

'If it's Pink, Scrape the Pink Off' : Negotiating Acceptable 'Tomboy' Femininity in the Playground

Dr Dawn Mannay, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University

Abstract

Issues of women in society are intimately connected with issues of girlhood in society; and this paper examines one young girl's interpretations of the lived experience of femininity; particularly in relation to her self-identification of 'tomboy'. The paper argues that femininity is regulated by and built against both the ideology of masculinity and the embodied parameters of manliness enacted by boys, sometimes in the form of physical violence. This aggression was normalised as something that 'boys do' rather than challenged as an attack on the liberty of girls; however, violence was also used by the participant to police gender boundaries and negotiate an acceptable form of femininity within the complexities of children's worlds.

Keywords: Femininity, Regulation, Gender Identity, Visual Methods, Violence

Introduction

Gendered violence amongst children has been well documented in studies within the sociology of childhood (Renold, 2002; 2005), human geography (Tucker and Matthews, 2001) and interdisciplinary perspectives (Davies, 2003). Phillips (2003) argues that although it is rare for girls to use physical violence on a regular basis, studies focusing on the meaning of violence in girls' lives show how violence is perceived by many young girls and women as 'normal' and routine. However, although overt aggression is often associated with a normative and palatable boyhood (Renold, 2005), this does not mean that girls do not engage in forms of violence. For example, previous research has demonstrated the ways in which young girls elicit strategies of aggression and engage in the 'normative cruelties' of gender regulation by policing the boundaries of masculinity and femininity (Ringrose, 2006; 2013).

There have been moves towards creating the conditions for children's safety and fairness for all with the political intervention of educationalists; promoting the need to challenge gender stereotyped ways of thinking and segregation between boys and girls (MacNaughton and Smith, 2009). However, educationists' attempts to shape the curriculum and provide a non-sexist environment are met by children who are already aware of

gender rules, and play an active role in their construction and maintenance. Therefore, although children desire fairness and safety, collaborative and peaceful play is often seen as achievable only through strict adherence to traditional gender roles and boundaries (MacNaughton, 2008).

Interviews with the youngest daughters (see below) in this study explicitly documented physical attacks; however, they were often presented as an expected and accepted form of masculine behaviour; as something that 'boys do'. This paper explores the girlhood identities available to one of the participants, Rachel [1] and examines how she sees herself now and also what she envisages for her future. The paper focuses on Rachel's everyday use of space and its gendered regulation, and argues that the normalisation of boys' physical violence and girls' meanness supports the rigidity of gender norms; and creates childhood inequalities, contributing to a culture of uncontested domination for hyper-normative gender identities and the real and symbolic subordination of those who attempt to do childhood differently.

The Study

The research site, Hystryd [1] is a marginalised housing area in urban south Wales, United Kingdom, which ranks as one of the most deprived communities in Wales (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2008). Data presented here was drawn from a wider research project that employed visual and narrative methods of data production to explore the experiences nine mothers and their nine daughters, residing in Hystryd. The research focussed on their everyday lives and the ways in which the boundaries of the immediate culture and memories of the past mediated their educational and employment histories and futures.

Participant-directed data production techniques of narrative [2] and collage [3] were selected to limit the propensity for participants' accounts to be overshadowed by the enclosed, self-contained world of common understanding and to elicit a more participatory mode of engagement (Mannay, 2010). In this way the opportunity for participants to create visual representations of their worlds in their own homes, without the intrusive presence of the researcher, was employed as a strategy to promote the ideal of giving voice to research participants. Visual and narrative data was then discussed in an elicitation interview privileging the interpretative model of auteur theory [4] (Rose 2001).

Daughters in the study fell into three groups; post-compulsory education aged 17 and over, the last two years of secondary schooling aged 14 to 16, and the last two years of primary school aged nine to 11. This paper focuses on data produced with one of the daughters in the study, who was in the

group of primary school students, Rachel aged ten. Rachel lives in the heart of Hystryd in a council property. Her street is characterised as 'hard to let' and Rachel's single parent household has been unable to relocate through the council's voluntary exchange scheme. Rachel attends a large state school and her mother is neither in employment nor in education. Rachel was one of three daughters in this age group; however, I selected Rachel for this paper as her visual data, narrative work and interview talk best illustrated, not only the spatial dominance of boys, which was apparent across the accounts, but the conflict of negotiating an alternative yet acceptable tomboy femininity within normative boundaries but on the edge of the male female binary.

Rachel was provided with the opportunity to choose the methods of data production that she felt most comfortable with applying. She produced two collages, one reflecting her likes and dislikes within her home and the local area, and one reflecting her positive-possible self; that is, the person that she hoped to become in the future. Rachel also produced an illustrated narrative piece for her negative-possible self; that is, the person that she did not want to become in the future. Rachel created these visual and narrative productions in her own home and each piece was later discussed in one-to-one elicitation interviews. The following sections are based on the analysis of Rachel's visual and narrative productions and the accompanying co-constructed elicitation interview data; focusing particularly on the material relating to construction, experience and performance of gendered identities.

Playground Protocol

This section explores Rachel's everyday negotiation of gender; focusing on the embodiment of gender and the ways in which binaries were physically and emotionally maintained in the playground

Slugs, snails, football and survival tales

Research suggests that the traditional divides of the 'home corner girls and superhero boys' (Davies, 2003) have become more fluid, so that although football and fighting remain signifiers of heterosexual masculinity (Renold, 2005), girls are beginning to encroach onto the male domain of the playground football pitch. However, although girls may have secured some access to these masculine spaces, entry does not necessarily represent acceptance or inclusion.

Rachel represents this traditionally masculine sport in her 'possible selves' collage; a production that reflected the activity aim of providing an insight into her imagined possible futures. Rachel's image representing her career choice of football is telling in itself as she explains how she had to

superimpose the head of a girl onto the footballer's body as she could not find an image of a female footballer in the magazines and catalogues she used to create her collage. The picture then, is symbolic of the normative mismatch between football and the feminine.

Rachel attends a large state school and the space of the football pitch, like other recreational domains documented in previous research (Tucker and Matthews, 2001), is defended as a male arena by the boys. Control of the game is enforced harshly by Rachel's male peers so that crossing the gender binary of the football pitch is not only symbolically deviant but physically punishable, as Rachel shares below;

Interviewer: *Do you play football in school then*

Rachel: *Yeah*

Interviewer: *With the boys*

Rachel: *They've got a football pitch but I don't always go in there because the boys if they score a goal or the goalie catch the ball they go "ahuum off" and swear*

Interviewer: *Mmm*

Rachel: *Oh whatever it is, and there's one terrible boy who's in my class*

Interviewer: *Mmm*

Rachel: *He's alright, he's one of my friends but he's the worst worst, kicks you in the shins just until you get out of the way... pushes you down on the floor if you have the ball and he won't let you take your penalty, and if you take it he goes off and you know swears, but yeah he's alright as a friend*

In Rachel's experience the boys dominate and control the football pitch. Rachel also encounters violence, a finding echoed by previous work (Davies, 2003), where girls who position themselves as a tomboy, which Rachel does, as discussed later, often find themselves in situations that are uncomfortable.

In their study of playground football, Clarke and Paechter (2007) note that the entrenched zones of play grant boys automatic rights to football whilst girls can only negotiate marginal tenancy. For Clarke and Paechter (2007) male domination was achieved by continual opposition from powerful boys; and Rachel describes one 'terrible' boy who is the 'worst worst' and portrays a violent encounter where she is kicked and pushed.

The boy uses violence to dominate, deride and exclude Rachel in her account of playing football yet despite this incident he is still 'one of my friends' and 'alright as a friend'. An acceptance that resonates with the primary school based work of Renold (2002) who documents how girls

remain in relationships with boyfriends who subject them to forms of physical violence.

There is then a duality of man in Rachel's account, perhaps not as potent as Towns and Adams's (2000) twofold representation of the beast like and princely masculine ideology, but it holds some resonance. Importantly, alongside this duality, there is an acceptance and normalisation of violence, where someone who pushes and kicks you can still be '*alright as a friend*'.

In the same way that Walkerdine (1989, pg. 67) documents the way in which boys' verbal sexualised assaults on pupils and teachers are read as 'normal and natural', such displays of aggression represent everyday school interactions. Violent interactions are not always perpetuated by boys, and later in the paper I will explore Rachel's physical violence; however, boys' playground violence is viewed as more palatable, usual, expected and tolerable than feminine overt aggression (Ringrose, 2006). The performance of gendered 'normative cruelties' are frequently passed over by school staff and pupils as natural (Ringrose and Renold, 2010; Ringrose, 2013), and this normalisation of both verbal and physical violence as something that 'boys do' is evident within the site of the playground. In this way gender is embodied and distinctions are drawn not only intellectually, but physically with the violence becoming an effective tool of policing boundaries; however, children's own ideas of their gender identities often conspire to produce and reproduce unequal outcomes.

Boys will be boys

Reviewing UK based research prioritising children's accounts of their daily lives, use of space and gendered practices, Morrow (2006) finds that in middle childhood particularly, boys and girls tend to express stereotypical views of gender differences and actively construct and understand masculinity and femininity as polar opposites. Therefore, although male violence is unwelcome, it is viewed along a continuum of 'normal' behaviour for boys, whilst any deviation from hegemonic masculinity, Morrow (2006) contends, is treated with contempt and attempts to regulate this 'deviance'.

Similarly, Thorne's (1993) classic work, *Gender Play*, highlights how children actively police gender boundaries with added emphasis on controlling any behaviour deemed as feminine displayed by boys in the North American context. In the following quotes Rachel describes her reaction to a boy breaking implicit gender rules and crossing the male/female binary by playing with Bratz dolls, controversial dolls designed for four to eight year olds that have been linked with an objectified adult (female) sexuality (APA, 2007).

Rachel features a picture of a Bratz doll in her 'place and space' collage because Rachel plays Bratz games on her PlayStation console. However, the following extract is not embedded in Rachel's description of her own Bratz merchandise; rather, it is a spontaneous interjection that occurs directly after Rachel's account of playground football, which was explored in the previous section. The timing of this interjection could be particularly significant as after defending her own crossing of the gender binary on the football pitch Rachel chooses to tell me about a boy who '*plays with Bratz*'. Utilising an object relations based interpretation, this interjection could be interpreted as a form of projection (Gomez, 1997). Rachel could be projecting the internal malignancy of gender deviance not onto me, the researcher, as in the traditional psychoanalytical relationship, but beyond the immediate context and onto Alistair, a boy who '*plays with Bratz*'.

Rachel: *Guess what*

Interviewer: *What*

Rachel: *I know a boy in my class who plays Bratz, who plays with Bratz dolls*

Interviewer: *Mmm*

Rachel: *Alistair he's a dancing boy (laughs)... They all call him Alistair Alistair with the pink underwear*

Rachel speaks vehemently about Alistair, and uses a range of other rhyming taunts such as '*Alistair the pear*' and '*Alistair the stare*'. Although she says he has not hit her, like the boy on the football pitch, his behaviour is seen as unacceptable. The pressures for men to 'do man' (Hedderman, 2012) and boys to 'do boy' in a particular way has been well established (Salisbury and Jackson, 1996; Renold, 2001) and the boy who hits her conforms to such hegemonic masculinity, whilst Alistair transgresses these unwritten gender rules.

Alistair's non-hegemonic masculinity is vulnerable to the processes of policing and shaming of 'Other' masculinities, as documented in previous research (Renold, 2004). Rachel recounts how Alistair is bullied by other children and discusses the relational and indirect forms of aggression that she partakes in to humiliate Alistair as illustrated by her response to me asking if she feels sorry for Alistair being called names.

Rachel: *His own fault if he didn't chase the girls, and eat too much he'd be fine... Instead of wobble wobble wobble but he's oh he's fun only when he falls to the floor I go "he he", nobody likes him nobody, girls scared of him*
Interviewer: *So what does he do if he's got no one to play with?*

Rachel: *Oh he dances and chases the girls, whenever he come to chase me I'll go oh hello and he trips over my foot, I've got it close to me and he says "Whoa and now I have to get up" (pause) They all call him Alistair, Alistair with the pink underwear*

Interviewer: *So does he get bullied then by the other boys?*

Rachel: *He chases the girls and tries to kiss them (laughs) I stick up for them because he's scared of me I go I go running after him he goes "he he he he" I threw his coat and he goes that's my favourite jacket, and I throw it really far so when I get him I say "I'll have that thank you"*

As Renold (2004) maintains schools are not safe places for boys who do not subscribe to the rough and tumble norms for male behaviour and Rachel goes on to describe Alistair's aversion of the masculine space of the football pitch, to which she herself negotiates problematic access.

Rachel: *Yeah, one boy out of the whole school yeah 'cause he's scared of the ball 'cause if he touches the ball he says "it's goanna get me"*

Children are often uncompromisingly stereotypical in their gendered attitudes and mercilessly ridicule those who deviate from their rigid standards of sex appropriate behaviour (Damon, 1997). In her interview, in conversations around school life and the playground, Rachel talks about Alistair with contempt and her portrayal of his physique, 'wobble wobble wobble' and the implied cowardice of him being scared of her and the football pitch, resonates with the picture of Rachel's imagined and dreaded future husband in her drawing of a negative possible self.

As discussed previously, Rachel also created an illustrated narrative in response to the request to create a representation of the imagined future negative-possible self, choosing to represent her ideas in the form of drawings and captions. In her illustrated narrative, Rachel communicates her negative-possible self by representing a possible future husband. According to Rachel's drawings and captions, Alistair meets the three criteria of the unwanted possible future husband being fat, ugly and a coward. Rachel tells me that the first most important thing that she does not want in the future is to be ugly herself as she wants to be an actress;

Interviewer: *So that's why it is really important to look a certain way*

Rachel: *Yeah and the second most important thing would be not to have a coward as a husband*

Interviewer: *Mmm*

Rachel: *Then not too skinny but not too fat... Just about right*

Interviewer: *What d'you think about fat people then?*

Rachel: *Wobble wobble wobble (laughs) (both laugh) Alistair the pear, wobble wobble wobble*

Again Rachel uses the phrase 'wobble wobble wobble' and we both laughed, crossing the border from nice girl to 'mean girl' (Ringrose, 2006) and indulging in the verbal relational aggression that Crick and Grotpeter (1995) argue is the feminine manifestation of violence. I was embarrassed by my own laughter, and by the idea of having to write up my complicit meanness. I laughed because of Rachel's comic tone and performance but I felt guilty and had some sympathy for Alistair.

Returning to the earlier extract, Rachel feels that Alistair deserves the treatment he receives (*His own fault*) and holds him to account. In neglecting the football pitch and indulging in the material culture of dolls, Alistair resists wearing the straightjacket of his assigned gender identity (Davies, 2003). For Rachel this challenge to the established norms of masculinity is unacceptable and justifiably punishable, giving her power to bully. This type of bullying has been cited as the means by which children define, create and consolidate dominant masculinities and femininities (Renold, 2004), and this interpretation becomes compelling when we consider Rachel's own negotiation of acceptable femininity.

Negotiating acceptable girlhood

There is a contradiction running through Rachel's interview. Rachel constantly strives to present herself as a tomboy but this positioning runs in opposition to her interjection of stereotypically 'girly' comments such as '*I can't go anywhere without my lip gloss*', which are communicated with a paralinguistic of hyper-femininity. Rachel tells me she is a football enthusiast and collects football cards but when I ask her about one of the football cards she has no knowledge of the player's team, and when I ask her which team she supports Rachel struggles to provide an answer. Throughout our conversation Rachel is constantly proliferating distinctions (Skeggs, 1997) between her gender position and that of her female peers. In particular Rachel uses the colour pink, an iconic statement of femininity, as something that must be defended against. Throughout the interview she introduces the colour with an affirmation of her dislike, and I ask her to give an explanation

Interviewer: *Why do you hate pink d'you think?*

Rachel: *It's a girly colour*

Interviewer: *But you're a girl aren't you*

Rachel: *I'm a tomboy... That's why I like football*

Interviewer: *And that's why you like blue not pink*

Rachel: *No (pause) yeah*

Despite Rachel's spoken aversion to pink, the colour keeps slipping through in conversation; Rachel derides 'dresses' and the 'colour pink' but she is not completely successful in portraying the tomboy image to the exclusion of the 'dress' and 'pink'. The 'dress' appears in a positive possible future self portrait where Rachel, an actress in the imagined possible self, is featured wearing a dress and standing on a 'red' carpet, a carpet which Rachel says '*should be blue*' in the interview. The drawing of the imagined possible future self then, depicts Rachel in a dress and the drawing is dominated by the colour pink from which Rachel attempts to draw distance in her talk.

The contradiction is also evident in this conversation about cosmetics where Rachel is telling me how she wants to look in the future based on a photograph of a model in her 'positive possible future self collage' that she introduces saying '*I'd like to look like that*'.

Interviewer: *So what about make-up would you wear make-up like her then?*

Rachel: *Um nothing pink*

Interviewer: *Nothing pink*

Rachel: *Red lipstick purple, blue or purple up there blue of course*

Interviewer: *Eye shadow*

Rachel: *Yeah, and no blusher*

Interviewer: *Have you got any make-up now then?*

Rachel: *Yeah*

Interviewer: *Are you allowed to wear make-up?*

Rachel: *Yeah I got this light lipstick not red red, no pink*

Interviewer: *Mmm*

Rachel: *Either*

Interviewer: *(laughs)*

Rachel: *Brownie brownie most, mmm lip gloss I can't go anywhere without my lip gloss*

The continual process of identification and (dis)identification (Skeggs, 1997) illustrates the way in which children who challenge the binary nature of categories remain heavily constrained by them. There is an available space for girls to do femininity differently in the identity of tomboy but this option still opposes dominant ideologies of girlhood and resistance often leads children to a contradictory set of understandings about their own identity (Renold, 2008). The degrading of stereotypically girly things, especially the theme of colour, is so entwined throughout the interview and the paradox so palpable that it becomes a standing joke between us as seen in the

limousine extract that refers again to Rachel's positive possible future film start self.

Rachel: *And a blue limousine*

Interviewer: *Ah a blue limousine*

Rachel: *Yeah (laughs) (both laugh)*

Interviewer: *It would have to be blue wouldn't it*

Rachel: *White painted blue, if it's pink, scrape the pink off*

Although we laugh frequently there is intensity in Rachel's talk and the tone of the phrase '*scrape the pink off*' conveys an underlying anger. As Driscoll (2008) argues modern girlhood is entwined with anxieties about cultural norms and Rachel is tall for her age and wears glasses so would not have easily matched the category of stereotypical 'girly girl'. Rachel divided the 'place and space' activity into two separate collages, one positive and one negative. Rachel tells me that when she made her collage of everyday dislikes she thought of glasses first. Rachel said that she had been teased about wearing glasses at school and confided '*I think I look better without them*'.

Intergenerational insights

It is useful to contextualise individual accounts within the understandings of other family members (Mannay, 2010; 2013a), and in her own interview, Rachel's mother, Melanie, describes the relational bullying (Ringrose, 2006) Rachel experienced from the girls in school, including the name calling in terms of her appearance and strategies of exclusion, which made her consider a school transfer. Melanie also discussed the way in which a tomboy image has been developed by Rachel since this episode and the accompanying acceptance of Rachel by her peers, signified by the curtailment of relational aggression.

The positioning of tomboy has been recognised as a strategy to avoid a sexualised girlhood and also a way of being that does not conform to the (hetero) normative femininity (Renold, 2008). Rachel's identification as a tomboy could then be interpreted as a strategy to find an acceptable girlhood. According to her mother, Rachel has been subjected to the secret, hidden, relational and indirect forms of aggression from her female peers: a form of repressed meanness, featuring an absence of physical aggression that Ringrose (2006, pg. 413) argues has become 'universalised as the new normal of feminine'. Rachel tells me that she gets on with all the girls but the reference to the '*bad day*' in response to my question about playground preferences suggests that difficulties remain in both masculine and feminised spaces.

Rachel: *And I usually choose football unless the boys are having a bad day*

Interviewer: *Mmm*

Rachel: *Then I'll play with the girls and if the girls are having a bad day, I'll go chase Alistair (laughs) Alistair Alistair with the pink underwear Alistair the share with no one to care*

In Rachel's interactions with boys her performativity of tomboy on the football pitch is often met with physical violence and relationships with female peers have been challenging. However, these boys and girls are presented as 'friends' although the gendered material culture, for example the colour pink and the normative physicality, such as kicking and pushing are portrayed negatively. The boys and girls in her school playground retain their conventional status through their ability to remain within the accepted continuum of the feminine and the masculine, whereas Alistair is an outlier to 'go chase' only when there are barriers to acceptance, the '*bad day*', to the sex differentiated spaces of play.

In this context Alistair symbolises the unacceptable and serves as warning about failed, deviant gender identity. Alistair represents aspects of Rachel's bullied self, for in Rachel's account he is unpopular, unable to fit in with prescribed gender norms and physically different. Children are taken to be a competent member of society because they are aware of the gender roles they are expected to perform (Renold, 2004), but Alistair is depicted by Rachel as demonstrating a desire to perform an unacceptable feminised behaviour.

Rachel displays elements of masculine behaviour in her investment in the subject position of tomboy but according to her mother, this is linked to a stronger desire for social competence. Returning to my earlier point, we could interpret Rachel's playground account as a defence against the pain associated with the bullied self where she actively projects elements of this self onto Alistair (Klein, 1975).

The demeaning of Alistair maintains a division - I condemn you - I express my disapproval - I am nothing like you. There is no room for association in a successful project of making and maintaining an acceptable female self. As Hollway (2006) contends, although change continues, we are a product of our pasts and we cannot choose to leave behind how they have forged us. Rachel's own experience of bullying could have provided the cognitive and affective base for empathy with Alistair but instead the 'capacity to care' (Hollway, 2006) is compromised by the defences mobilised in response to painful recollections and self-protection in the present.

One of the ways in which children make sense of their lives is through differences between the sexes (Walden and Walkerdine, 1985); so it is no surprise that Alistair is singled out as unconventional. In this way Rachel's response is not necessarily pathological but the strength of feeling in her talk indicates a deeper sense of meaning beneath the surface of her discourse, which is why I have looked at the individual biography, provided by her mother, alongside the social milieu of the school.

Conclusion

Boys who transgress gender norms remain as outliers; and are often the target of mockery, isolation and physical violence. In contrast girls, as found in previous research (Renold, 2005), appear to have more freedom as illustrated by Rachel's subject position as a tomboy; however, the move toward tomboyism (Renold, 2008) paradoxically engenders continued subordination of the feminine.

Although girls have a relatively less restricted choice of activities, being able to dress in 'boys' clothes and play 'boys' games, albeit often on the fringes, Rachel's account illustrates how girls remain confined by the actions of boys. Children's own ideas of their gender identities often conspire to produce and reproduce unequal outcomes, and the maintenance of an inflexible masculinity, to the exclusion of the feminine, can not only adversely affect men's capacity to care (Hollway, 2006) but contribute to and reproduce the normalisation of male violence.

Davies (2003) argues that the surrender of these defensively guarded autonomous and stereotypical gender categories could impede children being coerced into identities that are 'masculine' or 'feminine'. As Nava (1992, pg. 71) argues, 'the relationship between boys and girls and between masculinity and femininity are of considerable importance'; and I would suggest that Rachel is picking up implicit messages about violence and masculinity that she holds in her internal worlds, and that this association can potentially lead to low-level violence becoming a normalised as something that 'real boys' do.

As Page and Jha (2009, pg.194) maintain 'children will continue to absorb the biases of existing understandings of society and reproduce these ways of thinking in the future'. There may be new opportunities for generations of girls that exceed what was available to their mothers and a discourse of gender parity and freedom (Nielsen, 2004). However, this study suggests that the real and symbolic subordination of girls clouds these new horizons and restricts their mobility in the everyday space of the playground.

Furthermore, these tools of aggression are taken up by Rachel in her performance of the 'tomboy' and her policing of Alistair, in defence of the gendered status quo and as part of a careful negotiate of her own precarious gendered acceptance.

As Williams (1958, pg.54) contends, 'the inequalities that are intolerable are those which lead to denial or domination' and this paper has argued that we need to think of embodiment not just as a response to dominant discourses of femininity but in terms of the materiality of the moment. The paper has sought to restate and make central the salience of embodied violence in the construction and maintenance of lived femininity and to argue that the dominant norms of gendered aggressive physicality remain implicit in retaining, enforcing and regulating the spatial and psychological femininity and masculinity of girls and boys; and of the women and men that they will become (George and Hartshorn, 2012; Mannay, 2013b; 2013c; Towns and Adams, 2000). For children, both boys and girls, who step outside the prescribed notions of femininity and masculinity, there is a playground filled with normative cruelties that they constantly have to negotiate; and this playground is a reflection of a prior and wider world, which act to preclude and frustrate school based gender equality strategies.

Notes

[1] Pseudonym chosen to maintain participant anonymity.

[2] Narrative approaches provide an analytical frame for the study of mental life and social conditions. In this study participants were asked to write narratives describing who they wanted to become, positive-possible-self, and who they feared becoming, negative-possible-self.

[3] Collaging asks participants to create a representation through images taken from existing sources such as magazines. In this study participants were asked to make a series of collages depicting meaningful places, spaces and activities, followed by elicitation interviews.

[4] The notion that the most salient aspect in understanding a visual image is what the maker intended to show is often referred to auteur theory (Rose, 2001). Auteur theory can be required on a practical level because the interpretation of the audience is not necessarily the same as the narrative the image-maker wanted to communicate.

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