boy next door, Derek. In the past few years, their friendship has changed and they rarely see each other. Yet, she still harbors hope their friendship will be rekindled, which will eventually lead to a romantic relationship. That is, the sister, like most girls, believes she will receive many benefits by obtaining a boyfriend. Girls have been socialized to believe that much of their self-worth comes from being in a relationship, whereas most young men understand they have intrinsic value on their own. A young woman's identity becomes more intact when she is in a relationship because she has gained approval from a worthy source, a man. She will also gain a higher social standing

among her peers (Tanenbaum 101). The sister understands the numerous rewards she will reap if she is able to acquire a boyfriend.

Although the sister has strong romantic feelings for her former friend, she does not want him to know these feelings exist. In the first section of "I'm Not Waiting" she is clearly interested in Derek but she tries to hide these feelings by acting with nonchalance and avoiding any sort of contact with him. In the bridge of the song, her despair and confusion become evident when she sings: "Am I old? Am I dumb? Do I wear the wrong kind of jeans? Am I fat? Am I slow? Do I read the wrong magazines?" (Lippa 4-5). The sister desperately wants to know why Derek no longer wants to spend time with her and wonders if there is anything she can do to rekindle their relationship. When she receives the note from him asking her to lose weight, she believes there is a concrete solution to gaining his approval.

The sister's lack of surprise at Derek's request for her to change her appearance echoes findings that boys commonly ask their girlfriends to lose weight (Kilbourne 261). As well, the sister also adheres to the common belief that changing the configuration of her body will lead to greater popularity and status overall (Brumberg 104). By learning that all she needs to do is get rid of her love handles, the sister can rejoice in the knowledge that there is a tangible way to earn Derek's approval. She begins scouring teen magazines for advice on weight loss.

Teen magazines are a pervasive form of teen culture that can be quite dangerous for young women. Through harmful advertisements as well as articles and advice columns, these magazines depict a very specific ideal of how young women

should appear. Researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston found that

the more frequently girls read magazines the more likely they were to diet. They also

found that the images in the magazines influenced their feelings about their bodies and

caused them to want to lose weight (Kilbourne 260). The film *Dying to Be Thin* notes

that celebrities and models who are featured in magazines have been getting

progressively thinner, causing the beauty ideal to become even more difficult to obtain

than in the past. The sister's mirror portrays how magazines influence her. Decorated

with pictures of emaciated models, the mirror works as a reminder of what she aspires

to. This is made very clear when she rips out a picture from a magazine, tapes it to her

mirror, and begins applying make-up that emulates what she sees in the picture.

The sister believes that by altering her appearance in order to gain Derek's

affection, she will lead a happier and more fulfilling life. This is in part due to the

magazines she reads, which are filled with harmful advertisements, which portray

emaciated models in submissive positions. Advertising agencies depend on creating

self-disgust in order to sell products. They promise that by purchasing their goods, the

customer will become a better person who is more attractive and appealing than they

were before they used the product (Heilman 196). Within the genre of magazines

intended for teenage girls, there are certain products that are heavily marketed. For

example, there are ten times as many advertisements promoting dieting in magazines

read by young women than in those read by young men (Heilman 196). However

advertisements are not the only way in which teenage girls are negatively influenced by

these magazines. The majority of the articles and advice columns found in these

magazines encourage young women that in order to fit in a girl must look a certain way and obtain a boyfriend (Currie). The sister trusts these magazines are giving her useful advice that will boost her self-confidence and make her more desirable for Derek.

The sister's quest for a better body begins rather innocently with an increase in exercise and a better awareness of her diet. As she begins to shed pounds, her confidence grows as well as her desire to win Derek's approval. She realizes that in order to achieve her goals, she needs to take a more drastic approach. Besides increasing the amount of exercise she does, the sister begins to display symptoms of bulimia, throwing up her meals occasionally. Bulimia is a serious eating disorder that is often learned about in school as well as from television movies and magazine articles. The unfortunate fact is that many girls learn how to throw up in health class, where they are being taught about the dangers of eating disorders (Orenstein 91). In her film *Dying to be Thin*, Larkin McPhee explains that girls may learn about eating disorder through television movies for example a film about singer Karen Carpenter can inspire girls to become anorexic. The sad fact is that Karen Carpenter died as a result of her eating disorder, but this does not seem to stop girls from wanting to reproduce her emaciated physique. When girls begin losing weight, they begin believing they have control over their lives and their destinies, which leads to a feeling of power and superiority (Heilman 192). The sister is proud of her changing body until she realizes her new appearance has not impressed Derek in the ways she had hoped.

The sister is disappointed and hurt when she learns Derek was just using her as a way to spend time with his real girlfriend, the head cheerleader. She tries to hide her

feelings behind her new and improved body and continues to focus all of her efforts on maintaining a flawless appearance. The head cheerleader becomes her role model because if the sister can achieve a standard of beauty comparable to this pillar of popularity, she will undoubtedly be accepted. The sister begins basing all of her self-worth on her ability to shape her body in unhealthy ways. According to a study done by the American Association of University Women, looking good is more important to girls than having an ability in measures of self-worth among teenage girls (Heilman 194). Girls believe that by attaining a degree of perfection in their appearance they will gain power from the value given to them by others (Heilman 198). By conforming to what her peers view as "beautiful", the sister is expressing false self-behavior.   She is trying to please others by dressing and acting, as she believes the popular girls do. Unfortunately, her attempts to fit in fail as her classmates begin to taunt her with vicious insults.

The term "slut" in an all-encompassing insult used by young women regardless of a girl's sexual behavior (Tanenbaum 161). The girls at her school begin calling the sister a "slut" for a number of reasons, none of which have to do with her sexual activity. One of the many reasons girls are called sluts is due to assumptions about styles of dress. The sister sees that type of clothing that her idols wear in the magazines she reads and believes that if she emulates them, she will be beautiful. Unfortunately, her decision to wear tight shirts and short skirts leads her classmates to assume that she is sexually active. This behavior echoes research findings that girls who wear provocative clothing are more likely to be labeled as promiscuous (Tanenbaum 87). Besides

wearing the wrong type of clothing, the sister has lost so much weight that she now has the type of thin and toned body that many girls in her class envy and resent. By giving attractive girls the label of "slut" young women make themselves feel better about their own bodies and establish a sort of superior femininity (Tanenbaum 199).

Rather then defending herself against her classmate's remarks, the sister chooses to embrace her newfound label. Her response reflects studies that show that once a girl has been branded a "slut" it is unlikely she will be able to counter the charge (Tanenbaum 88). The sister recognizes the unlikelihood of shedding this pejorative label and believes that standing up for herself will only encourage the insults to continue. Getting angry with her classmates would only encourage criticism and further isolation. As well, she suppresses her anger, reinforcing studies that show it is easier to ignore anger rather than deal with the consequences of displaying it. Often times, they find ways to divert their anger into others things or onto other people (van Daalen Smith *Feminist Analysis* 160). The sister focuses her energy on seducing the boys in her class, as she believes this will result in a gaining a boyfriend. As her magazines tell her there is a lot to be gained by winning the attention of men. Many young women crave male approval and desire a man in their life in order to avoid feeling lonely. They believe that by acting as highly sexualized beings, they will win the attention of their male love interests (Yoffe 58).

Many cultural mediums offer advice to young women concerning how to acquire the attention of men. Unfortunately, this advice can often be harmful in that it encourages young women to focus on being sexually available while simultaneously

discouraging them from exploring their own sexual desires. Teen magazines are one such medium that sends contradictory messages to young women regarding sex. Numerous magazines feature articles that warn against engaging in sexual activity before the time is right. These same magazines include young girls in their underwear gazing provocatively at the camera. This double message is confusing for many readers who are being warned against men and sex while simultaneously viewing pictures and reading articles explaining "how to make him want you more" (Meenakshi *Dilemmas* 382).

Teen magazines are just one of the many cultural mediums that promote the idea that being desirable is more important than having desire for young women. Television shows, movies, and advertisements encourage girls to focus on gaining the attention of men and to disregard their own feelings of longing. Even when girls acknowledge their own sexual desires, they risk being targeted as "sluts." Yet many girls are willing to make this sacrifice in order to gain male approval and possibly even a coveted boyfriend (Orenstein 63). The sister believes she is unable to avoid the "slut" label imposed on her and therefore chooses to focus on gaining the attention of the boys at her school.

Male approval is one of the most valued commodities a young woman can possess. Girls gain self-esteem when young men give them attention and make them feel special and desired. They are willing to overlook being treated badly because they crave the feelings of self-worth when they are being treated well (Orenstein 65). The sister believes that in order to gain male approval, she must act sexy. Because she has

lost the approval of her female classmates, she is desperate to win the admiration of the boys in her class. In "Naughty Baby" she is seen dancing for an imaginary boy whom she is trying to seduce. This is a clear example of false-self behavior in that she is "putting on an act" in order to impress an outside viewer (Harter, Waters and Whitesell 154).

At the beginning of "Naughty Baby' the sister is confident and self-assured. She believes that by focusing on her sex appeal, she will strengthen her relationships with the boys at her school. However, she breaks down at the end of the song because she realizes her attempt to be accepted is futile. Young women's self-confidence deteriorates when they realize the messages they are receiving are contradictory (Orenstein 373). Meenakshi explains: "girls are encouraged to cast themselves as objects of male desire, while being admonished never to succumb to that desire or acknowledge their own" (386). These contradictory messages can be very confusing for young women and often lead to depression and self-destructive behavior. The sister breaks down at the end of "Naughty Baby" because she realizes she will never be able to please everyone. She wishes she did not have to display false-self behavior but cannot ascertain how to stop acting this way. The only way she believes she will be accepted is to perfect her outer self and ignore her own feelings of insecurity and self-doubt.

During the monologue before "A Change in Me" the sister admits her eating habits and obsession with working out may be detrimental to her health. In *Dying to be Thin,* narrator Susan Sarandon explains how bulimics are constantly tired and lethargic

because they are continually depleting their bodies of food. At the same time, the sister, like bulimics, is certain her physical appearance will continue to determine how popular she will become and, therefore, she continues to abuse her body. In the aforementioned film, supermodel Kate Dillon discusses the attention she got from her classmates when she lost weight. When she was perceived as overweight, she was ostracized and bullied, but as soon as she changed her appearance in a seemingly positive way, her fellow classmates embraced her. The sister truly believes that as long as she continues to focus on her external appearance to suit the needs of her peers, she will no longer be called a slut nor will she be ignored and overlooked.

The sister would likely have continued to self-destruct if there had not been a pivotal moment that changed her point of view. When she is congratulated on her low body fat index, she realizes the true nature of her quest for external beauty. Cultural expectations regarding the female body cause her, like other young women, to be praised for her extremely frail appearance. Women are often complemented for frail appearances even when they are admitted into the hospital for anorexia or bulimia (Pipher 174). The sister finally realizes the harmful effects of letting others determine whether or not she is beautiful.

Once the sister becomes conscious of the pernicious nature of Western ideals of female beauty, she allows herself to become angry. She agonizes over the time she spent worrying about her weight when she could have been using her time in a more productive and healthy manner. Many girls let their fear of getting fat control their lives and allow themselves to base their personal happiness on whether or not they have

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reached their goal weight (Brumberg 123). The sister recognizes that her focus on her physical appearance has negatively affected her self-esteem. She may not be at the point where an eating disorder is endangering her life but it is preventing her from being a fully functioning young woman. In addition to her insight regarding her poor body image, the sister makes known her disgust at being objectified by men. Although there may have been a point in her life where she took pride in the fact that unknown men were honking at her, she no longer values this sort of attention. Instead she feels angry she has been reduced to an object.

By allowing herself to express her frustrations and distress in a healthy and emotionally cleansing way, the sister is able to reach an essential conclusion about her sense of self. She states: "I'm tired of making my life about what other people think of me." People who develop their sense of selves in relation to others often deny their own needs, values, and desires (van Daalen-Smith 164). The sister's need for approval and validation has caused her to alter her behavior in order to please others. Unfortunately, by exhibiting this type of behavior she has sacrificed parts of her true self. Young women who consistently display false-self behavior are often depressed and lonely. Others determine their self-esteem and they constantly worry about whether they are acting in ways that are considered socially acceptable (Pipher 150). The sister finally realizes the harmful effects of letting her peers determine her level of self-respect and personal happiness. She understands it will be difficult to completely disregard what other people think of her, but she wants to begin focusing on looking within herself for validation.

"A Change in Me" is an optimistic song about hope and healing. The sister understands that her recovery will not happen instantly. She has been struggling with her self-esteem and identity for a long time, but she finally believes she can change. Her younger sister is about to enter into a phase where she will struggle to build and maintain solid relationships with others. This phase will likely lead to a tendency towards displaying false self-behavior.   The sister does not want her sibling to go through what she has gone through and decides to provide her with a positive role model. She finally understands she does not have to be perfect. She then turns her focus to creating a self that is not defined by others but rather comes from within.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE MOTHER'S JOURNEY

Raising two daughters is an incredibly difficult task for both mothers and fathers alike. Cultural changes have made adolescence harder than it ever has been (Pipher 28). Research has shown that adolescent girls are more vulnerable to depression, eating disorders, substance abuse, and low self-esteem than boys. This is a cause of great concern for parents who wonder how to bring up their their daughters in the most beneficial and successful way (Snyderman and Streep 228). The mother in *Reflections* has a particularly difficult time, as it appears her youngest daughter does not respect her and her oldest daughter does not believe her mother has any useful advice to offer her.

The girl is appalled that her mother would choose to be a housewife, a job she views as simple and unimportant. Children often absorb cultural messages that teach them that mothers who stay at home have no stature. Ann Crittenden recalls an incident where a friend quit her job in order to stay at home to raise her children. During an argument one day her daughter stated: "Why should I listen to you? You're just a housewife" (3). The girl echoes this sentiment when she states: "She's not even that smart. It's not like she reads or anything. She doesn't even have a job. She's just a housewife." She equates her mother's lack of intelligence with her standing as a housewife.

The girl is not yet aware of the gendered stereotypes that may have prevented her mother from pursuing her ideal career. Women are underrepresented in such financially lucrative fields as electronics, carpentry, and plumbing. They are more likely

to be found in clerical, service, and sales jobs. Women are still making less money to the dollar than men but this may be because the jobs they are performing are less financially rewarding (Heilman 192). In 2005, women were making 81% of men's dollar although the percentage for black and Hispanic women was significantly wider (*Highights* 1). Because women are categorized as nurturing caregivers they are often pigeonholed into jobs such as nursing and teaching. These jobs may be emotionally satisfying but they are undervalued and underpaid. Many women are reluctant to stray from certain expected molds because they fear an unconventional choice will bring them pain and disappointment (Hearn 35). The mother in *Reflection* chooses to stay home and raise her children because she believes she is not bright enough to pursue anything else.

Unlike fifty years ago, women are more likely and better equipped to work outside the home. However, there are still many women who chose to stay home and raise their children. Married mothers with children under the age of eighteen make up 28.4% of women between 25 and 54 who are not in the labor force (Crittenden 17). The mother is performing a job that is not recognized as an actual job. Our culture measures worth and achievement in terms of money and, therefore, women who choose to stay at home and raise their children are often overlooked as essential to the economic structure (Crittenden 45). In the play, the amount of work she does to maintain the household goes unnoticed and unrewarded and her own daughter chastises her for her lack of intelligence.

The mother begins "Just a Housewife" as if she is ashamed of the work she

does. She states: "What I do is kind of boring, if you'd rather it can wait" (Carnelia 1).

She internalizes the myth of the housewife as being uninteresting and unintelligent and

having no worth (Crittenden 5). With shame the mother begins listing to her daughter

her daily tasks, which include doing the laundry, washing the dishes, taking the dog out,

and cleaning the house. As she describes all these duties she begins to get angry

because she becomes aware of how pointless her actions appear. The work she does

goes unnoticed and unappreciated by her family and the rest of society, and yet she

continues to do it every day without complaint. As soon as she realizes her frustration,

the mother quickly forces herself to calm down. She denies herself the right to become

angry because anger is an emotion that women are taught to suppress in order to

preserve their relationships with others (van Daalen Smith, *Guide* 4).

As the song progresses, the mother has significantly more trouble containing her

anger. Anger is a powerful emotion that allows people to express their dissatisfactions

as well as their beliefs and opinions. When women express their anger, they are no

longer defining themselves in terms of what others want but rather allowing their own

insights and views to come to the forefront (Cox, Stabb and Bruckner 63). She is

furious with the way society views the work she does. Her sentiments are expressed in

the following lyric: "I don't mean to complain and all but they make you feel like you're

two feet tall when you're just a wife" (Carnelia 4-5).

Feminist scholars have argued that a large part of women's oppression results

from the division of labor between males and females. Women learn their primary

responsibilities exist in the domestic sphere and come to believe that this is where they belong. Chodorow claims that Western society has linked the domestic sphere to expressivity, nurturing and emotion while the public sphere has been classified as instrumental, competitive and rational (qtd in Bush 187). Women have been told they do not possess the necessary traits to work in the public sphere in areas such as politics and law. They are segregated to the private sphere, where they are expected to focus on caring for and nurturing their families. This type of thinking is characterized by feminists as essentialist in that it pigeonholes men and women into distinct and different roles based on their essential natures or biology. Women end up suffering because essentialism in patriarchy means that the work men do in the public sphere is highly valued whereas women's work is disregarded and viewed as less important (Bush 187).

The mother is also upset at how the women's liberation movement judges her for staying at home with her family. This is articulated in the lyric: "Women's lib says they think it's fine if the choice is mine, but you know they don't' (Carnelia 5). The women's movement paved the way for many women to enter into high-powered public positions. Unfortunately, this meant women who chose to stay at home were sometimes ostracized by other women for their decision. Well-known French feminist Simone De Beauvoir believed women could not reach their full potential as human beings if they were required to stay home and be housewives. Germaine Greer compared the life of a housewife to that of a slave and argued that women should not be condemned to a life of absolute servitude (Johnson and Lloyd 7). Housewives were made to feel the work they did had less worth than the work done outside of the home.

The mother rarely lets herself express her anger over her current situation. However, she can longer handle having her daughter judge her and is compelled to reveal her true feelings about her job. She challenges her daughter's perceptions when she states: "And I mean did you ever think, really stop and think what a job it was, doing all the things that a housewife does" (Carnelia 6-7)? However, when she catches herself losing her temper she quickly reverts back to the unassuming, self-conscious woman her daughter believes she is. The mother does not feel it is her place to complain nor does she want to seem ungrateful for being in a position where she does not have to work. She is also concerned about being challenged or criticized for her views and would rather ignore her feelings than defend herself. She has no qualms about putting herself down and is embarrassed she has revealed her true feelings to her daughter.

When the mother looks in the mirror and says: "All I am is like my mother" (Carnelia 8), she is admitting to herself that she is unhappy with who she has become. She wishes she could speak up for herself and be proud of what she does but she lacks the self-worth that would allow her to do this. Women often experience self-doubt, self-devaluation, and low self-esteem when they realize that gender roles for women are devalued (Washburn 153). One of her biggest fears is that her daughters will grow up without the ability to defend themselves. She desperately wants to set a better example for her daughters, but her low-esteem prevents her from being the kind of parent she wants to be. She does not realize that by simply talking to her daughters about what they are going through, she is helping them understand their problems.

The mother does not try and pretend she knows what her daughters are going through. She acknowledges the fact that her upbringing was quite different from her daughters when she says: "It was hard when I was teenager but it was nothing compared to what you're going though." Growing up in the 1950s the mother lived in a world where men had public power, women were undervalued and femininity training was especially prevalent. However, there was significantly less violence and sex in the media, and family relationships were stronger and more intact (Pipher 237-238, 243-245). In today's society, young women are far more likely to have an eating disorder, experience depression, and be involved in potentially dangerous sexual relationships. According to the film *Dying to Be Thin*, anorexia has been increasing by 36% every five years since the 1950s. Teen magazines that used to write about innocent romantic love now speak about sex openly (Schlenker, Caron and Halteman 147). While young women used to be teased in the hallways, they are now being groped and talked to inappropriately in ways that can only be classified as sexual harassment (Pipher 104).

Many parents hold their daughters responsible for their own problems without recognizing the cultural expectations that affect the decisions their children make. The mother recognizes society is placing pressure on her daughters to conform to certain desired standards but does not know how to comfort and advise them. Statements such as, "How can I tell you that you're beautiful when we live in a world where the standard of beauty is impossible to achieve" show how frustrated the mother is with her inability to help her daughters. Parents will often teach their children to love and value their external self without understanding how important appearance is to their children's

social standing. Young women who do not attempt to live up to a certain standard of beauty are often ostracized and mocked by their peers (Pipher 105). The mother understands how futile her attempts to advise her daughters are but feels it is still necessary to offer some kind of guidance.

Both the sister and the girl are struggling to be accepted by their peers, which the mother views as problematic for a number of reasons. She expresses her concern through the lyrics: "Oh to be normal, to be a safe and unassuming shade of grey. Not too different, not too smart. No more poems in your heart. Do you really want to live your life that way" (Heisler 5-6)? The mother realizes that "normal" is an aspiration that prevents her daughters from fulfilling their true potential because it causes them to suppress parts of themselves. The term "normal" is constructed through a number of cultural mediums and is defined as looking good, obtaining a boyfriend, consuming goods, and being popular (Currie 11). Although it appears being "normal' leads to happiness and acceptance, the mother wants her daughters to realize this is not necessarily correct. She hopes her daughters can see that when they sacrifice their own uniqueness, they are giving up the parts of themselves that make them special.

The mother does her best to encourage her daughters to ignore the criticism and hurtful remarks of others and focus on being true to themselves. In *Reviving Ophelia*, Pipher claims that parents used to want their children to fit into the culture but now they see that trying to fit into the dominant culture may be detrimental to their children's mental health. They focus more on encouraging their children to remain true to themselves and to avoid exhibiting false-self behavior (Pipher 67). The chorus of the

song accurately represents what the mother is trying to relate to her daughters. The lyrics read: "Sing your own song, use your own voice. Your voice is not a thing to be denied you. And when they hear it ring true, there's not a thing they can do to take away the music that you're made of" (Heisler 2-3). The mother believes her daughters will be happier and healthier if they remain true to themselves. This involves expressing their emotions, standing up for their beliefs, and not allowing anyone to determine their self-worth.

The mother is particularly upset at the transformation she has witnessed in her youngest daughter. The girl used to be an opinionated child who always stood up for herself. When the mother discovers her youngest daughter has allowed the boys in her class to determine her self-worth, she is stunned. She mourns the loss of innocence in her daughter but does not accept this is the way it has to be. She takes the advice of Mary Pipher, who recommends that parents encourage their daughters to acknowledge all parts of themselves, rather than just the socially acceptable parts (264). She also recommends that parents explain to their children the difference between being treated as a subject as opposed to being treated as an object. The mother desperately wants her daughters to see how they are being objectified and that they will benefit from acknowledging themselves as human beings who are worthy of respect.

The mother may feel her advice has done nothing for her daughters when in fact she has made a huge difference in their lives. Young women crave real communication with adults who will not reprimand them for speaking openly and honestly. They often feel betrayed by the silence of the adults around them, particularly their parental figures

(Cormier and Iglesias 267). Watching their mother experience a wide range of

emotions, including anger and sadness, demonstrates to the sisters that they do not

have to suppress their feelings. Although the mother may have appeared weak and

withdrawn to them, they now see that she is stronger than they could have imagined.

Knowing they have their mother's support also gives them hope they can overcome

their problems. In their study of true versus false self-behavior, Harter et al. found a

lack of support from parents caused children to suppress their true thoughts and

feelings more regularly then parents who encouraged their children to remain true to

themselves (*Lack of Voice* 164). By providing her daughters with a strong and confident

role model, the mother has shown them that they can go beyond their expected

feminine roles and see themselves as unique and valued human beings.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Adolescence is a time when young women are looking for ways to understand the world. They struggle to find guidance and often turn to the media for information. Television programs, music, and teen magazines are all cultural mediums young women consult for assistance on how to live their lives (Schlenker, Caron and Halteman 147). Adolescence is also a time when young women choose to separate themselves from the women in their lives, particularly their mothers. As they come to realize the roles of women are devalued, they detach themselves from their previous role models at a time when they need them the most (Llorens 29).

Mary Pipher strongly believes this is the time in their lives when adolescent girls need safe spaces where they can flourish and mentors who can help them grow into confident and self-assured adults (qtd in Anderson). Van Daalen-Smith argues that one of the best ways for older women to educate adolescent girls is through contesting certain gender role expectations. She states:

> Offering and reinforcing certain kinds of femininity other than those that teach girls self-deprecation, that detach girls from valuing their own bodies, and that enforce subservient heterosexual coupling would be a radical step towards preventing psychological losses currently associated with young women (180).

When young women observe they can resist their prescribed gender roles, they can avoid self-destructive behavior.

Young women need to realize the harm that comes from maintaining relationships at the expense of their own thoughts and opinions. Relationships are important in influencing self-perception. They also determine how people see and relate to the world around them (van Daalen-Smith 165). However they should not be abused and taken for granted. When adolescent girls realize they must sacrifice their own beliefs in order to keep strong and intact relationships, their self-esteem suffers. They begin craving praise and validation from others and focus on aiming to please the people in their lives rather than focusing on looking within themselves for validation (Pipher 257). In the following quote Mary Beth LLorens explains the optimal path for young women:

> A self rooted in authentic self-knowing would best emerge from a developmental path where young women come to know their own needs, values, and beliefs independent of what others want them or expect them to be (164).

Women can still form important and sustaining relationships with others, but they can form these relationships without feeling they have to neglect their own needs and desires at the expense of others.

Although it is important to teach girls the value of forming relationships, it is essential they realize they should not be expected to put all of their attention into maintaining these relationships. They are better served by resisting this particular gendered expectation and focusing on experiencing a full range of characteristics, traits, and behaviors (van Daalen-Smith *Feminist Analysis* 34). Young women witness the benefits of resonant relationships where they are free to act as themselves without risk

to the relationship (Gilligan and Brown 28).   Miller believes the best way for young

women to conquer the problems associated with adolescence is to gain "agency within

community" rather then separating themselves from others (16). Girls need to focus on

establishing relationships with people who encourage uniqueness rather than

conformity. Establishing a positive identity within a community lets young women know

they are not going through this difficult part of life alone (Haag 86).

Young women often learn self-destructive behavior from their own mothers.

When they witness their mothers suppress their thoughts and feelings, they may believe

this is what is expected of women. They will emulate their female parent, resulting in a

tendency to stay silent and not speak their minds (Harter et al *Lack of Voice* 155).

Pressure from parents to act in sex role appropriate ways is another factor that

contributes to young women displaying false-self behavior. Rosen and Aneshensel

found that parents who were restrictive and controlling were more likely to have

daughters who showed signs of the Chameleon Syndrome. These parents often

emphasized the importance of maintaining close personal relationships and

discouraged their daughters from displaying self-assertive behavior, lest it threaten

relationships they were forming (28). Parents should avoid judging their daughters on

their behavior and allow them to express themselves in any way they see fit (Pipher

256).

Adolescent girls struggle to find places where they can speak openly about

issues involving sexuality, body image, future career goals, and self-worth. Schools are

one such cultural institution that fails to address important issues around gender,

possibly because this would involve questioning rigidly defined notions of femininity and appropriate behavior (Holloway and LeCompte 390). The majority of schools in Western culture do not require their curricula to examine power relations between men and women. This omission is problematic because important differences in gender role expectations are overlooked as a result of this exclusion. These same schools neglect to discuss sexual politics or problems associated with body image. Without safe spaces to discuss personal problems, adolescents often make dangerous choices (Holloway and LeCompte 394).

Schools are merely one institution that must be held accountable for ensuring that adolescents are given the support needed during this particular time in their lives. One such measure is a sexual education curriculum that goes beyond merely teaching its students safe-sex techniques. These classes should also discuss the harmful and pervasive images of women in the media. Women are often featured in subordinate positions to men in subtle ways, and viewers do not necessarily realize that they are witnessing a form of objectification (Asher 24). Asher also argues for sexual education classes that teach young women not to confuse their own desires with those of others (24). Unfortunately, students are lucky if they receive basic safe-sex techniques as there are a number of schools throughout the country that offer only abstinence only classes.

<div align="center">Theatre Workshop</div>

There are many ways to counteract the destructive behavior that characterizes the experience of many adolescent girls. Offering them valuable role models, allowing them

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to speak openly and honestly about their experiences, discouraging them from conforming to narrow gender roles, and changing the school curriculum are all ways in which girl-serving professionals can make positive changes. As a theatre artist and passionate feminist, I wanted to bridge the gap between the two fields and create a workshop that addresses the issues discussed in *Reflections*. The first part of the workshop will take place immediately after a performance of *Reflections* that the workshop participants will have watched. The second part of the workshop will occur the following day. Each part of the workshop will last two hours and is ideally meant for twelve to sixteen participants.

Although the workshop can be done with any group of girls ranging from ten to eighteen, it is designed specifically for eleven to thirteen-year olds. This is a time when girls are known to be able to resist gendered expectations and still feel compelled to speak their minds without holding back. In her research on girls and anger Brown observed the following:

> We heard the curiosity and witnessed the disruptive behavior of the younger girls; we observed the sometimes cynical and angry resistance of the girls on the brink of adolescence. Here, in the girls' intense struggle against the pressures not to know and not to speak, we thought, was the hope for a different developmental trajectory, and with it, the potential for societal change (xi).

This quote suggests that girls on the cusp of adolescence are likely to be active participants in a workshop such as mine. They will be better equipped and more likely to apply what they discover from the workshop. They can use their newfound

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knowledge and realizations to stand up for themselves before they need to display false

self-behavior becomes strong.

The arts are a powerful form of self-discovery that can be used to awaken the

mind in terms of how the world operates. Bank-Wallace used storytelling in her work

with young women because it gave her subjects opportunities to express their opinions,

safe spaces to vent their feelings, and permission to resist oppression. She believed

the young women took what they learned from the experience and used it to educate

and inform their peers (qtd. in van Daalen-Smith *Feminist Analysis* 177). My workshop

is designed to garner similar results. The participants will be given the opportunity to

express themselves in the following ways: visualizing the impossible or unlikely through

improvisational games, voicing their experience in a safe space through reflection and

journaling, and trying on new identities and perspectives. It is a space where they will

not be judged for their opinions and where they are able to express themselves as

much or as little as they want. Within the workshop, young women can envision

themselves outside of certain prescribed roles and imagine other worlds and

possibilities (Gallagher 6). Through role-play, the participants will enact a number of

situations they may never have imagined. In certain ways it is similar to the

consciousness raising groups made popular in the 1970s.[1] The intention of my

workshop is very similar to those of consciousness raising groups. Young women will

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[1] Consciousness raising groups were an important feature of the women's movement.
They allowed women to come together and recognize that their problems were not
necessarily personal but shared by other women. When these women realized they
were a part of a destructive and oppressive patriarchal society, they began
brainstorming ways in which to make changes (Meenakshi *Articulating* 10).

recognize the universality of their problems and realize there are ways to make what seems impossible, possible.

Young women struggle to find places where they can express their thoughts and opinions without being judged or ostracized. My workshop will provide a safe space where young women are free to say what they please without risk of being attacked or shut down. It will provide a way for these young women to express what they may perceive as dangerous emotions including hate, jealousy, pain, frustration and rage. Expressing these emotions is a positive step towards ensuring psychological health and self-awareness (LeCompte and Holloway (389). When young women tell the truth about their lives and speak honestly about their experiences, they enact a powerful form of resistance through self-authorization (Brown 71).

Drama provides a framework to show there are many ways of looking at the same issue (Gallagher 23). Through a number of valuable activities, the girls in my workshop will explore a number of different perspectives and ideas regarding Western society. Through theatrical games such as "Line Improvisations" and "Party with a Purpose" and various creative activities such as "Collage Creation", young women can reflect on experiences from multiple perspectives and understand how other people feel even if they don't agree with them (Holloway and LeCompte 394). The workshop encourages empathy and compromise. Young women learn there is not necessarily one "truth" and there is always more than one side to any story. They will learn to take into account multiple perspectives when they see that every character has a reason for believing their own "truth" (Gallagher 50).

One of the most valuable parts of the workshop is the time the girls have to reflect on their experiences with the exercises. After each activity, the participants will be given the opportunity to write in a journal. There will be a chance to express their thoughts about what they have just witnessed with the others in the group. The participants must always remain conscious of the connection between the dramatic performances in terms of how it relates to the real world (Gallagher 33). Reflection is the time when young women can express their opinions and collaborate with others. Ideally they can brainstorm ways to fight the social forces that aim to oppress them (LeCompte and Holloway 34). Finding ways to take what is done during the workshop into the real world is a valuable and essential part of the workshop itself.

Arts programs have been shown to improve academic achievement, creativity, and originality of thinking and provide a greater sense of self-worth. They allow adolescents to express themselves in healthy ways in the hopes they will continue to develop a sense of voice and agency (Holloway and LeCompte 388). Miller defines agency as "a girl's capacity to perceive and use her powers in all ways (20)." Ideally, my workshop will encourage young women to gain a sense of agency and allow them to see they do not have to display false self-behavior in order to live a happy and complete life. Van Daalen Smith states: "Knowledge and affirmation of one's anger, one's sexuality, and one's capabilities brings power and agency and women's power and agency are dangerous to a patriarchal culture (165). Young women need to see they have options in terms of how they live their lives. When they begin expressing themselves in more truthful ways and stop defining themselves according to what other

people think of them, they will gain the power and agency needed to grow into well-adjusted and confident adults.

Further Research Possibilities

Research on adolescent girls often does not take into account issues of race, class, and sexuality. Marginalized groups of young women are often overlooked and the experience of white middle-class girls is presented as representative of all young women (Cormier 260). Women have very different experiences because of their position in society. One example can be found in a study done by Taylor, Gilligan and Sullivan. These authors found that ethnic girls from low-income backgrounds were more likely to speak out when they felt they were not being heard. However, these same women were often labeled as troublemakers by their teachers and peers and faced the consequences associated with this title (qtd in Cormier 260). This paper is the first step toward what I hope will eventually become a one-woman show with at least ten diverse characters. When I eventually expand my show, I intend to research and make known the nuances and discrepancies between women from a number of difference race, class and sexual backgrounds.

APPENDIX A: LIBRETTO

Lights come up on girl playing some sort of children's game.

Girl: I probably shouldn't be doing this. It's kind of a kid's game. But I like it. It's simple and fun and anybody can play. My mom says I'm too old for this game and my sister calls me a dork and tells me to grow up. But I don't want to grow up. My sister used to be a lot of fun, that is before she turned thirteen. Then she became really moody or "angst ridden" as my mom likes to say. She's sixteen now and moodier then ever. I never want to be like that, but what if I can't avoid it? (*she goes to the mirror and begins examining herself in it)*

Feelings Underscoring Begins

(whispers to the audience) Lately I've been looking in the mirror a lot. It seems like every day something about me changes. I'm growing hair in places where there was never hair before. Yesterday I was standing in gym class and I noticed that the top of my inner thighs were touching. It was disgusting. I'm starting to get zits.

Song: "Feelings"

Feelings are tumbling over, feelings I do not understand.

And I am more than slightly worried that they are getting out of hand.

Sometimes they happen in my stomach, sometimes it happens on my skin. What is the name of this condition that I'm in?

Feelings Underscoring

Girl: Did you hear that? My voice never used to do that. And it's not as if people don't notice these changes. All the guys called my sister crater face for a full year before her

skin finally cleared up. But of course the thing I do want, boobs, are nowhere to be found. Of course, I had to come from a family of flat chested pimply faced women.

Am I sufficiently attractive? Should I do something with my hair?

Is there some tidbit that will please them? What should I wear?

What is the name of this condition that I'm in?

What is the source of this congestion that I must learn to rise above?

Is there a name for this condition? Yes, there's a name and it is "hell"!

<u>Girl</u>: I don't know what I'd do without my sister. Even though she can be pretty mean sometimes, she's always willing to give me advice. She's going through all this stuff that I know I'm going to have to deal with someday. If I didn't have her I might have to talk to my mom about my problems. My mom knows nothing. She didn't have to deal with the type of stuff we have to deal with when she was growing up. And she's not even that smart. It's not like she reads or anything. She doesn't even have a job. She's just a housewife. I've got bigger and better things planned for me.

Song: "I'm One of the Smart Ones"

I'm one of the smart ones, I got it all figured.

You won't find me in one of them broken down flats,

Commanding an army of brats, not me.

You won't find me bent over and ready to rub

Some grimy old ring in a tub, not me.

Got it figured, got it planned.

How's my future? Grand!

You won't see me, whenever the dinner is through,

With mountains of dishes to do, not me.

That's for some dumb someone else, not me.

<u>Girl</u>: I know I shouldn't talk like this about my own mother 'cause it hurts her feelings. She's doing the best she can for who she is. A couple of years ago I had to do a school project about my parents profession. Obviously I didn't expect my mom to have a lot to say about her job but she actually did….

<u>Mom</u>: **"Just a Housewife"**

All I am is just a housewife, nothing special, nothing great.

What I do is kind of boring, if you'd rather, it can wait.

All I am is someone's mother. All I am is someone's wife.

All of which seems unimportant.

All of it is just my life.

Do the laundry, wash the dishes. Take the dog out, clean the house.

Shop for groc'ries, look for specials. God, it sounds so Mickey Mouse.

Drop the kids off, pick the shirts up. Try to lose weight, try again.

Keep the troops fed, pick their things up. Lose you patience, count to ten.

Two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight nine ten, four, five, six, seven, eight nine

All I am is just a housewife. Just a housewife, nothing great.

What I do is out of fashion. What I feel is out of date.

All I am is someone's mother. Right away I'm "not too bright."

What I do is "unfulfilling." So the T.V. talk shows tell me every night.

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I don't mean to complain and all but they make you feel like you're two feet tall when you're just a wife.

Nowadays all the magazines makes a bunch o' beans out o' fam'ly life.

You're a whiz if you to work but you're just a jerk if you say you won't.

Women's Lib says they think it's fine if the choice is mine, but you *know* they don't.

What I do; what I choose to do may be dumb to you but it's not to me.

Is it dumb that they need me there? Is it dumb to care?

'Cause I do, ya see. And I mean, did ya' ever think; really stop and think what a job it was, doing all the things that a housewife does?

I'm afraid it's unimpressive. All I am is someone's mother, nothing special.

What I do is unexciting, kind a dull. Take the kids here, take the kids there.

I don't mean to complain and all. All I am is busy, busy.

All I am is like my mother. All I am is…..just a housewife.

(Lights Down, Rise on Girl)

<u>Girl</u>: My big sister has the biggest crush on our next-door neighbor, Derek. They used to run around naked together in our backyard. Don't tell her I told you that. She'll kill me. Anyway, they were best friends until middle school when Derek grew eight inches and started playing basketball. During that time my sister also gained twenty pounds and suddenly he was too busy making out with the captain of the cheerleading squad to hang out with her. Pretty clichéd, huh? She told me she didn't even like him anymore but I knew better than to believe her.

"I'm Not Waiting" Underscoring Begins

Sister: (*examining herself in the mirror*) "Hey Derek my mom wants to know if I can borrow a cup of sugar?" No that's stupid! "Hey Derek, my dad was wondering if you could help him hang some lights?" Yeah, right! (*she looks out her window and sees Jake*)

Song: I'm Not Waiting

Three years, four years, you have held my eye.

Handsome, friendly, someone else's guy.

But I'll see you at a party and we will say "hello."

We'll chatter at a party and I'll wonder if you know

I'm not waiting for you.

I'm not waiting for you.

Am I old? Am I dumb? Do I wear the wrong kind of shoes?

Am I fat? Am I slow? Do I read the wrong magazines?

Am I tall? Am I cold? Am I all the wrong in betweens?

I'm not changing! I'm not growing! You're not watching! I'm not going!

We're not loving! You're not seeing! I'm not waiting! I'm NOT waiting!

(Throughout voiceover "I'm Not Waiting" underscoring is heard)

Girl's Voice: My sister tried to deny that she was in love with him but we all knew that she would have done anything to get his attention. One day she came home from school sobbing. She had found a note from him telling her she would be really cute if

only her fat didn't spill over her jeans when she wore tight pants. Now if it were me, I

would have just accepted that he had turned into a jerk and moved on with my life. But I

guess she just really wanted him to like her. She started spending three hours a night

at the gym, saving all of her allowance for a personal trainer she could only afford to

work with once a month. After dinner one night, I heard her throwing up. She told me

she thought it was food poisoning but I didn't believe her. In just two and a half months

she lost fifteen pounds and she looked great. She started wearing super tight shirts and

lots of make-up. And I guess Derek noticed the change

> **Two months, three months finally get that call**
>
> **You're free, I'm free, free to disenthrall**
>
> **But we stagger to a party as I if I were an alibi**
>
> **You lose me at the party and I stop to wonder why**
>
> **I've been waiting for you**
>
> **I'm not waiting for you.**

Girl: So he ditched her. I guess his mom didn't want him hanging out with the head

cheerleader anymore so he told her he was going to the party with my sister. He was

never interested in her. In fact, he wasn't even the one who wrote that note. It was my

sister's best friend from elementary school. She did it as an initiation challenge so that

she could become a part of the "cool" group at school. They even had a name for

themselves: "The Coolios." You think the most popular and well respected group at

school would be smart enough to come up with a better name than that. Anyway, it

seems all these girls care about is being mean to other girls and chasing boys. Their

goal in life is to get a boyfriend. It seems so stupid but it's like if you don't at least

pretend that all you care about is boys, clothes, and make-up, you'll never be accepted.

My sister wants so badly to become just like everyone else. It's like that movie,

"Invasion of the Body Snatchers." When girls turn thirteen some sort of outside force

takes over their souls and tell them that the only way to survive to is to be like everyone

else.

"Everybody Says Don't" Underscoring Begins

(*makes the decision then and there*) Well I'm not going to be like everyone else. I'm

going to dye my hair bright pink or wear black pants with brown boots or maybe even

eat fourteen cheeseburgers for lunch. And I'm going to do all this no matter how many

people tell me not to.

Song: "Everybody Says Don't"

Everybody says don't, everybody says don't, everybody says don't, it isn't right.

Don't! It isn't nice!

Everybody says don't, Everybody says don't, everybody says don't walk on the

grass, don't disturb the peace, don't skate on the ice.

Well I say do! I say walk on the grass it was meant to feel!

I say sail! Tilt at the windmill! And if you fail, you fail!

Everybody says don't, everybody says don't, everybody says: don't get out of

line. When they say that, then, Lady, that's a sign: nine times out of ten, lady you

are doing just fine!

Make just a ripple. Come on, be brave.

This time a ripple, next time a wave.

Sometimes you have to start small. Climbing the tiniest wall,

Maybe you're going to fall, but it's better than not starting at all!

Everybody says don't everybody says stop, everybody says: mustn't rock the

boat! Mustn't touch a thing!

Everybody says don't, everybody says what, everybody says: can't fight City Hall.

Can't upset the cart, can't laugh at the King.

Well I say try! I say laugh at the kings or they'll make you cry!

Lose your poise! Fall if you have to, but lady, make some noise!

Everybody says don't, everybody says can't, everybody says wait around for

miracles, that's the way the world is made!

I insist on miracles, if you do them, miracles!

Nothing to them! I say don't- don't be afraid!

<u>Girl</u>: I wish my sister could have more of my mentality and stop caring what other

people think of her. But instead she took advantage of her new and improved body and

continued to wear tight shirts and short skirts. People at school started calling her a

slut. Everyone assumed she was easy. And I guess at one point she became okay

with that.

<u>Sister</u>: (*looking at herself in the mirror)* I didn't work this hard for nothing. What's a

great body if no one's there to appreciate it? Besides, if they think I'm a slut, I'm a slut

and there's nothing I can do or say that will make a difference. Even if I went back to

my oversized sweatshirts and walked with my head down and my eyes averted, I'd still be a slut. At least this way I'm making the guys happy.

Song: Naughty Baby

If you want a girl who's sentimental

One who'll never set you in a whirl,

One who will be always sweet and gentle,

I am not that sort of girl.

But if you prefer a rather swift one,

If you'd think you'd like to run around

With a bright one,

I am just the right one.

Naughty baby, naughty baby, who will tease you.

I can show the way and know the way to please you.

If you're wanting a beginner, I shan't do.

I can make a saint and sinner when I want to.

If you find the simple kind are rather slow, dear,

Then you ought to try a naughty one you know dear.

But you'll never meet another who will be a naught baby, naughty baby just like

me.

 Girl: I was watching my sister fall apart in front of me. I would look at her during dinner and she would stare back with these vacant eyes. I hardly ever see her smile anymore. I vowed to myself that I would never let myself become like her. But then I found the

list. The guys in my class created a rating system for all of the girls and I was in the bottom three. I lost most of my points in the chest department or shall I say lack of chest department. I couldn't understand why I felt so bad. I knew what they were doing was disgusting and wrong but I wanted to know why I wasn't pretty enough for them just cause I don't have big boobs. I went to school the next day and all I wanted to do was impress the guys so they would place me higher up in the ranking system. I put on my mom's mascara and blush and stole my sister's favorite push-up bra. It was like all of a sudden people noticed me. I know I should be disgusted with myself but the attention felt good. I guess I kind of copped out but I'm happy. Isn't that enough?

Song: "Reflection"

Look at me, you may think you see

Who I really am, but you'll never know me.

Everyday, it's as if I play a part.

Now I see, if I wear a mask,

I can fool the world, but I cannot fool my heart.

Who is that girl I see?

Staring straight, back at me.

When will my reflection show who I am inside?

Must I pretend that I'm someone else for all time.

When will my reflection show, who I am inside?

There's a heart that must be free to fly

That burns with a need to know the reason why.

Why must we all conceal?

What we think, how we feel?

Must there be a secret me I'm forced to hide.

I won't pretend that I'm someone else for all time.

When will my reflection show who I am inside?

When will my reflection show who I am inside?

(Lights dim, come up on the mother who is talking to her eldest daughter)

Mother: Girls, it was hard when I was a teenager but it was nothing compared to what you're going through. We live in a world where girls gain power by torturing other girls, where guys get points for how many girls they sleep with and rate them according to their physical features.

"Sing Your Own Song" Underscoring Begins

How can I tell you that you're beautiful when the standard of beauty is impossible to achieve?   How can I tell you to be yourself when being yourself leads to almost certain exclusion? I really don't know what to say.

Song: "Sing Your Own Song"

Those kids that try and knock you down,

They're not what life's about.

Just learn to sing you're special song and drown them out.

I won't pretend it doesn't hurt.

Some things kids say can hurt a lot.

But what hurts more is when they make you want to be something you're not.

You've got to sing your own song, use your own voice.

You're voice is not a thing to be afraid of.

And when they hear it ring true, there's not a thing they can do to take away the

music that you're made of.

Oh, to be normal.

To be a safe and unassuming shade of grey.

Not too different, not too smart.

No more poems in your heart.

Do you really want to live your life that way?

For those who work so very hard to make their talents fly.

It's hard when what gives so much joy can make you cry.

But hold on tight to who you are.

Don't lose that joy to please the crowd.

And if they still don't understand, you'll have to sing a little louder.

Just sing your own song, use your own voice.

Your voice is not a thing to be afraid of.

And when they hear it ring true,

There's not a thing they can do to take away the music that you're made of.

Don't let them take away the music that you're made of.

(*Lights down, Rise on Sister*)

"A Change in Me" Underscoring Begins

Sister: I tried to stop dieting and making myself throw up but the pressure to stay thin was too much. I had almost no energy and I couldn't concentrate in school but I was getting attention and that's all I cared about. And then one day I went to the gym where they were testing people's body fat. I was congratulated because I only had ten percent body fat; the average women's is twenty-five. I won a two-week pass to the gym. I walked away feeling disgusting. I wasn't dying but I had a problem and I was being praised for it. I stopped throwing up. I'm tired of feeling like this. I'm tired of worrying about whether or not that chocolate bar I ate will go straight to my hips. I'm tired of having random guys honking at me as I walk down the street in my workout cloths dripping with sweat. I'm tired of making my life about what other people think of me. I wish I could go back to being a kid when my biggest concern was whether the ice cream truck was going to come that night or not.   But I can't go back to that time. I just have to keep moving forward and start setting an example for my sister. I don't have to wear these tight shirts every day but I don't have to go back to oversized sweatshirts either. I can find ways of being myself without condemning myself to a world of isolation and loneliness. Deep down inside, I know who I am. I just have to find her again.

Song: "A Change in Me"

There's been a change in me, a kind of moving on,

Though what I used to be I still depend upon.

 For now I realize, that good can come from bad.

That may not make me wise but oh, it makes me glad.

And I, I never thought I'd leave behind

My childhood dreams but I don't mind,

For now I love the world I see.

No change of heart, a change in me.

For in my dark despair I slowly understood.

My perfect world out there had disappeared for good,

But in this place I feel a truer life begin.

And it's so good and real, it must come from within.

And I, I never thought I'd leave behind

My childhood dreams, but I don't mind.

I'm where and who I want to be.

No change of heart, a change in me.

No change of heart, a change in me.

(Lights dim)

"Here's Where I Stand" Underscoring Begins

Voice of Girl: I think we're both going to be okay. I mean we've got each other and our mom and together we can figure out how to survive. Maybe growing up won't be quite as scary as I thought. Probably not, though. And my zits are probably only going to get worse. But I'm here world and I'm ready for you.

(Lights slowly rise as song is being sung)

Song: "Here's Where I Stand"

Here in the dark I stand before you

Knowing this is my chance to show you my heart.

This is the start, this is the start.

I have so much to say and I'm hoping that you're arms are open

Don't turn away I want you near me but you have to hear me.

Here's where I stand, here's who I am.

Love me, but don't tell me who I have to be.

Here's who I am I'm what you see.

You said I had to change and I was trying,

But my heart was lying.

I'm not a child any longer, I am stronger.

Here's where I stand, here's who I am

Help me to move on but please don't tell me how.

I'm on my way, I'm moving now.

In this life we've come so far, but we're only who we are

With courage and love, show us the way,

We've got the power to stand up and say

Here's where I stand, here's who I am.

I'm counting on you.

Here's where I stand, here's who I am. We'll make it through.

Here's where I stand, here's who I am.

I'm counting on you.

Love me, love me, love me and we'll make it through.

APPENDIX B: REHEARSAL JOURNAL

February 22, 2007

We spent today's rehearsal working on the music. Some of the songs are much harder than I had anticipated and I'm a little concerned about how they will sound two months from now. "Here's Where I Stand" is especially difficult with all of the runs and the pop quality sound it requires. It is definitely a song I need to work on with Nick in voice lessons. Nick also mentioned that I did not seem to be connecting to my material and I think it was because I am focusing primarily getting the notes right and on my vocal performance. The ironic part is that the notes and quality of the song will improve dramatically once I've layered in the interpretation. However, I'm wary of adding the interpretation without knowing the blocking. I hope that Nick allows me to explore a number of different options regarding how I am going to perform the songs. There are so many choices to be made and I need to make sure to make that the choices I make support my thesis statement and deliver my message to the audience.

Nate and I have been working on the songs in accompanist hours and he has added some nice nuances to them. For example, "A Change in Me" has an ebb and flow to it that makes it more interesting and less repetitive. We have also placed the accompaniment for "Reflection" higher so that when I sing the low parts, it brings out my voice more. I would like to work with him to add more layers to "Reflection" as it is such an important song in the show. I want it to start off very quietly and passively and stay this way until the second verse when it starts to build and the character starts to become more sure of herself.

February 26, 2007

We spent rehearsal talking through the blocking. The first thing we had to do was establish the layout of the stage with my specific furniture pieces. There will be a platform that will be placed centre stage, which will allow for more levels to exist. This will be where the girl's stool and mirror is placed although she will enter the space downstage of the platform as well.   The sister's space will be inhabited by a vanity with a mirror attached to it and is found downstage audience left. The mother's space will have a standing mirror, a folding table and a chair and will be found downstage audience right. All of the mirrors will only be comprised of frames in order to avoid the light reflecting off the mirror. More importantly, it allows Nick and I to stage the three women looking at themselves in the mirror in a way that also allows the audience to see their faces.

There may also be a folding screen found upstage of the girl's mirror and stool. Nick and I had discussed placing a clothing rack there, where the characters could go to make their costumes change. However, I felt this would break the momentum of the piece and opted to place all of their costumes in their areas, strewn over their furniture. We still want to maintain the symmetry that the clothesline created so I suggested we try and obtain a folding screen that the girl could change behind in various parts of the show.

The blocking begins with the girl sitting on the edge of the platform playing Pogs, a childhood game that I used to be obsessed with. I wanted to find something that I identified with and this game has particular meaning in my life. I would spend every

single recess in sixth grade playing this game until my close friends actually had to have an intervention and tell me that I was no longer fun to hang around. It is also interesting to observe that when I entered junior high in seventh grade no one was playing POGS or any other sort of childhood game. People just hung around outside during lunch talking and rough housing. I imagine if anyone had been seen playing a kid's game, they would have been ostracized immediately.

During the first speech, Nick and I decided that it was important to reference the other character's space when referring to them. This immediately lets the audience know that there are other characters that will be included in the show and that those are their specific spaces. After I sing "Feelings" I refer to those spots again, which seems like overkill but Nick made a good point. Many times audiences may not be fully focused at all moments in the show and therefore it is important to be as clear as possible. As well, when I begin running the show, I can explore ways of making the device work without banging the audience over the head with it. One convention that Nick and I discussed and that I really like is the idea of the girl invading the mother's space during

"I'm One of the Smart Ones." She enters the space and looks around disdainfully, picks up a piece of clothing from the laundry and throwing it back in the basket in disgust. This blocking helps support the lyrics of the song and creates a stronger connection between the mother and the daughter.

The blocking for "Just a Housewife" will be very similar to the blocking I worked on last semester in acting class. I will start the song by folding laundry but eventually

move outside of the mother's space to just right of centre stage. There will also be moments where I will look in the mirror at myself. Nick had the great idea of looking in the mirror when I sing the lyrics "all I am is like my mother" and seeing how she has become exactly like her mother. This is a nice touch in terms of the generational differences and similarities between the mother and her daughters.

The last number we blocked was "I'm Not Waiting." I was concerned that it would look awkward for me to stand in front of a mirror that is placed on a vanity and I didn't want to sit because I feel that by sitting the character loses some her power and strength.   Nick suggested that we find a way to move the mirror and have it slanted in order for the sister to be able to see herself while standing. Another idea that Nick had to make the transition clearer was to have the girl shed her overalls and leave them on the platform steps to signify that they are a part of her world. The sister will be wearing jeans underneath and keep on the sweatshirt until the part of the script when the girl mentions her new and improved body. I also wanted to add a section where the sister is seen reading a teen magazine and trying to emulate what she sees in it. This will help support my contention that the media plays a role in how young women perceive their physical appearances.

March 19, 07

We weren't able to finish the blocking today but we only have two more songs and a monologue to complete. I am starting to get very anxious about the upcoming performance. I do not feel prepared and wish I had more rehearsal time with both Nick and Nate. I hope that by next week I will feel better about where I am and how I am

doing. I am so concerned about some of the songs that I am having trouble putting my

heart into the piece at this point and allowing myself to let go and explore the text. I am

really going to try to be fully memorized by the end of the week so that if we have a

rehearsal on Friday, I can throw myself into it. I need to start taking more risks and

rehearsing at the level I intend to perform or else I will never achieve the final results I

know I can produce.

Nick and I found some really interesting ways for me to perform "Everybody Says

Don't." My original idea is that it would be more external, a sort of lecture on conformity

to the audience. However, I realized that part of the song is the girl trying to convince

herself that she should not let herself get sucked into a world that limits her actions

because of her gender. In my research, I've learned that women are often encouraged

to suppress their anger and only display positive feelings. Not only is this a song about

going against the grain, it is a song about standing up for yourself and allowing yourself

the right to feel any emotions you want to. It will add an extra layer to have to girl

struggle to realize that it is okay to express herself in a number of ways.

"Naughty Baby" is going to be difficult for me because there needs to be a

balance between truth and performance in this song. Nick made a good point in that

even sixteen-year old girls play make believe and that the girl could be pretending that

she is dancing for a guy. I'm still not quite sure how I'm going to block the piece but

hopefully Gary Flannery can come in and help out if needed. I definitely feeling

awkward dancing like a stripper but I think the awkwardness that I am feeling will add to

the insecurity and uncomfortable feelings echoed by my character. In the final moments

of the song, the sister breaks down and realizes that she doesn't want to prescribe to the label given to her by her classmates.

I am finding that the title song of my show is the most difficult for me to sing. I wish I could cut it from the show but it is an important element to the girl's journey. I know I don't need to sound like Christina Aguilera, but I do want to sound strong. The song sits very low in my voice and I feel like it is kind of boring right now. There are also three ballads in a row, which adds to my worry that this song will drag on. I'm going to work on this song with Nate in accompanist hours and either cut some of the song or find way to make it more dynamic. He also suggested earlier in the year to listen to Christina's version as she really plays with the rhythms and emotes the feelings of the song well.

March 21, 2007

I felt much better about today's rehearsal. We finished blocking the show and went back and started working it. I'm starting to become more comfortable with how my voice sounds in all of the songs. I need to trust that just because I'm not singing it the way that people are used to hearing it, it does not mean that I am not making an impression. Nate and I worked on "Reflection" in accompaniment sessions today and cut a portion of it. I think this is going to make it a much stronger statement in that the song is less repetitive. We also made the final few systems on the last page simpler as the ornamentations written in the music did not really fit in my voice.

I was really worried that I would not have enough to do during the show but Nick and I have come up with some really interesting concepts. During the monologue

before "A Change in Me" the sister begins taking down all the harmful and poisonous images that are taped to her mirror. This act signifies her awareness of the negative atmosphere they create in her own personal space. During the song she continues to take off the photos but this time it is less angry and defiant and more accepting and calm. We also found a really significant moment at the end of the song where the sister looks in the mirror, pushes in her chair and turns upstage. Throughout the show the sister has been the most body conscious of all the women and, through this final action, she is leaving behind her obsession with her body and starting a new phase in her life.

March 23, 2007

Rehearsal went extremely well today. I have been very nervous that I am not going to be ready in two weeks but rehearsal today helped convince me that the show was going to be great. I was really nervous that the end was going to be too depressing and lose the audience but I actually think it is inspirational and inspiring. Although the songs are mostly ballads, they all have a different feeling to them and a different message attached. While a song like "Reflection" is full of longing and questioning, a song like "Sing Your Own Song" is about hope and encouragement. A different character sings each ballad meaning that each song has its own flavor to it.

Nick and I are working at developing each of the character's idiosyncrasies and styles. The girl is full of excitement and wonder, as a girl of eleven often is. She is unafraid to take up space and make noise. I would have thought that it would be easy to take on these characteristics but I am having trouble allowing myself to really let go. I think I am worried that I am going to come across as an adult acting like an annoying

little child and give a stereotypical representation of an eleven-year-old girl. I expressed

my concern to Nick and he told me to be bigger and more childlike and he would reign

me in if necessary. Songs such as "I'm One of the Smart Ones" and "Everybody Says

Don't" requires an enormous amount of energy and delight at what she is saying. I

need to start taking more risks in this character and doing more unexpected things

because the material I have chosen lends itself to be done using big gestures and lots

of movement.

Unlike her younger sister, the sister is much more body conscious. Her story is

largely about her relationship with her body so it makes sense that she would be hyper

aware of how she presents herself. There needs to be a gradual transition in terms of

how she holds herself from the first time the audience sees her to "Naughty Baby." This

number is going to be extremely powerful as she transitions out of being a major sex

kitten to a beaten down teenage girl. At the end of "I'm Not Waiting" I need to be more

affected by Derek's rejection of me but at the same time I need to make sure there is a

build from her sadness at this moment to her absolute despair after "Naughty Baby."

Yesterday was the first time I realized that this show was going to be emotionally

draining and that it was going to be a struggle to maintain my composure when I am

playing these characters that I have created and that I identify with so strongly. I will

have to find a way to use those emotions without losing control.

I'm very glad I was able to work on the mom's character last semester cause she

is probably the farthest from myself. She is very grounded and her movements are not

broad but rather small and specific. Her centre is in her core and she is quite certain of

who she is and how she got that way. Her voice quality is very soothing and lulling but she is not weak. Nick encouraged me to be more angry and certain of myself in "Just a Housewife" which I wasn't sure if I wanted to do because I'm not sure if she is angry in this song. This is the first time that she has had the chance to express her anger and it may surprise her that she has so much to say but she is going to say it because she is tired of her daughter looking down on her.

I am becoming more comfortable vocally with the show but I am still worried about certain songs. When I added the blocking to "Everybody Says Don't" the music kind of fell apart, but I think this will be easily fixed with time. I am still working on building "Reflection" but it is hard because right at the moment that I want the song to take off, I sit down on the steps. I will have to talk to Nick about how to make this moment work so that the vocal quality matches up with the action.

March 27, 2007

Today's rehearsal reminded me that although I may think I am giving one hundred percent, I am often not going as far as I can go. I thought I was being really loose and silly in "Everybody Says Don't", but Nick told me that I needed to loosen up and explore the space more. This is such a challenging song by itself and when I add the blocking to it, it is really difficult to sing well. It is my biggest challenge at this point but one that I know I can overcome with time and practice. We also worked on "Naughty Baby" and "A Change in Me", which are both coming along nicely. I'm starting to play more with the sexy quality in "Naughty Baby" and Gary helped me find some new chair moves to add to the song. I also need to play more with the idea of there

being a man sitting in the chair and not worry so much that I am not communicating with the audience in this song. This is a chance for the audience to become voyeurs and see into the world of the sister.

I started thinking more about "Just A Housewife" as I was working on it in my own time. Nick had asked for the mom to get angrier as the song grew but I was unsure if this was the journey that I wanted the character to take in this song. I had pictured the mother as someone who always stays in control and even as the song gets more intense, stays cheerful and hides her pain and anger behind a smile. After Nick's suggestion I started to rethink the character and realized that her journey matches up with some of the research I have done on girls and women. I have learned that girls are often told that they must suppress their anger and that anger is not a good quality for them to have. It will be interesting to watch the mother get angry and express her anger but then retreat back into her life and apologize for getting so worked up by the end of the song.

My goals for Thursday's rehearsal are to take on a looser and more relaxed persona for the girl, to make sure the mother is grounded, and to play with the many different roles and personalities of the sister.

March 29, 07

When I finished my run-through today I was expecting Nick to tell me that I had a lot of work to do before the piece be at performance level. My energy was all over the place and there were a number of songs in which I could not figure out which vocal quality to use. I was pleased when he informed me that the show had taken a step

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forward and that I was on the right track in terms of creating three different and distinct characters and telling each individual's story. Although I feel that the girl's and the sister's journeys are both very clear, I was concerned that the character of the mother seemed to exist for no reason. With the help of Nick, I realized that the mother goes on just as much of journey as her daughters. She is learning how to relate to two young women who are dealing with many complex and complicated events. One of her daughters looks down on her while the other refuses to talk to her about her problems. It takes a lot of courage and resolve to tell her daughters to "sing their own song." By doing so, she gives her daughters hope and encouragement that they do not have to live with uncertainty and pain forever. By discovering this about the mother, I am confident that the character will begin to become even more three-dimensional and be a clear and essential piece of the story.

The characters are starting to take on three very different physicalities. Gary Flannery suggested that I could take this even farther by establishing two to three mannerisms for each character that will help define them even more. Some ideas that I am exploring are having the mother play with the belt of her sweater, clasp her hands in front of her stomach, and possibly find places for her to sigh as a way of expressing anger, sadness, or tension. The sister is the most body conscious of the three characters and is often found playing with her hair, touching her stomach and possibly her breasts specifically in "Naughty Baby" and tends to smooth and fiddle with her clothing in order to achieve perfection in her look. I may explore having the sister play with her hair at the beginning of every monologue in order to gain consistency in the

transitions. I've mentioned that the girl is very loose and laid back, specifically at the beginning and middle of the show. She is confident and somewhat defiant and often stands with her hands on her hips as a way of expressing these feelings. She also loves to laugh, especially at her own jokes. This was one of the notes that Nick gave me and I agree that she needs to find herself more amusing because she does think that she's witty and enjoys being silly.

April 2, 07

Today was the first day I had an audience and I was very nervous to see what my classmates would think of my piece. I tried to stay focused by really letting myself get caught up in my characters and applying everything we'd talked about in our previous rehearsal. Although it was not the strongest vocal performance, the characters were much more clearly defined and my energy felt really strong right off the bat. My favorite character is definitely the girl, although I feel a strong affinity to all three of the characters. I just love the excitement and joy for life the girl has and I am having so much fun exploring who she is and her journey.

I'm still working on building the anger in "Just a Housewife" and not slowing down too much. Nick reminded me that although I'm tempted to pause in order to show the mother's hesitation, it is not needed considering the hesitation is built into the song. My two biggest worries vocally are "I'm One of the Smart Ones" and "Everybody Says Don't" because I'm running around and acting silly for the majority of both pieces. When I sing them in the voice studio, they both feel really strong and easy in my voice. When I start singing them in the show, I crack and am uncertain when to breath and

change voice qualities. Hopefully I will have a chance to work on these songs and really decide on the voice quality I'm going to use for each part of the song.

April 4, 2007

Today's rehearsal was the first time I felt that I would be ready to perform the following Tuesday. Although I've felt that my show has been coming along nicely, I was concerned that there was still a lot of work to do before it would be where I really and truly wanted it to be. I'm not sure why everything clicked today but I suddenly felt a connection to all three characters that I had never felt before. I felt each character's struggle and experienced a release when each character resolved their story. My favorite part about doing this show is that it is different every time, especially with the girl. She is so carefree that it is impossible for me to make her dialogue the same every night. It is as if I am saying all the words for the first time, which makes my reactions and revelations that much more meaningful and exciting.

One of the reasons I felt today's rehearsal went so well is because I got a lot laughs from the audience, specifically when the girl was speaking or singing. During notes, I confessed to Nick that I didn't really remember what I had done to get the laughs and that I was not sure if I could recreate them. He immediately assured me that if I tried to recreate or even play for a laugh, I would most likely fall flat on my face. Audiences know when you are trying to be funny and don't appreciate it. I need to trust that the humor of the characters comes through unexpectedly and that every night there will be laughs in totally unforeseen places.

I really enjoy singing the finale of the piece, 'Here's Where I Stand" but it is one of the most difficult songs to sing in terms of the characters motivations. Nick requested that I maintain the enduring quality of the girl while still showing her strength and determination. One of the most important lines in the song is "I'm not a child any longer", which means that I need to find a balance between maintaining her innocence and youth while still showing her growth.

April 6, 2007

Tonight was the first time I performed on the stage with lights and full sets and it definitely threw me off quite a bit. Having actual mirrors was especially difficult since I had not been working with them up until this point. It is also somewhat tricky to use frames with no mirrors inside for the sister and the mother and an actual mirror for the girl. I find myself focusing above my reflection when I am the girl because it throws me off to be actually looking at myself, especially in the song "Reflection." But the most difficult mirror to work with is the sister's because it is so large and I am worried that it obstructs me. After the rehearsal Nick informed me that it doesn't necessarily block me but that my face is often in an ugly shadow. He asked me if I could feel it and told me to be aware of whether or not it is there when I am performing. Thinking about this during a performance makes me nervous because I don't want to be distracted by where I am sitting but rather just want to be able to fully commit to the moment. I played with different ways of sitting and discovered that as long as I leaned forward, I could avoid the shadow.

"Just a Housewife" went the best it ever has tonight, largely due to Nick's previous note to get angrier sooner but then catch myself and calm down. It felt as if there was a very strong build to a climactic moment and then a dénouement. Every song should have a journey and this was the first time that I felt that the character went on a very clear and complex journey. As of now, my biggest worry is still "Everybody Says Don't" because I am moving around so much that I am forgetting when to breath and where to place my voice. It is getting better and I think as I become more comfortable with the blocking, the song will become much stronger vocally.

April 7, 2007

My final rehearsal went well although Nick felt that I had lost some of my storytelling. He reminded me to take care of each character that I had created, which I felt I was doing. I should have asked him to clarify but I think that as long as I keep in mind his advice, my feelings for each of the characters will be clear. Surprisingly, this rehearsal was the most vocally consistent even though the rehearsal was in the afternoon when my voice is not as warm. I finally felt that "Everybody Says Don't" was where it needs to be although I felt that I pulled back my energy in order to avoid cracking or missing notes. I need to focus on keeping the energy and excitement up while placing my voice in the proper area of my mask.

I had a revelation during "Sing Your Own Song" about the mother. I ended up looking in the mirror on the last phrase: "Don't let them take away the music that you're made of." As I looked in the mirror, I felt as if the mother was remembering her past and her decisions to follow a more traditional life rather than following her dreams. This

helps clarify the journey the mother makes because it shows how she desperately wants her children to make the best choices they can and not let others control the decisions they make. In order to make this statement even clearer, I need to find moments during the bridge when the mother is speaking to the girl where she can look in the mirror and be reminded of her own past.

April 10, 2007: Performance #1

It's hard to describe how I feel about tonight's performance. Inevitably I feel like I could have done better but I think no matter how I perform, I'm going to feel that way. For much of the show, I felt like I was in my head, questioning everything I was doing and reminding myself of notes I had gotten in the previous rehearsals. I was also very aware that there was an audience and was worried about whether or not they were enjoying themselves. One of the biggest lessons I learned was to constantly remind myself before the show that this show is a part of myself and I shouldn't worry about what other people are thinking. I just need to go out there and live in the moment and trust that everything I've worked on will be there.

I was particularly surprised at how the audience responded to the piece, specifically at the beginning. They really enjoyed my patter before and during "Feelings." I'm not used to getting laughs at these spots so I had to kind of adjust to the audience. As the show progressed, I found myself getting laughs in unexpected spots and not getting laughs where I had thought I would. This was a great lesson in not

expecting anything and realizing that every night and every audience is going to be different.

I am very nervous for next week's performance because I have a lot of people in the audience who I want to do well for. My parents, my peers, and my thesis chair are all attending this performance so the pressure to do well is especially intense. I need to trust that my piece is something special and that regardless of whether or not I sing it perfectly or am in the moment the entire time, it will still be a good piece of theatre.

April 16, 2007

I have been awaiting this performance all week with a combination of dread and anticipation. I knew that I wanted to take it a step further than my first performance but worried that my nerves would get the best of me, considering I had so many people I knew in the audience. I was somewhat concerned that I had not sung in more then three days and was worried that my voice was not going to be where I wanted it. I came in early to warm-up with Nate and run through a few songs. I was happy to discover that my voice felt relaxed and strong, although I did need to do some further warming up on my own. Rather than singing through my songs and stressing out, I did some vocal scales and sirens and ran around the larger studio to get rid of all of my pent up energy and nerves. I also ran through my show quickly in order to make sure that the lyrics and the dialogue was still intact.

As I waited offstage immediately before my show, I found myself overcome with an indescribable combination of fear and pride. I have put so much of myself into this show and I know that what I have accomplished is special. I have given a voice to

characters that do not always have the chance to speak up for themselves. I have

created three multi-dimensional and conflicted characters who go on three different and

distinct journeys. I have tackled a complicated issue and refused to oversimplify it in

order to appease a theatre audience. As these thoughts ran through my mind, I

realized that it didn't matter if I forgot a lyric or cracked on a note but rather all that

mattered was that I give one hundred percent and refuse to settle for anything less.

One of my major goals for this performance was to stay committed to the

moments, thereby staying out of my head and analyzing everything I did. My elation at

the end of the show was in large part due to my ability to achieve this goal. There were

times where I could hear myself questioning something I had just done but rather than

letting it haunt my next move, I simply let it go and concentrated on telling the story.

There were times in the last performance where I found myself worrying about whether

the audience was enjoying themselves but during this show I only focused on whether

or not the characters were being truthful and honest.

If a thesis is supposed to be a culmination of what you've learned in graduate

school, I believe I have accomplished this feat. Before the show I was thinking about

the song "A Change in Me", and I realized how much it applied to who I have become in

the two years since I started here. Although I still believe I need more training, I really

do believe that I have grown tremendously as both an artist and a person. I have begun

to believe in my artistic abilities and like the characters in my show, I am certain that

there is a place for me and my unique talents in this world.

APPENDIX C: CURRICULUM FOR THE WORKSHOP

Day 1: Two Hours

<u>Introduction</u>

Time: 15 minutes

We will spend the first five minutes drawing up a contract that will set the ground rules for the next two days. I will ensure that the girls are aware that if they are uncomfortable with an exercise they can choose to observe rather then participate. We will discuss boundaries and issues of respect and create a contract that outlines the expectations, rules, and responsibilities that are expected of the participants. Each girl will sign the contract signifying that she understands her commitments and obligations.

After the girls have signed the contract, we will spend ten minutes discussing their thoughts and feelings regarding the performance of *Reflections,* which they will have just viewed. I will ask each girl the following questions:

1) What is your name?

2) What do you think the message of the piece was?

3) Have you ever identified with any of the characters at any time in your life?

Identifying the World Around Us

<u>Goals</u>: To share feelings about various issues

To begin developing consensus around issues of importance to the group

To *listen* to each participant's points of view without getting defensive or

argumentative

Time: 25 minutes

Instructions: The room is divided into three different sections that are defined as Agree, Disagree, and Unsure. The facilitator reads a statement and each individual girl decides which section best represents her feelings. She will then go to the specific section where she will write down one sentence that supports her decision. When everyone has written on her specific piece of Bristol board, a new statement is read. This repeats until all six statements have been read. The facilitator will then read a selection from each statement making sure to include all three sections if applicable.

Statements that are Read by the Facilitator:

I am comfortable with my body.

I think that it is okay to talk about people behind their backs as long as they don't find out.

The media is a big factor in what causes eating disorders.

I'd rather date someone I don't like that much than be alone.

I think that it is okay for people to make comments about my body.

Reflection

Inform the participants that the purpose of this exercise is to have them start generating opinions and thoughts on the subject matter. Ask them if they have ever thought about any of the statements above and if they would like to share any of their responses with the group. If there is no response, invite them to spend a few minutes reflecting on one

or more of the statements in a journal at that time and then move on to the next exercise.

The value of this activity is realizing that many people see the same situation in a very different light. This activity should be done done silently using written responses rather than verbal ones. Important issues are discussed and evaluated without putting any individual girl on the spot.

Line Improvisations

Goals: To challenge themselves to take on different points of view

To concentrate on building conflict without coming to an ideal solution

To create real and conflicted characters with multiple points of view that are not caricatures or stereotypes

Time: 45 minutes

Source: Michael Rohd (86) via Living Stage

Instructions: Everyone finds a partner and stands in a single-file line facing each other. The facilitator will provide the group with the relationship, the circumstance, and the intentions. They must build a conflict, make sure the stakes are high and their individual intentions are clear. The duo will conceive of the details of the conflict as they face one another and act out the scene. The scene takes place as a confrontation; there is no moving or sitting but the actors must deal with their partners face to face. Once they can define their circumstances and create their characters, those who wish may perform their scene in front of the others. They will perform for approximately two

minutes without stopping. After two minutes, participants from the audience will be given an opportunity to take the place of one or both of the characters and explore different tactics for solving the conflict.

Notes: Encourage the group to play characters that make them uncomfortable. This will challenge them to think outside of their own personal views and step into the shoes of another.

Examples of Relationships, Circumstance and Intention

1) Sister- 16 Years Old
   Younger Sister: 12 Years Old

   The younger sister has discovered her older sister has been throwing up after dinner every night. She is confronting her about this discovery and her sister is denying it.

2) Friend #1: Lucy
   Friend #2: Mary

   Lucy is unhappy with how Mary has been neglecting her in order to hang out with the popular crowd at school. Mary feels their friendship has changed and she no longer feels connected to Lucy.

3) Mother: Julie
   Daughter: Sarah age 12

   Julie has discovered that Sarah has been stealing her make-up and secretly changing clothes at school. She is unhappy with her provocative attire and wants her to stop dressing that way. Sarah likes the attention she has been getting and want to continue to dress this way.

4) Friend #1: Laura
   Friend #2: Betty

Laura has discovered that Betty has been saying nasty things to Laura's boyfriend, George, about her. Betty claims that she liked George first and that she shouldn't have started dating him in the first place.

5) Teacher: Ms. Lynn
   Student: Jamie

   Ms. Lynn does not understand why Jamie is no longer participating in math class. She used to give answers all of the time and was one of the brightest ones in class but now she refuses to even guess on some of the answers. Jamie is concerned that people will think she's a nerd and no longer cares about excelling in school.

Reflection: After each scenario is performed for the group, we will discuss which tactics were successful in working towards the individual character's objective. I will ask for feedback on the following questions: Is it hard to stand up to people when they are doing things you disagree with? Are you afraid of the consequences and does this fear ever stop you from interfering? How important is it to be accepted by others?

Collage Creation:

Goals: To explore perceptions of young women presented in the media.

Time: 30 minutes

Source: Original

Instructions: Begin by discussing stereotypes and perceptions of "being a girl." Write these down on a piece of Bristol board. Divide the group into three groups. Supply each group with a piece of Bristol board, four teen magazines, scissors, glue, and markers.

Ask them to create a collage that explores the contradiction of the passive, destructive, and lost adolescent girl and the strong, independent and fearless "Girl Power" girl. Give them ten minutes to complete the assignment after which time they will have to explain their artwork to the rest of the group. Ask the participants to comment on each piece of artwork.

Day 2: Two Hours

Introduction

Source: Original

Time: 15-20 minutes

Goals: To explore the complex relationship between mothers and daughters

       To get the creative juices flowing

The second day of the workshop will begin with a creative writing exercise. I will ask the participants to develop a script between themselves and their mothers. The script will explore the following questions:

Is there anything you wish your mother had told when you were growing up?

 Is there any advice she could give you now?

What advice would you give your daughter as she grows up in this particular culture?

The girls will have to think of a place, a circumstance, and a situation in which some or all of these questions will be addressed in their scripts. After they have had ten to fifteen minutes to free write, the facilitator will invite the participants share their script.

<u>**Party With a Purpose**</u>:

<u>Goals</u>: To have the participants experience what it feels like to judged according to their social status

To practice problem solving skills in a safe environment

<u>Time</u>: 20 minutes

<u>Source</u>: Drama and the Adolescent Journey by Linda Nelson and Lanell Finnerman (91)

<u>Instructions</u>: Each girl chooses a piece of paper that explains her role at the party. The girl tapes the piece of paper outlining her role on her chest so that everyone knows who she is. The party begins with everyone interacting as their assigned character. This goes on for five to ten minutes and afterwards the group reconvenes and talks about the experience or writes in a journal about the experience. If there is a large number of people in the workshop, this activity may have to be done twice with one group sitting out and observing the action.

<u>List of Characters</u>:

The Queen Bee: Everyone wants to be around her and she is not afraid to tell other people what to do and to openly make fun of others.

The Gossiper: The girl who loves to spread rumors about other people in order to discredit them and to make her group of friends look better.

The Floater: She is friends with everyone and treats everyone with respect. However, she is afraid to stand up to the popular girls when they are harassing others.

Skinny Girl: She is constantly talking about her body but wants everyone to know that she is not anorexic. She is always looking for approval from others about how she looks but constantly putting herself down.

The Pleaser: She wants to appease everyone. She goes from group to group agreeing with everything and talking about people behind their backs.

The Brave One: She tries to stop people when they are making fun of others and does not stand for any sort of mistreatment of her friends. She will stand up to anyone regardless of how it affects her social status.

The Target: She does not wear the right clothes or say the right thing and therefore is often targeted for her behavior. She tries to blend in and is sometimes ignored but is often harassed by the popular girls.

The Angry One: She is full of angst over her present status and just wants to grow up and graduate. She has very few friends and will speak to make sarcastic remarks.

Commercial Creation

<u>Goals</u>: To critically examine the power of advertising

   To create commercials that are witty, ironic, informative and shed light on the effect of advertisements

<u>Time</u>: 60- 70 minutes

<u>Source</u>: Original

<u>Instructions</u>: Begin by devising a list describing the physical changes that a girl experiences as she goes through puberty. Some examples made include weight gain specifically in the hips and thighs, the onset of menstruation, sudden appearance of acne, hair growth and breast development. Discuss how others perceive these changes in both positive and negative ways. Focus specifically on how the media and advertisements portray these changes often in a way that makes girls feel ashamed and desperate to buy their products.

The next phase of the activity will examine commercials and how they function. If possible, the facilitator will bring in examples of commercials specifically targeting young women. Some examples may be commercials for tampons, acne cream, razors and diet pills. Don't spend too much time discussing what they think of these commercials but immediately begin to outline the four steps necessary to create an effective commercial. After outlining these steps, divide the girls into three to four groups and explain that they will have thirty minutes to prepare a commercial selling a product aimed at girls to "help them get through puberty." The products they pick do not have to be realistic in fact it is encouraged that they be somewhat fantastical.

<u>Conclusion</u>:

Time: 10-15 minutes

At the end of the workshop I will briefly explain the message that I was trying to convey in *Reflections.* I will ask the following questions: "Do you ever feel like you are constantly fighting to remain true to yourself while simultaneously struggling to fit in?" and "Do you feel like you are able to perceive and use you personal power in every way possible?" If it appears that they are not comfortable answering it out loud, I will ask them to write in their journal.

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