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"WHO RUN THE WORLD? GIRLS!"

Analysis on girlhood, girl empowerment and girl empowerment organization
GENaustin

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Abstract <p>Gender has a strong impact on individual's entire life course. However, this impact is also shaped by the culture and society the individual lives in. For girls (and for boys) the consequences of being of certain gender may be positive as well as negative. This master's thesis focuses on the factors that contribute to the well-being of girls, and more generally, on how girlhood is experienced. These factors are divided according to the biopsychosocial approach, but it is acknowledged that girlhood is constructed culturally and socially too, which guides the research process. Research context is here seen as 'geography' according to the theory deliberated in the book <i>Geographies of Girlhood</i> (2005), edited by Paula Bettis and Natalie Adams, in which several authors speak for the diversity of girlhood.</p> <p>Research on girls' empowerment is part of girlhood studies aiming at empowering the girls holistically; through empowerment girls are equipped to act upon their own well-being. In the study girlhood and girl empowerment are observed through the lens of biopsychosocial theory, taking into consideration the girls' living environment, i.e. the geographical context (Western, North American society). It is argued that many of the biopsychosocial challenges of girlhood might best be solved with empowerment theory turned into practice.</p> <p>The theoretical discussion on girlhood and girl empowerment is supported by a case study of one of the North American girl empowerment organizations, GENaustin, Texas, where ethnographic data was collected. Based on the analysis of the data, the researcher evaluates how successful the project of empowering the girls was and also, what were the challenges people working for this organization needed to cope with. The conclusions drawn from the theoretical consideration and the case study show that the empowerment of girls is of vital importance for their well-being and further, that in order to get good results, the geographical perspective should be recognized; this became obvious when analyzing the challenges that the organization needed to solve, such as the homogeneity of the local girl groups and prerequisites for funding set by the sponsors.</p>			
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<p>Sukupuoli vaikuttaa yksilön elämänkulkuun voimakkaasti koko eliniän ajan. Tämä vaikutus muokkautuu sen kulttuurin ja yhteiskunnan mukaan, jossa yksilö elää. Tytöille (kuten pojillekin) tämä aiheuttaa sekä positiivisia että negatiivisia seurauksia. Tässä pro gradu – tutkielmassa tarkastellaan nimenomaan tyttöjen hyvinvointiin ja ylipäätään tyttöyden kokemisen vaikuttavia tekijöitä, jotka on jaoteltu biopsykososiaalisen teorian mukaan. Tyttöyden katsotaan olevan kuitenkin myös kulttuurisesti ja sosiaalisesti rakentunutta, mikä ohjaa tutkimusprosessia. Tutkimuskontekstista puhutaan myös maantieteenä; tyttöyden maantieto- teoria perustuu Paula Bettisin ja Natalie Adamsin (2005) teokseen <i>Geographies of Girlhood</i>, jossa useat tutkijat puhuvat tyttöyden moninaisuuden puolesta.</p> <p>Tyttöjen voimaantumisen tutkimus on osa tyttötutkimusta ja siihen perustuvan toiminnan tavoitteena on tyttöjen kokonaisvaltainen voimauttaminen niin, että he pystyvät itse edistämään hyvinvointiaan. Tässä tutkimuksessa tyttöyttä ja erityisesti tyttöjen voimauttamista tarkastellaan biopsykososiaalisen teorian kautta, johon liitetään tyttöjen elinpiirin, maantieteellisen kontekstin (länsimainen, pohjoisamerikkalainen yhteiskunta) huomioon ottaminen. Tutkielma suosittaa tyttöyteen liittyvien biopsykososiaalisten haasteiden kohtaamiseen voimaantumisen teoriaa ja sen soveltamista käytäntöön.</p> <p>Tyttöyden ja tyttöjen voimaantumisen teoreettista tarkastelua vahvistetaan yhden organisaation, texasilaisen GENaustinin, tapaustutkimuksella. Tutkija on kerännyt organisaation toiminnasta etnografisen aineiston, jonka perusteella hän arvioi tyttöjen voimaantumisen onnistumista ja niitä haasteita, joita tämän organisaation toimijat työssään kohtaavat. Teoreettisen tarkastelun ja tapaustutkimuksen perusteella päädytään painottamaan tyttöjen voimaantumisen tärkeyttä hyvinvoinnin edistäjänä; parempaan tulokseen tässä työssä päästään ottamalla huomioon maantieteellinen näkökulma, mikä ilmenee myös haasteissa, joita organisaatio kohtaa, kuten paikallisten tyttöryhmien homogeenisyys ja sponsorien mahdolliset rahoitukselle asettamat ehdot.</p>			
Asiasanat Etnografia, hyvinvointi, tapaustutkimus, tyttötutkimus, tyttöyden maantiede, voimaantuminen.			

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1 INTRODUCTION

“Who run the world? Girls!” (Knowles, 2012)

Girlhood is a worldwide phenomenon. Girls are all over the world. All over the world children are separated as boys or girls according to their biological makeup, and this make up means something. It expounds their lives to be certain kind of life; life of a boy or a life of a girl. Hence, while existing in the world girls create geographies of the girlhood just by being. These geographies are molded by the society that they live in. And these geographies, again, mean something. Traditionally geography refers to the actual place of the girl, but geography here implies how gender identities are simultaneously racialized, classed, sexualized and so forth according to the place of the girl (Laurie, Dwyer, Holloway & Smith, 1999, p. 16). The geographies are a representation of how girls are perceived by themselves as well as by others. These representations are valued and treated differently from culture and society to the other. In this thesis, this idea of geography of girlhood forms a frame of reference for the analysis performed.

Notwithstanding, it can be questioned whether there is something shared in girlhood, in the geography of being a girl. Is there in the core of being a girl something omnipresent that can be defined important for girls no matter what their geography is. It could be any detail related to the lives of the girls. In this master’s thesis, I will try to provoke discussion on the importance of empowering girls in their own specific geography. In other terms, the goal is to discuss if empowerment could be that something omnipresent in the geographies of girlhood. This discussion is supported by a case study of girl empowerment organization called Girl Empowerment Network Austin, GENAustin.

To reach the goal, firstly an analysis is performed of academic publications and researches on the topics of girlhood and girl empowerment. Based on this theoretical analysis, the thesis will examine the case of GENAustin. Thus, academic publications and researches set basis for more detailed analysis of girl empowerment to occur. The discussion is deepened through analysis of GENAustin, which is a non-profit organization in Austin, Texas, USA.

Essentially, this master’s thesis is written to create discussion and to further the action. The reasons why I have chosen this topic as my thesis stem from my personal and professional life. My personal and professional experiences have made me realize that this discussion

on girl empowerment is still needed in the 21st century. Academically I started to work on this topic in my bachelor's thesis where I discussed the general theory and praxis of girl empowerment. This work has lead me to deepen my knowledge on theoretical as well as on practical level of girlhood and girl empowerment. I have worked in different countries concerning the topic of girlhood, one of them being GENaustin where I did my advanced professional practice to complete my studies in intercultural teacher education. The work that I did in the organization inspired me to embark on this topic as my master's thesis. During my academic career I have always felt that working on empowering girls is important and inspiring.

Moreover, I have personally felt that more work is desperately needed in order for girls to really "run the world", i.e. to be active members of the geographies that they are born into. These in depth encounters with issues related to girls' and girlhood have made me feel urgent matters in order to build a better future and enhance the well-being of girls all around the world.

2 FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH

The discussion in this thesis is profoundly based on theories and conceptualizations, which is why the research has to fulfill the requirements of validity and reliability. In order to achieve these requirements, the framework of the research has to be explained in great detail for the reader. Another important factor is the case of GENaustin; the reader has to be able to follow the discussion related to this organization and therefore, the analysis has to obey the rules of the case study research method. In this chapter, the intention is to explain the research performed for this thesis.

2.1 Research questions

Research work has to have clear direction guided by research questions. The main objective for the discussion on girlhood and girl empowerment is to find answers to the following research questions.

1. What is defined as girlhood and girl empowerment? To answer this, a sample of selected academic publications is analyzed.
2. Why and how should girl empowerment be performed according to certain geography of girlhood? Consequently: how is girl empowerment understood and carried out in Girl Empowerment Network Austin with reference to geography, philosophy, practices, and experience?

Through answering these questions, the thesis is designed to meet its goal of defending the existence of girl empowerment and supporting it inside the different geographies of girlhood.

2.2 Research method

In any reliable and valid academic research, one has to have a clear research method to convince the reader of one's professionalism and objectivity. This becomes extremely crucial when the data for research is written by people for people. Hence, a completed study is one kind of interpretation of the matter at hand. In educational sciences, there are

seldom right or wrong answers. The goal of this thesis is not to give definite answers as such but to instigate thoughts on the issues discussed.

The thoughts and ideas presented in this thesis are gathered through the analysis of researches and academic publications. The analysis has to follow the protocol of one type of qualitative research which has been chosen as the most suitable. The umbrella of qualitative research method is not a set of unified techniques or philosophies of research; rather it represents a wide range of intellectual and disciplinary traditions of research (Mason, 1996, p. 3). Simultaneously, ground rules for qualitative research can be set and that is what Jennifer Mason does in her book *Qualitative researching* (1996). She suggests qualitative research to be systematically and rigorously conducted which means that one really studies what one has set out to study. Qualitative research should also be strategically conducted, yet flexible, and support the researcher's constant reflexivity. Together these rules for qualitative research mean that while one understands the context and conditions of the research, one should be also aware of how these issues affect one's own work and challenge one's objectivity. While performing qualitative research social explanations should be produced to solve intellectual puzzles that are somewhat generalizable. And while performing according to these rules, the researcher should give thought to the ethical issues related to the research topic. (Mason, 1996, pp. 5-6).

From the field of qualitative research one has several schools of thought to choose from. The analysis of a certain topic cannot be executed in an arbitrary manner. There has to be a system, code of conduct behind the analysis. In this thesis the method chosen is descriptive textual analysis. The research is based on the selected academic publications, previous studies as well as on the material collected on GENaustin. While deep-reading these texts I am interpreting them to describe the phenomena discussed. Mason (1996, p. 109) describes interpretive reading to involve the researcher in constructing or documenting a version what she or he thinks the data to mean or represent. This descriptive analysis or building of representation leads to theoretical framework of geographies of girlhood and girl empowerment.

To the researchers themselves, it seems transparent when written but the idea behind descriptive textual analysis has to be opened for the reader to fully trust the reliability and validity of the research. Reliability in this thesis refers to the consistency of the interpretation, in other words coding (Schreier, 2012, p. 166). High level of academic

reliability is described by Margrit Schreier to be as if the writer is someone who the reader regards as reliable and who will be true to her word. The writer's actions are predictable for us to follow her and trust her (Schreier, 2012, p. 167). This predictability and gaining the trust of the reader are my goals when it comes to reliability.

Another important issue for this thesis and it succeeding in the conventions of academic writing is the issue of validity. The research is considered to be valid when it achieves to research what it set out to research (Schreier, 2012, p. 175). This means that the research method is also valid because by using it, the researcher has been able to answer the questions she or he took up to answer. This goal for validity will be addressed at the end of this thesis.

In this thesis, reliability and validity are affected by the success in using the case study method. In order for the method to be successful, the reader has to be aware of the codes of conduct of case study. The case study method is defined as a problem solving mechanism (Syrjälä & Numminen, 1988, p. 5). According to one case, certain phenomenon is discussed so problems and issues related to it are debated, even solved, through the analysis of the case. Traditional definition of case study depicts it to be empirical research where different types of evidence are used to study a phenomenon in a certain context. Hence, case study is comprehensive and systematic depiction of a phenomenon. It has concrete elements from the living and breathing reality of the case. These concrete elements are described and analyzed in a case study (Syrjälä & Numminen, 1988, p. 8). While performing a case study research, the researcher is in direct interaction with the studied phenomenon with transaction between feeling, acting, and participating subjects (Syrjälä & Numminen, 1988, p. 9). From this participation and interaction, the goal of case study is to form a synthesis where the phenomenon discussed is opened in practice and developed.

Firstly, in this thesis the case is GENaustin. The case study method offers knowledge on the causal connection behind a phenomenon (Syrjälä & Numminen, 1988, p. 18) which is why the causal connections behind GENaustin are discussed at large. From these connections, the thesis moves on to discussing the future of girl empowerment. In case study research the frame can be formulated in two ways. The research can start just with the case and from the reflections of the case, discussion on theory is conducted. Secondly, the case can be examined with a framework of theory collected prior the case study

research. (Syrjälä & Numminen, 1988, p. 21). The latter is used in this thesis. The theory collected and formulated on girlhood, girl empowerment and geography of GENaustin guides the discussion on the case. Without the preceding knowledge on the phenomenon of girl empowerment, one would not be able to fully comprehend and follow the analysis and discussion on GENaustin.

This thesis resides more precisely under the umbrella of evaluative case study research. Essential for evaluative case study is to portray a phenomenon and evaluate the value of it. Through this evaluation, concrete suggestions for development are offered and also advised (Syrjälä, Numminen, 1988, p. 40). The evaluation is based on interpretative method in which the researcher herself is present and it is taken into consideration when looking at the arguments of the research.

Ethnography is chosen for this thesis because it has been widely used to analyze the work of various organizations. John Brewer (2004) gives several examples on how to use ethnography as a mean to study organizations, for example for examining power relations inside the organizations. Brewer claims that ethnographic research enables the researcher to see the organization differently (2004, p. 314).

Collecting the data from GENaustin in order to analyze its work as a girl empowerment organization was carried out through ethnography. Ethnography is part of qualitative research and it is used when something is desired to be described (Fetterman, 1998, p. 1). Ethnography attempts to gain a holistic view of the phenomenon putting emphasis on authenticity of the data. Therefore the purpose is to cover as much as possible during the fieldwork period on the actual location. This means that the researcher works with people in their natural settings and collects data through individual observations but also in collaboration with the locals (Fetterman, 1998, pp. 11, 31). The data for this thesis was collected through field work when working in the studied organization. Ethnographically compiled data is processed through triangulation so that the source of information is tested against other explanations on the phenomenon (Fetterman, 1998, p. 93). Here, the case study of GENaustin is tested against the theories of girlhood and girl empowerment.

In detail, my role of as an ethnographer means that I was a thinking, feeling, sensuous person who constantly during the practice collected 'data' around me (Riain, 2009, p. 292). In the evaluative work, GENaustin is treated as a case found which signifies that it is a real, social entity that I have gained an experience from (Harvey, 2009, p. 20). The present

study can also be considered as an ethnographic study in the sense of that I stayed on location and collected data from the environment.

Ethical evaluation of research is important; the researcher has to take her own goals, goals of the research, the quality and applicability of chosen methods as well as the effects of the results into account while considering the phenomenon and individuals inside it (Syrjälä & Numminen, 1988, p. 160). Case study is also evaluated by the reader comparing it to prior publications and researches made (Syrjälä & Numminen, 1988, p. 167). In order to reach high ethical and scientific reliability, the analysis performed on GENaustin will be discussed in the end accordingly.

As I have mentioned it before, the data consists of academic publications and materials produced by GENaustin as well as the material produced by me during my practice at the organization. The selected literature was chosen by the popularity of the authors which implies that they are well-known in the field of girlhood studies. Another criterion for the literature was their up-to-date relevancy. With the help of these criteria, I wish to establish comprehensive, yet versatile, theory for this thesis.

Hence, in the following chapter I will introduce the reader to the field of girlhood studies.

3 FIELD OF STUDY

Before starting a discussion on girlhood and girl empowerment, the reader has to know something about the academic history and traditions that are present in this field of research. This is important especially in educational sciences where every study falls into a specific field of study. Study of girlhood and girl empowerment is not an exception. The field of research where these two phenomena fall into is called girls' studies, also known as girlhood studies. In this thesis, these terms are used as synonyms. *Girls' studies* (*tyttö tutkimus*) is a combined creation of two older fields of studies; youth and women's studies. Originating from these two, it is considered to be formed mainly by women's studies' desire to bring girls into the field of youth studies, referring to the absence of girls regarding the general direction of youth studies in the 1970's (Näre & Lähteenmaa, 1992, p. 9). Sociological girls' studies were first introduced in the United Kingdom, Birmingham, in 1976, by Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber who shifted the direction of youth studies towards girls after noticing the lack of young women in the studies (Ojanen, 2008, p. 2). Their purpose was to find the 'hidden culture of girls' which they considered to have been created in order to resist the patriarchal mainstream culture and its pressures and expectations towards girls. They did succeed in their attempt when girls' private lives and social contexts proved to be a culture of its own (Näre & Lähteenmaa, 1992, p. 10). The concept of the Birminghamian school of thought is considered to be the beginning of girls' studies wherefrom it has advanced long way and developed various trends before the 21st century.

After its creation, girlhood studies have become assorted in different ways. One of the main divisions in the field has been a geographical one. The girls' studies field has had a Western world focus or origins but it also has been to some extent distributed over the Atlantic Ocean. The European and North American girls' studies have had different paths and emphasis throughout their history. Notwithstanding, they both consider the Birminghamian school of thought as the birthplace of all girls' studies (Harris, 2004, p. xvii). Starting with the European girls' studies history, the Birmingham researchers, in the 1970's, had focused on the differences between boys' and girls' cultures and had highlighted how girls had to build up their own culture as a counter-reaction towards threats and attitudes from society. The girls were not seen as valuable actors themselves in their culture but rather as counter strikers because of a must. Angela McRobbie instructed

girls to come out of their bedrooms and announce that they needed to be heard. One interpretation is that she was advising girls to act more boy-like in order to receive attention. (Ojanen, 2008, pp. 6-7).

The next step in the progress of European girls' studies was performed in the 1980's. The Nordic girls' studies had awoken to the comparing of boys' and girls' cultures and wanted to shift the tendency of the studies to focus purely, solely on the issues in girls' culture, without any comparison (Näre & Lähteenmaa, 1992, p. 10). In her article, Ojanen (2008, p. 3-4) refers to this shift as birth of functional girls' studies which meant that the research was now focused on the skills and talents the girls possessed on their own, i.e. practically admiration of their skills. Functional girls' studies' point of view had the idea of finding the valuable competences girls could offer to society (Näre & Lähteenmaa, 1992, p. 11). Within this trend, the Finnish girls' studies were born. The next decade of European girls' studies continued in the path of functional research and the girls continued to be regarded as operative actors within their own cultures, almost frantically idolizing girls because of their specific and important competences (Ojanen, 2008, p. 8).

On the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, chronologically the development has been similar. The first important North American girls' studies research was performed in the 1970's by Michelle Fine, who discussed the importance of understanding intersectionality in young women's identities. Other important grounding stone in the American girls' studies was the feminist psychologists who elaborated theories on adolescence development from the point of view of young women (ed. Harris, 2004, p. xvii). The development of the study had a rough outburst on the North American soil in the 1990's which occurred because of the huge public interest in the topic. Because of this, the field shifted towards the 'crisis' in girls' development and vast studies were made under the topic. This crisis as well as the psychological theories will be discussed in this thesis later on, but it is important to acknowledge that the researches and publications on girls' studies bloomed in the 1990's. This is also the antecedent for the current girls' studies to be US-centered.

Despite the Atlantic division in the history, the field itself never wanted to separate into two schools of thought and it never has. This wish is best described by Anita Harris who states the following:

“Although there was a considerable Atlantic divide in terms of disciplinary traditions and conceptual frameworks regarding feminist work about girl, a shared body of knowledge and political research agenda were developed across these differences which became the basis of the broad field of girls’ studies.” (ed. Harris, 2004, p. xix)

Regardless of the historical differences in tendencies and approaches, the girls’ studies is considered to have a strong transnational and cross-disciplinary history (Harris, ed. 2004, p. xvii). This generates that the current field of research has common interests and topics that it deals with. Therefore, it is important to identify the modern girls’ studies topics before issuing girl empowerment, one of its branches.

In *Young Femininity* (2005), written by Aapola, Gonick and Harris, the contemporary girls’ studies is described to attempt to make central the constitution of ‘girls’ as a category through an examination of the diverse experiences of young women in their social worlds. (Aapola, Gonick & Harris, 2005, pp. 9-10) These diverse experiences or issues are stated to be in relationship with popular culture, material conditions and gendered identities: in school, media, and society (Harris, 2004, p. xix). Through acknowledging these different forms, the modern girlhood has become more than a physical stage, viz. transition to something. Modern girlhood is defined through the psychological, social, physical, and emotional experiences that girls go through and therefore, they are issued within the girls’ studies research. (Aapola et al., 2005, p. 5).

After this general introduction to girls’ studies one has to establish the individual level who is considered to be a girl. This description is most effortlessly done with a regard to the academic traditions of girls’ studies. The concept of ‘girl’ has been widely discussed in the field of research and its use has been questioned. This viewpoint generates from the use of the word ‘girl’ to demean and condescend women of all age. Yet, in girls’ studies it is now starting to have a conception reclaiming or inverting its meaning (Aapola et al. 2005, p. 6). Therefore, the use of ‘girls’ and ‘young women’ is justified in the research and they are even used as synonyms. The book *Young Femininity* does not wish to determine chronological age-limits about when girlhood ends and womanhood begins (Aapola et al. 2005, p. 6).

To sum up, the current girls’ studies implies feministic research on different aged girls. This multidisciplinary field of research approaches girls from various points of views and focuses on questions of girlhood and differences between girls (Ojanen, 2008, p. 1).

Harris' *All About the Girl* (ed. 2004) demonstrates different parts of contemporary research agendas that currently characterize girls' studies; feminism, sexuality, popular culture, school, and education are all central issues in young women's lives across the world (ed. Harris, 2004, p. xxi).

These research agendas bring out the question of what is girls' studies' contribution to scientific research, especially youth research. Vesa Puuronen in his book *Nuorisotutkimus* (2006, p. 143-145) states that girls' studies has had an influence on youth studies as well as society as a whole. It has focused on methodological analysis and self-criticism and used various qualitative research methods. Combined with the previously mentioned analysis and criticism, it is considered to have found some special characteristics of womanhood and girlhood through its versatile research methodology. Puuronen refers to the idea of girls' studies really conveying the reality of young women and therefore, to be useful in society.

In conclusion, the concept of girlhood studies, girlhood and girl empowerment included, scopes more than one agenda. It can have a certain emphasis on researching young women, it being about their sexuality or their educational lives. For this thesis the concept of girl empowerment has been chosen as the main focus area. One of the leading discourses inside girlhood studies has been the empowerment and powerlessness of girls. The modern research on the power of girls is related to ambition of molding the discussion to be more versatile and to be based on the actual experiences of the girls (Ojanen, 2011, pp. 22-24). The main objective is to give the girls possibility to speak out. According to Karoliina Ojanen (2011, pp. 25-28), this should also be the focus of girlhood studies of today in order to reach intersectional knowledge on the lives of the girls.

Through the definitions on girlhood and girl empowerment one will be able to see that this thesis follows this discourse of girlhood. Furthermore, the theoretical framework on these issues will guide this thesis towards the discussion on empowerment that occurs in the specific geography of GENaustin. This discussion hopes to give a versatile description of the empowerment that girls' in that specific geography are experiencing. In the framework of this specific geography, the analysis is then directed to answer the question of why it is recommendable to focus on girl empowerment inside certain geography of girlhood.

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON GIRLHOOD

In order to commence the discussion on girlhood and girl empowerment one has to establish frames for the discourse. The frames are built in this chapter. Discourse on girls is as multidimensional as are the lives of the girls. Writers and readers have their own agendas when focusing on any of the dimensions of girlhood. As an equivalent for these dimensions is the word geography. Geography of girlhood refers to the various cultures of girls. These cultures of girls are shared experiences of the world around them. Through practices, experiences, emotions, attitudes, and knowledge the girls create a culture of girlhood (Anttila, Ojanen, Saarikoski & Timonen, 2011, p. 137). Wherever the girls are, they are part of a place that is not neutral (Bettis & Adams, 2005, p. 273). Therefore, some generic definition of girlhood cannot be presented, but instead several aspects of girlhood must be taken into consideration.

Oxford Dictionary of Current English, Third Edition (2001, p. 382) gives the word girl meaning of ‘a female child, a young woman’. These two meanings show how differently the idea of being a girl can be interpreted. One can be considered as a child or as a young adult. Girls are constantly moving between these two definitions or in some way getting lost between them. With the help of academic sources a girl can simply be considered to be an individual stated as a female by gender and also with the age limit of under 18 years old. Although, there is no consensus of what the limits for girlhood are age wise, one has to take into consideration that childhood and being a child is restrained differently from culture and society to another. With regard to this complexity of what is considered as childhood, the definition of girlhood in this thesis derives from the United Nation’s definition of who is a child. In the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) the United Nations set that being a child regards every human being under the age of 18 years old unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier. (Article 1). In this thesis, being a girl is considered parallel to being a child. I am well aware of the fact that girlhood involves specific stages that may not come any more under the heading of ‘being a child’. In the present study, the age limit of 18 years for girlhood has been chosen as the criterion of ‘being a child’.

As for the psychological sciences, they have traditionally treated human beings as three dimensional creatures. Slater and Bremner state in their psychological research on gender development that:

“Gender development concerns the important question of how it is that children grow up that they are either a boy or a girl. Psychologists from several different theoretical traditions have offered accounts of how it happens, and here we give very brief accounts of cognitive, behaviorist/social learning, psychoanalytical, and biological explanations.” (2002, p. 59).

Girlhood is a gendered childhood. Therefore, it is motivated to examine girlhood in three dimensions of biological, psychological, and sociological aspects. In one of the major works on girlhood *Handbook of Girls' and Women's Psychological Health* (ed. Worell & Goodheart, 2006), various articles discuss situation of girls and women from the three aspects of biology, psychology, and sociology. The book states the method of biopsychological approach to be most beneficial in order to gain influence on the matters concerning the various contexts of girls and women (Goodheart, 2006, p. 3). This biopsychosocial perspective is a profound guideline for this thesis and for discussions on girlhood and girl empowerment.

These contexts of biology, psychology and sociology can also been found in the work of Bettis and Adams in *Geographies of girlhood - identities in between* (2008). Throughout the book, the various authors shed light on the different geographies of girlhood. This is performed through discussions on the biopsychosocial perspective of being a girl. As this work is the basis for the discussion on girlhood and girl empowerment in this thesis, it would seem absurd not to base the theoretical frameworks of the issues according to the same perspectives. In another famous research on the realities of girls, their experiences were also divided into three. Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan introduce in their book *Meeting at the Crossroads - Women's Psychology and Girls' Development*, the voice of the girls and how it has these three aspects: biological and physical aspects of a voice are resonances and vibrations, psychological and sociological voices refer to the fact that voice connects psyche and body as well as psyche and culture (1992, p. 20). Brown and Gilligan listened to the different voices of the girls they interviewed and from these voices they formulated theory of empowering girls through listening.

The biopsychosocial aspects of girlhood are molded by the geography of girlhood. This geography includes the place and the time of a specific girlhood (Montgomery, 2003, pp. 51-55). The place and the time of girlhood for this thesis is the Western society of United States of America in the 21st century. Through this geographical standpoint, the three dimensions of girlhood are opened. Therefore, the examples on the matters related to girlhood introduce the reader to a certain type of girlhood and later on to girl empowerment. This speciality of girlhood in a certain place and time is supported by critical girlhood studies where the girls are seen as active participants who together create their gendered childhood. Being a girl and the geography of girlhood is individually and conjointly produced and it is not static nor linear (Brown, 2010, p. 109). The present thesis is part of critical girlhood studies focusing on the importance of girl empowerment for the girls in Austin, Texas and through that, even in other geographies.

After introducing the reader to the framework on girlhood, it will now be analyzed through the biopsychosocial perspective.

4.1 Biological aspect

The main focus in the educational and psychological fields when discussing gender has not been on the biological aspect of it. This is due to the fact that the biological and social aspects of childhood overlap. This overlapping is considered to have an effect on psychological processes such as aging, illness, and reproduction (Andersen, 1988, p. 57). Biological aspect of sex is usually regarded as a setting stone from which gender is an acquired identity (Andersen, 1988, p. 48). As stated previously, girlhood is a gendered childhood. In this chapter the setting stone of biological sex is opened through academic theories and studies with a regard to girlhood.

The predominant view of examining gender is that gender is acquired knowledge. Yet, some researchers express strongly that this gender acquisition has a basis in the chromosomes each individual receives in the moment of conception. There have been studies where 'maleness' and 'femaleness' have been found on a biological level. The different levels of female and male hormones, estrogen and testosterone, have an effect on how we act as representatives of gender. These hormones give us the physical attributes upon which individuals are male or female. It is hardly possible to acquire a gender without the physical features of one sex. (Rogers, 2003, pp. 187-192).

The great significance of these biological and physical features can be illustrated with one of the many cases in psychological research. The case of John establishes gender to be somewhat imprinted in our DNA, no matter what we incorporate from the surrounding world to be gender specific. The puzzling incident concerning a boy called John gives a new bearing to the fact that something is inbuilt in us when it comes to gender. John was born with both sex organs. The doctors treating him felt that they had to choose a sex for him. John was forced against his biological built up and the sex organs of a boy were removed. Throughout his childhood his cultural and social environment treated him as a girl. Yet, he did not feel that the sex chosen for him was the right one. In the end, he made sex change to achieve the biological and physical features of a male. (Moshella, 2008).

What does this biological aspect of gender mean for girlhood? As a founding remark, the biological differences start the concept of girlhood. One cannot enter girlhood without being a girl and even today this is done through the biological standards. Notwithstanding, transsexualism is an important point to be made and as a researcher, I regard it as a crucial part of human rights. However, the focus of the present study is on girls who since birth have considered themselves biologically girls.

It is essential to question how much does sex and gender overlap inside girlhood. As stated previously in this chapter, the common view is that sex is the biological factor of gender and gender is the social aspect of it (Ruggerone, 2008). Any up-to-date research of gender agrees with that mark but it is useful to briefly discuss the significance that biological sex has for girls' growth into adulthood.

Biological sex affects girls from birth and it can have profound consequences, even at an early stage of reproduction. It is still common in some cultures to abort girl fetus because they are not seen as beneficial for the culture and society. In a piece of news in Helsingin Sanomat (Mielonen, 24.3.2013) this is supported with dreadful figures. The United Nations posted an estimation that world is missing 200 million girls at the moment. This lack of girls is due to the abortion of girl fetus as well as to crimes against girls. Documentary called *It's a girl* (It's a girl, 2013) tells stories of cultures where baby girls are killed just for the reason that they happen to be girls. Being born a girl is a shame for the families. And this shame is implemented by the cultural geography around them.

This piece of news and the film documentary, referred to above, make a clear statement that being born girl already affects the geography of girlhood that one is going to acquire in

a certain place, if one at all. Being part of geography of girlhood requires a biological starting point. All in all, being born female can have devastating consequences as illustrated above. Already at the moment of conception certain geography starts to affect the individual and continues to do so throughout the life.

4.2 Psychological aspect

Next I will discuss the psychological aspect of girlhood. What are the special psychological features of girlhood? Here these features are examined through analysis of academic studies and books. Individual's psychological health can be influenced in many ways. From this point of view, I am interested to find the issues influencing girlhood. It is common knowledge that adolescence and puberty are not always an easy process. Girls and young women fit to this period chronologically. Adolescence involves great changes that can affect one's self-esteem in a powerful way. In this chapter, those changes are observed through the psychological changes that take place in a girl. This means that the individual is in the center of the focus and the effects of other people will be discussed under the heading of sociological aspect.

Firstly, the psychological changes within individuals do not originate just from the development of the psyche. Physical changes present psychological challenges too. The physical changes occurring through adolescence; early, middle, and late adolescence, have a strong influence on the psychological development. This idea is introduced by Morris A. Skalansky (1991, pp. 63-97) who states that pubescence is a critical physical maturational process that profoundly affects personality development and life on the whole. He especially highlights the importance of the reactions to these changes, from the individual and from the others. Through the physical changes, the psychological self is constructed. For girls, the physical changes affect the psychological aspect of girlhood.

Secondly, the psychological development of young women is claimed to be more gender emphasized than in the case of young men. According to Carol Gilligan (1982), one of the pioneers of women and girls' studies, this difference is an important characteristic throughout women's lives. Gilligan has devoted her research to the unique psychological development of women and has come to the conclusion that women do have extremely different psychological makeup in their lives. In her most famous book, *In a Different Voice* (1982), Gilligan explains her research on women's development which she

conducted through interviews. She constructed a theory that touches upon women's perceptions of themselves, on their own, and in relationship to others, and found out that the female psychological development has a different voice that needs to be carefully listened to and seen through the psychological theories. In other words, when reading a psychological theory, one should hear women's voices separately from the text.

On the development of young women, Gilligan also collaborated with Lyn Mikel Brown in their book *Meeting at the Crossroads – Women's Psychology and Girls' Development* (1992). The book contains interviews carried out with girls and the theory of their development is built upon these interviews. The psychological development of girls in the edge of adolescence Brown and Gilligan describe to be like standing in a crossroads. Brown and Gilligan (1992, pp. 217-218) state that girls feel disconnected from their lives: they separate themselves or their psyches from their bodies; they disconnect their voices from their feelings, and isolate themselves from relationships to please others. And these disconnections follow them in their adult life. In the perspective of empowerment, these two authors highlight that young women should be met in the crossroads and helped to cross it. Their own, special voices should be heard and respected. Brown and Gilligan (1992, p. 232) see this to be done in collaboration with adult women, finding power together for societal and cultural change to occur.

A third uptake on psychological development of girls is introduced by Mary Pipher, the author of the notorious book on adolescent girls; *Reviving Ophelia – Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (1994). Pipher's book is referred to in many other publications on girls' studies and a lot of research has been based on it. This generates from the radical and quite upfront point of view that Pipher takes on young women and on their development. Namely, Pipher (1994, p. 19) sees girls' psychological changes on the verge of adolescence as a metaphor to the Bermuda's Triangle. Young women are lost to this storm of social and developmental aspects; they are unhappy and unsatisfied with their bodies. Pipher has an emphasis on sociological issues. Therefore, her theory will be discussed in depth later on.

In conclusion, it is important to acknowledge that psychological studies on girls indicate that there is some type of a trap that awaits young women and some sort of special guidance is needed in order to evade this psychological trap.

4.3 Sociological aspect

An individual is always part of a group, whether it is family, friends or work place. In many societies individuals are connected to various groups simultaneously and they affect us in various ways. In this chapter, the effects of this will be considered through the eyes of young women: how do our society and its multiple groups and communities treat girls and young women on their journey to adulthood? The influence of others is significant in the developmental stage of adolescence. Susan Harter (1999, pp. 65-67) argues in her book that young people, especially women, make use of social comparison while constructing their identities. They compare themselves to others and they adjust their identities and actions accordingly. Harter (1999, p. 62) explains that adolescent girls and boys use the social context to form their identities, both positively and negatively. In other words, this is when the geographies of girlhood are shaped.

Jan Erik-Nurmi (1997, pp. 256-274) describes the whole transition from childhood to adolescence to be 'role transition' (*roolisiirtymä*). This means that young women struggle with the various roles they are faced with, for example, being a good daughter, efficient student, loving sister, popular friend or pretty girlfriend. Some of the roles of the childhood need to be transformed or abandoned in order to survive in the phase of puberty and in the upcoming adulthood. Girlhood and its different geographies include all of the above mentioned roles.

Generally the discussion on sociological aspect reacts to the interaction happening between adults and children, in this case girls. In his book Wyness (2006, p. 31) says: "*In all sorts of ways children are expected to behave according to codes and frames laid down by adults, usually parents and teachers.*" These kinds of codes affect girls too. Codes and frames are part of the special geography of girlhood. In *Geographies of Girlhood – identities in between* (2005) Pamela Bettis and Natalie Adams describe these codes and frames. In the book, these frames are claimed to be of extreme importance in geographies of girls. As mentioned previously, this idea of social geographies is crucial because they guide the discussion on girlhood and girl empowerment in this thesis. *Geographies of girlhood* is an advocate for the "place" of girlhood; therefore to open up this concept of geography we need to start with the concept of "place". In this context, the place refers to both physical and psychological place of the girls. Girls are always part of a place, community, where they are creating girlhood. The authors want to highlight the topic by

giving different kind of examples of these places. A place can be a class, ethnicity or whatever specific feature that contributes to the life of a girl. And these different places create different kind of geographies, in other words girlhoods. But they are not created alone. Therefore, as a proof for the social aspect of girlhood, the book discusses many exterior issues affecting the girls and molding them. These exterior things stem from the social environment around the girls.

Therefore, most dominantly, girlhood is considered to be shaped by the social aspects. This view is shared by several authors and scholars in psychology. In *The Developmental Social Psychology of Gender* (ed. Eckes & Trautner, 2000) various authors wonder about the features of gender that are received from the social psychology and interaction. The main message of the authors is that gender is “done” in families, schools, and in media. The authors argue that no one can create gender alone and the creation of girlhood is purely a social phenomenon. This means that girlhood is constructed by the society and culture a girl is living in.

4.4 Summing up thoughts on girlhood

In the previous discussion on defining the phenomenon of girlhood, three aspects of girlhood have been opened up for the reader. These three dimensions of girlhood set the outline for the discussion that follows in this thesis, therefore it is useful to gather these three aspects and formulate some conclusive thoughts. To start with the biological aspect, we have the chromosomes, the combinations which create males and females. This biological buildup guides the girl towards the gender-special psychological and sociological aspects.

Psychological aspect can be seen in the turmoil that is considered to affect the girls. These changes are molded by the sociological aspects. The community, and the family a girl child is born in to play a significant role in what type of girlness the girl will acquire or how she deals with psychological changes of girlhood. Girlhood cannot be performed alone and it is always affected by certain people, events, and issues in the individual’s life.

As the previous discussion shows, girlhood is a specific phenomenon for an individual. Every girl in the world is a member of some kind of girlhood. Therefore, in order to be part of girlhood, one has to be able to learn and to act according to certain codes of conduct of

the particular girlhood. As for these different codes of conduct, it can be asked whether they are favorable for the girls themselves. The importance of questioning these codes of conduct is crucial. Although it may seem that gender and position of girls are set, we still have the power to change them. Rogers (2003, p. 211) states that: *“Gender is not something that is acquired passively, but something that people continually do. Gender is something all of us – adults and children – have to constantly ‘work on’. At the same time, it constantly ‘works on’ us.”*

On this remark, the concept of girl empowerment will be introduced in the next chapter. If gender and girlhood are not acquired only passively, there is the possibility to affect it. Pamela Bettis and Natalie Adams (2005) show us how various landscapes of girlhood are. To conclude, the authors demonstrate that active participation of girls in the geographies of girlhood is called for. This is especially evident when they make reference to the origins of girlhood studies: *“Furthermore, we were frustrated with the feminist researchers who took what were “women’s issues” and transplanted them into the lives of girls.”* (2005, p. 2) In order to empower the girls, we need to use their own voices and tell about their ‘geographies’ in their own terms and language. From this request, I will commence to discuss the topic of girl empowerment.

5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON GIRL EMPOWERMENT

In educational sciences, empowerment has been a popular concept for a few decades. The concept has been connected with various genres of research as well as with different phenomena. Notwithstanding, the use of the word empowerment and its meaning requires separate clarification within each field of research because it does not possess one single definition. This problem has created a separate branch of research that is only focusing on the term empowerment and observing it from different points of view. Therefore, before defining the concept *girl empowerment* it is beneficial to examine the concept of empowerment on its own.

The verb *empower*, and its derivate empowerment, is defined as follows in *Oxford Dictionary of Current English, Third Edition* (2001, p. 292): *give authority or power to, give strength and confidence to*. From this seemingly simple definition, variety of discussions and definitions have arisen and are now in the focal point of various researches. One example of this discussion is Juha Siitonen's (1999) study concerning the basics of empowerment theory. After the empirical part of his research, Siitonen's study involved professional growth of pre-service teachers; the main goal of the study was to formulate a general formal theory of human empowerment (Siitonen, 1999, abstract). Siitonen describes various approaches on empowerment in the theoretical part of his study in order to compose an inclusive theory on empowerment. He elaborately discusses the different theoretical frameworks and definitions of empowerment. Siitonen demonstrates the loose use of the term and claims that the shattered field of research has not produced a shared definition (Siitonen, 1999, p. 82-96).

The first definition introduced also by Siitonen (1999) is Heljä Antola Robinson's (1994, p. 38) view about empowerment as a liberating feeling regarding one's own strength, competence, creativity, and freedom. She recognizes empowerment to be as a feeling that comes from other people and within oneself. She defines empowerment also as energy and joy of life. Concluding, Antola Robinson considers an empowered human to be capable of enjoying and growing in one's life and she states that an empowered person is the opposite of a person suffering from burn-out. Continuing from Antola Robinson's idea is the second definition which is constructed by Bell and Gilbert (1996). They acknowledge empowerment to be a personal and social experience where power cannot be transferred

straight between people. This requires subtle action and thinking before empowerment is to occur. In other words, empowerment is not a sticker that can be handed over to someone, it requires constant effort. The last example of defining empowerment is on the same lines as the previous two but it puts more emphasis on the constant effort of an individual person. Heikkilä and Heikkilä (2001, p. 286) detail empowerment to be development of one's own individual feeling of power. She or he should be able to find an authority of empowerment in him- or herself. They implement that all actions of empowerment should be harnessed to enable people to find power in themselves.

To conclude these three different theories on empowerment, one has to merge them and find a shared idea. Siitonen (1999, p. 93) gathered the definitions into one and describes empowerment to be a process starting within oneself. It is a personal and social experience where the environment plays an important role. In surroundings where empowerment is supported, it is more likely to occur, but empowerment does not happen through outer pressure or on the basis of someone else's decision. In order to clarify this even more, Siitonen draws a picture of a person who is empowered. An empowered person is someone who has found their inner strengths, control over themselves and is free from outer pressure. One has become empowered because of one's own desire. (1999, p. 93).

At this point, a definition of empowerment has been achieved but it is still unclear where empowerment can manifest in a person's life. Nelly P. Stromquist (2002) clarifies this question in *Education as a means for empowering women*. She puts an emphasis on women empowerment which has four dimensions, each equally important, none sufficient to enable women to act on their own behalf. The four dimensions of empowerment are 1) the cognitive; critical understanding of one's reality, 2) the psychological; feeling of self-esteem, 3) the political; awareness of power inequalities and the ability to organize and mobilize, and 4) the economic; the capacity to generate independent income. At this point of the thesis, defining empowerment shifts towards empowerment related to women and girls. Stromquist explains these four dimensions of empowerment to be connected to the lives and realities of women.

In *Rethinking empowerment* (Parpart, Rai & Staudt, 2002, p. 5) empowerment is also attached to the idea of change, the change that could happen in women's lives. To *empower* is an action verb which suggests the ability to change the world, overcome opposition which women and girls face. This leads directly to the definition of girl

empowerment. Girl empowerment strives for change in girls' lives in all of the four dimensions described above. In this thesis the focus of girl empowerment is in Stromquist's psychological empowerment where the discussion is about the self-esteem and self-assurance as well as well-being of young women.

As described in the previous paragraph, empowerment means actions towards a change within a person, in different fields of their reality, which is what girl empowerment is destined to achieve but within the mindset of girls and their lives. Girl empowerment arose from the realization that many young women in the Western world were feeling discouraged and unsatisfied in their lives and these feelings were seen in the studies and statistics on young girls. On the basis of this concern, educators and social workers gathered to think about what should be performed in order to stop the worrisome development. In *Reviving Ophelia*, a goal for a societal action is formulated as follows: "Our daughters deserve a society in which all their gifts can be developed and appreciated." (Pipher, 1994, p. 13). This goal became the center of girl empowerment movement. Girl empowerment is a set of actions and attitudes that are guided towards the development and appreciation of all girls.

A girl empowerment organization from California, United States, *Girls for change* (Girls for change, 2013) describes their girl empowerment as a forum to teach girls to create social change. The organization highlights that they invite young women to design and lead social change projects in their own neighborhoods and lives as well as to give them faith in their own capacity to produce a change, ability and confidence to express and implement their ideas. *Girls for change* has a special emphasis on girls from low income communities. Their outlook on girl empowerment has all of the Stromquist's dimensions on empowerment: cognitive, economic, psychological, and political.

A systematic and shared definition on girl empowerment has not been formulated. Yet, it has a somewhat common meaning to the different agents working in the field of empowering young women. The organization analyzed in this thesis, *GENaustin* defines their girl empowerment as fostering healthy self-esteem in girls by engaging them to explore and define their personal values and to build skills that empower them with confidence and encourage them to make wise choices (Genaustin, 2013). This indicates that girl empowerment has to do with the inner, Stromquist's psychological, empowerment. Girl empowerment is an action towards more psychologically stable and

well-equipped girls. This empowerment work of GENAustin is elaborated later on in this thesis.

While discussing girlhood and girl empowerment, it is evident there are issues which generate problems for girls. More specifically, girl empowerment could act as a solution to some of girls' problems. In the next chapter, the reader is provided with three dimensional, biopsychosocial, perspectives of girl empowerment.

5.1 Perspectives of girl empowerment

Before the discussion on the perspectives of girl empowerment, it is extremely important to define the concepts of self-esteem or self-assurance in this thesis, since they make a crucial part of the discussion on empowerment. These concepts are often used as synonyms. Yet, self-esteem refers to the feeling of power and contentment in oneself. Steinem (1992) describes self-esteem to be a personal, contagious, self-discovery, physical, loving, and cosmic development. Through different phases, always moving towards a set of skills and attitudes with which one is happy with oneself. On the other hand, self-assurance is something that could be empowered because it links to actions coming from within oneself and from the outside. Liisa Keltikangas-Järvinen (1994, p. 27) argues that self-assurance is a combination of many factors, just as Steinem divides them; similarly good self-esteem can be formulated in many ways and is extremely individual. Good self-esteem is described by Keltikangas-Järvinen (1994, pp. 17-23) as a feeling of goodness, self-respect, valuing of one's life, ability to respect others, individuality, and tolerance of failures. With these definitions, the concept of self-esteem will be discussed in the following section on psychological and sociological perspectives of girl empowerment.

The previous chapters on the theoretical frameworks provided knowledge of girlhood and empowerment. It is equally important to question why girl empowerment movements exist and are needed. In this chapter, three different descriptive approaches; biological, psychological, and sociological, will bring out some of the perspectives for why girl empowerment is needed in modern societies. As a part of academic writing, it is crucial to acknowledge the counter ideas for the need of girl empowerment and these will also be discussed in this chapter.

It has to be stated that one cannot give a complete picture of all the issues affecting girls but the purpose here is to introduce some and link them to girl empowerment and especially to young women's well-being.

5.2 Biological perspective

If one is looking for the most convincing and justified perspective for the need and birth of girl empowerment, one should start with the biological and physical reality of the girls and young women in current societies. The development and results of various statistics and studies on girls of the 21st century carry a discouraging and concerning message. The girls of the modern society are, according to the results, struggling on various fields of their lives and this affects their lives more profoundly than previously understood. The worrying trends of young women in today's Western societies are issues such as drug and substance abuse, violent behavior by girls, physical abuse towards girls, as well as the declining feeling of self-esteem. Further, there are issues of sexual behavior and body image, which cannot be discussed here.

In an American study on adolescent drug abuse by the *National Center on Addiction and Drug Abuse at Columbia University (CASA)* in 2006 it is stated that "*the age 14 marks a turning point in teenage substance abuse risk in girls and boys*" (CASA, 2006, p. 21). For the first time, in 2006, CASA states that the gender gap on drug abuse has closed. It reports that girls between the ages of 12 and 17 are at equal or even higher substance abuse risk compared to boys same age. Traditionally, drug abuse has been linked to boys and their adolescent development but CASA informs that young women have reached the same level as boys and are maybe even ahead of them. This development of drug abuse amongst girls has sneaked upon the society and the tools to deal with it are inadequate. The tools for trying to handle this development could be found in girl empowerment. The researchers in the field of drug abuse amongst teenagers state that the reasons behind these trends originate from something much deeper and wider.

Violent and abusive behavior either performed towards girls and young women or even by them is another disturbing trend. Generally, violent and abusive behavior refers to both physical and mental violence. The term physical violence includes the range from hitting, kicking, choking, etc. Mental abuse is described as bullying and harassment without

physical contact. These outbursts of violent and aggressive thoughts and behavior are affecting and devastating lives of young women of the 21st century.

Violent behavior towards young women reveals that abusive relationships are not only affecting adult women. Collected statistics on the lives of American teens, especially girls, by *Respect Rx* (2013) has a long list of various researchers who have conducted research on abuse, domestic violence and sexual assaults towards young women between ages 13-18. A study reviewed in *Respect, Teenage Research Unlimited for Liz Claiborne Inc., Technology & Teen Dating Abuse Survey 2007 & Teen Dating Abuse Survey, 2006*, states that one of three girls have been in a serious relationship where they have been physically hurt by their partners. 23 % of the girls reported having been victims of pressure from their partners to go sexually further than the girls wanted. As for mental violence, the above mentioned study gives more insight and overwhelming results. 25 % of teens said that they had been called names, harassed and put down by their partners through cell phones and text messages. Mental abuse occurs in modern society through technological devices and therefore it is hard to monitor. A staggering percentage of parents, 75 %, were unaware that their teen had been abused physically and mentally by a partner.

If violence, physical and mental, towards girls is a taboo and not even noticed in the homes of the teenagers, violent and abusive behavior performed by young women is even more a forbidden and evaded issue. Yet, it has become part of the reality of Western girls that they themselves indicate both physical and mental assaults towards both boys and other girls. Rachel Simmons book *Odd Girl out – the Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls* (2002) is dedicated to this topic. Simmons states how previous studies or thoughts on the topic were hard to find but from her own personal experience she knew that bullying and harassment of girls, by girls existed. In her book, Simmons interviews young women and tells their insights on girl aggression and violence.

The issues of drug abuse and physical violence are evidence for the claim that biological and physical well-being of girls is deteriorating. These issues cannot be disregarded; they need to be seen as important perspectives of girl empowerment.

5.3 Psychological perspective

Psychological discomfort of girls can be examined through different lenses. For example, the vast field of research concerning girls' eating disorders, such as anorexia, bulimia, and other bodily illnesses demonstrates that young women feel the physical changes in adolescence more harshly and it presents more challenges for their psychological development. Hilde Burch (1991, pp. 313-331) has focused on adolescents who were struggling with the changes in their physical appearance, especially considering their eating habits. She states that young women who suffer during the period of their physical development do not identify with their bodies and feel helpless. She inclines that these girls are trying to escape the development and this shapes their psychological development, again. With the excessive preoccupation of their attractiveness, Burch finds girls to be concerned with their inner inadequacy. This inner dissatisfaction is directly related to the self-esteem development of a young woman. If one does not feel physically at ease, how could one find the needed psychological strength? And as Steinem (1992) puts it, self-esteem is part of our physical being as well as our psychological well-being.

One of the groundbreaking studies published on the Western, especially regarding American, girls' self-esteem is made by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) in the 1990's. The nationwide survey examined the differences between adolescent girls' and boys' perceptions of themselves with regard to self-esteem. The research surveyed approximately 3000 children between grades 4 and 10 throughout the nation. From this survey, AAUW published an executive summary called *Shortchanging Girl, Shortchanging America* (1994) which conveys a harsh reality of American girls facing more in depth loss of self-esteem in their lives than boys. The boys and girls were on the same level in the elementary school but over the next eight years girls' self-esteem dropped tremendously (Appendix 1) and it was also seen in the girls' actions. The survey (AAUW, 1994, p. 8) states that adolescent girls were more likely than boys to have their declining sense of themselves inhibit their actions and abilities.

Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America (1994) demonstrates this decline in the school context. The formal education is seen as a place where young women are under deprivation of their self-esteem and obligated to perform to the standards of the society. The survey suggests that because of the formal education, young women have lower hopes for their careers, they interpret problems in school subjects as personal failures, and they

are made to believe that their worth is dependent on their appearance (AAUW, 1994, pp. 8-13). It serves as an example of how little we know about girls' self-esteem and its effects on their life in general.

A more recent evidence of the specialty of girls' self-esteem is a research done by psychologist Richard Robins, in the University of California Davis, who studied 350,000 participants of both gender on their self-esteem. His study on self-esteem across the lifespan showed that women had lower self-esteem than men and in adolescence, after identically high levels between ages 9-12, girls' self-esteem plummeted about twice as much from the boys' (Respect Rx, 2013).

In conclusion, a clarification needs to be made. The previously explained problems and struggles concerning young women of today evolve from various reasons in their personal lives. It seems that one global reason for the described drug abuse, violent behavior or declining self-esteem has not been found and attempts to find one have been few. It is known that there are many factors in an individual's life that will shape it towards different routes. Yet, Dr. Frank Biro from Cincinnati Children's wrote in 2006 on a study on self-esteem in adolescent women which demonstrated that:

"Previous studies from other authors have noted the impact of self-esteem on the vulnerability of adolescent women to risky behaviors. However, building self-esteem could improve outcomes, as suggested by a community-based study that notes lower rates of violent behaviors in those who underwent self-esteem building." (Cincinnati Children's, 2006)

Evidently, drug abuse, violent conduct and declining self-esteem and their results can be seen as 'risky behavior'. Considering this, raising self-esteem by building actions of girl empowerment could help young women more thoroughly and permanently than just topic based intervention for example in drug abuse. It can be questioned whether through girl empowerment one could prevent the psychological turmoil from happening and manage young women's self-esteem stay on the same level as young men's.

The issue of self-esteem is most closely related to the psychological aspects of girlhood but as one can see from the discussion above, it is intertwined with other aspects of girlhood both biological and social.

5.4 Sociological perspective

Perspective of girl empowerment according to the sociological aspects of girlhood is best described in the famous book titled *Reviving Ophelia* (1994) by Mary Pipher. She (1994) sees that the character transition is greatly affected by others and it might not be what the girls would themselves be striving for. Therefore, Pipher considers young women to be pressured by the school, family, and media to become something else than themselves. Pipher (1994, p. 23) describes in the American point of view how the popular culture is smacking the girls on the head and making them more miserable than ever before.

Pipher (1994) justifies her explanation with data which she has gathered from her work as a psychological therapist for girls. In her book, Pipher tells stories of the young women who have suffered from the effects of the previously mentioned Bermuda Triangle. She views this development as regression when positive and self-assured young girls turn into negative, almost lethargic, young women. The girls in the book suffer from hysteria, self-mutilation, and self-harmful thoughts, just to name a few symptoms. Pipher vividly explains the situations of the girls and seeks reasons for their problems from the sociological as well as psychological theories. The title of the book, *Reviving Ophelia* (1994, p. 20), relates to Shakespeare's Hamlet where young girl Ophelia drowns herself because of the inner and outer dilemmas she has to face on the verge of adolescence. And this is the metaphor Pipher wants to use when discussing the adolescence of girls: the others; the communities, groups of sub-cultures, are making young women to drown slowly and painfully.

Pipher sees peer groups, families, and education as a cause to some of these problems and she claims that these societal problems are to be dealt with on a social and communicative level. Pipher calls for co-operative actions in order to save young women from themselves. In order for this to occur, she suggests that society needs to change or we need to change it. Pipher explains it to be work towards culture in which there is a place for every girl, where women are respected, and children protected. In that kind of culture and society, Pipher (1994, p. 293) sees an opportunity for "*our daughters to have a place where all their talents will be appreciated and they can flourish like green trees under the sun and the stars.*". She describes her profession as a psychologist, therapist, as the work of an ambulance: she was rescuing the already effected girls. Pipher states this to be insufficient. Preventive work on the sociological issues should be organized instead. With her book,

Pipher wants to raise awareness on the personal and societal development and how they are intertwined through the personal stories of the girls.

Pipher (1994) succeeds to draw attention towards the girls tremendously well. After the book was published, representatives of American culture and politics became concerned with young women. Pipher's book still enjoys popularity amongst girls' studies research and discussion and the book is still today a valid and reliable source of girls' studies.

Pipher (1994) meant that designed and well thought actions should be performed considering young women to prevent them from sailing to the Bermuda Triangle. The adolescent girls are saplings in a hurricane according to Pipher; physically, mentally, and sociologically. As discussed earlier, all aspects of the hurricane are also constituents of self-esteem. Therefore, from Pipher's point of view, the girl empowerment work was seen to improve girls' self-esteem. The self-assurance of the girls; physically, mentally, sociologically, was considered to be important.

This groundbreaking research started the creation of girl empowerment practices. The mid 1990's and the early 21st century was the golden age for the formulation of girl empowerment practices. These practices have carried over to the modern girl empowerment and many of the existing practices have their roots in Pipher's work because she was the first one to bring upon international awareness and concern on the topic. These different practices of girl empowerment will be introduced as the next step in my discussion on girl empowerment.

6 GIRL EMPOWERMENT THROUGH TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION

I use the term *praxis* here in the meaning that Paulo Freire (1993, p. 51) has given to it: "*reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.*" Through praxis, oppressed people can acquire a critical awareness of their own condition, and, with their allies, struggle for liberation by using theory in a practical way. Freire's idea of praxis includes the principle of transformative action. Transformative action is based on three basic components; breaking the silence that surrounds injustice, building an inclusive movement where adversaries become allies, and articulating an inspiring, proactive vision (Center for Transformative Action, 2013). In this thesis, girl empowerment is described to strive for the above mentioned objectives. As it has been highlighted above, I feel that certain groups of Western girls can be seen as oppressed today and through transformative action of girl empowerment we are able to support them.

Therefore, after the theoretical discussion on girl empowerment, the practical work and means to achieve the goals of girl empowerment are presented below. This chapter introduces various practices, bearing in mind that the field is extremely vast and multidimensional.

6.1 Organizational work

The vastest field of girl empowerment work takes place in the actions of various, both nationally and privately funded, organizations in Western geographies. These organizations provide various opportunities and mediums for the empowerment to occur. The organizations introduced here have been chosen just to show the variety of the field and also because they are well-known and have a good reputation. For clarification, the organizational work is separated from the structured institutional educational empowerment.

The number of American girl empowerment organizations is astounding; when doing an Internet search on the expression 'girl empowerment', one receives 10 pages of links to various American sites that promote girl empowerment. On top of the list is GENaustin and that is partly the reason why it is the case of the present study. A few of girl

empowerment organizations are discussed below in order to show what is considered as practice of girl empowerment.

The organization also previously discusses *Girls for a Change* (GFC) focuses on the societal problems that girls face within their communities. The area of GFC's influence has expanded and today it is a nationwide organization. GFC describes its primary goal to be to give an opportunity for girls to provoke change in their own lives as well as in their communities. The practical means of achieving this consists of *Girl Action Teams*, *New Girls' Network*, *Girl Events*, and *Girl Steering Committee*. These four core building blocks include various types of groups or committees to engage girls in creating change. This indicates that GFC is striving towards more structural and political changes. The work of GFC is based on the idea that individual empowerment creates a societal change and it is received by participating in the abovementioned groups. (Girls for a Change, 2013).

A national nonprofit organization *Girls Inc.* works in a similar way but it has a unique tendency of using science to find these goals or focuses of action; it uses data that Girls Inc. National Resource Center collects from girls between 6 to 18 years old. Based on this data, they plan and implement various projects and actions through their 1,000 sites of work. As an example of their structured, traditional, and quite political uptake on girl empowerment, Girls Inc. has created a format inspired by United Nations Declarations. Girls Inc.'s *Girls' Bill of Rights* states their views on girls' empowerment and rights in the modern Western society (Appendix 2). (Girls Inc., 2013)

The examples above of girl empowerment, GFC and Girls Inc., have the focus on general empowerment of girls. They do not have any specific point of view or preference through which they want to perform empowerment. They consider empowerment to happen through general discussion or actions. Notwithstanding, within the girl empowerment organizations exists a field where empowerment is carried out through one specialized medium.

Two examples of this type of action are organizations called *GirlStart* and *WriteGirl*. *GirlStart* is Austin, Texas based non-profit organization that provides empowerment in math, science, engineering, and technology. This focus has been chosen because of the declining interest from girls towards science, which has also decreased their self-esteem. The research performed and explained in *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America* (1994, p. 16), also highlighted this when the results showed that girls who like

mathematics and science have higher levels of self-esteem. GirlStart goal is to see more girls achieving science related professions and careers. Therefore, they want to eradicate the common belief ‘girls are not good at math and science’. In order to do so, they have after school programs and summer camps that girls can attend to. (GirlStart, 2013)

The name of the other specific girl empowerment organization, *WriteGirl*, implies what is their medium of empowerment. WriteGirl specify that they want to help girls to write their way towards more positive futures. They believe that through practicing writing, girls will be more equipped to express themselves and as a result feel more empowered in their lives. They want to inspire girls to pursue a career in writing and encourage them to use their creative talents. The means to achieve these goals are through one-on-one mentoring or monthly writing workshops. One aspect of WriteGirl’s actions is to publish the works of young female writers because they believe it to be an excellent mean to draw attention to the lives and issues of young women. (WriteGirl, 2013)

As mentioned in the beginning of this thesis, the Atlantic Ocean was named as a divider in the implementations of girl empowerment. Northern America, including USA and Canada, has great volume of non-profit, profitable, national or regional girl empowerment programs that work on their own. The American model of organizational work on girl empowerment guided my decision to do my advanced professional practice as well as a case study on a North-American girl empowerment organization GENaustin, discussed in detail later in this thesis.

6.2 Literature *on* girls and *for* girls

Organizational girl empowerment work is stationed geographically somewhere specific and does not reach girls in large numbers on a concrete level. Certain organizations and programs can only address certain numbers of young women at a time. Through their web pages, as introduced in the previous chapter, different organizations do expand their audience but a much more old-fashioned medium is used to disseminate information efficiently. The girl empowerment literature can be divided into two groups; books *on* girls and books written *for* girls. Magazines directed to young women are another powerful medium of girl empowerment.

There have been numerous references to books that focus on girls and tell about the issues affecting girls. The general emphasis in these books on girls is on raising awareness and creating discussion. The variety of the books dealing with young women is extensive but I can see many themes very similar to Nelly Stromquist's division (2002) presented earlier. In other words, the books may deal with girls' psychological, cognitive, political, or economic issues. They address girls in groups as well as individually, nationally or globally. In these books, there can be speculative predictions or truth based analysis on girls. Linked to all these themes, one can recognize empowerment even though it may not be worded in the text. The choice of topic indicates this. The agenda of the writers also implicates that they are concerned and want to see some kind of change taking place regarding young women.

The books on girls that have already been discussed previously are examples of the field of literature written on girls, all of them having a special point of view. Two new publications will be introduced here. The risk behavior of young women discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis has inspired Gwynedd Lloyd to collect thoughts on girls and young women that are seen as troubled, or troublesome. In a book *Problem Girls – Understanding and Supporting Troubled and Troublesome Girls and Young Women* (2005), Lloyd has collected ideas from various authors. Her starting point is that the troubled or 'problem' girls are not a separate group of girls; every girl can become a 'problem' because of the pressures and issues they are faced with. The authors' points of view on troubled girls vary from mental and psychosocial issues to legal and political procedures concerning these 'troublesome girls'. The pressures put on troubled girls are discussed by different authors, but Lloyd (2005, p. 190) draws a conclusion from the varied aspects. She expresses that the book wants to raise awareness that "...*'problem' girls are both socially constructed and yet individually unique as human beings with distinctive histories and personal choices*".

While Lloyd focuses on a group of girls called 'problem' girls, Shelley Budgeon (2003) concentrates on individual young women. In *Choosing self – Young Women and the Individualization of Identity*, Budgeon examines the process of how young women become themselves; individuals. She carried out interviews with young women in order to gain an understanding of how they were actively constructing self-identity. Budgeon (2003, p. 17) states her goal to be to give insights into the identities that young women are producing within a particular historical moment. In conclusion, Budgeon wants to raise understanding

towards the girls and their identity building process and she considers this knowledge to be of importance to any adult or educator working with young women. This knowledge will also be of use in girl empowerment because understanding of the self and respecting oneself are considered to be crucial in the process of becoming empowered.

It is easier to pin down publications *on* girls because they are more available in academic format in libraries and on the Internet, but the other form of literature of girl empowerment, books *for* girls, is another story. The field of girl empowerment books *for* girls is immense and multidimensional. The number of books is too great to be introduced in one thesis, one could in fact write a separate analysis on the various topics of these books. Therefore, this introduction is quite superficial but the main idea is to acknowledge that this field of practical girl empowerment exists and is extremely active and well-off. The empowerment books for girls range from self-help books to fictional stories as well as to collections of pictures, short stories created by girls themselves. In the following, examples of the three categories will be provided.

One example of the self-help books is a book called *Respect – A Girl’s Guide to Getting Respect and Dealing when Your Line is Crossed* by Courtney Macavinta and Andrea Vander Pluym (2005). *Respect* is a book for teenage girls who want to find confidence and self-assurance through respect of others. The book is written in a language that intrigues a girl reader and gives very practical advices and tools for girls to gain respect. The book also has pictures to make the reading more pleasant and vivid for young readers. *Respect* has become like a guidebook in the US and it is even used in schools.

Another example of fictional empowerment book for girls is Annie Razz’s (2006) book *Fantastical Tales for the Heroine’s Quest*. In this fictional story, imaginary tales provide characters which young girls can identify with. Through the journeys and experiences of these tales and characters, the book is supposed to help girls seeking and finding their own best self. Of course, many fictional books succeed in this but what is special to Razz’s book is that it was written bearing in mind the empowerment issues.

Books for girls offer a powerful and popular arena for girl empowerment, but it also has its restrictions. Every girl within a nation, not to mention globally, may not be able to have access to the books or even know about the existence of these types of publications. Yet, one form of written girl empowerment medium is truly expanded and even global; it is the magazines for young women. The circulations of these magazines are astounding.

American young women's magazines *Seventeen* and *GirlsLife* attempt to empower girls. They also have separate sections for beauty, fashion, school, and celebrities but in the mix of these, they contribute to girl empowerment. *GirlsLife* has a section in the magazine called *Advice* where young female readers can send their own questions. The section also offers, as its name states, advice for the girls concerning various topics. The questions and advice are divided into different categories; school, friends, family, body, job, and tough stuff. All of the questions are treated anonymously and they are responded to by an adult. In the 'tough stuff' part of the section, there is also a section called *HELP!* where the girls are provided with resources to find guidance and aid for their problems at hand. This section of the magazine offers a place where young girls can express their concerns but also can receive some peer-support as well as adult recognition, thus it offers care and understanding. This acknowledgement of girls and their lives functions as an act of empowerment. (GirlsLife, 2013).

As for *Seventeen*, it has a focus on empowering young female readers to be confident in their bodies. Through a project called *Body Peace*, the magazine is encouraging girls to realize their individual inner and outer beauty and love themselves just the way they are. The *Body Peace* project involves the girls to sign a pledge where they promise to treat their bodies well, ignore the outer pressure to be something different from what they are, and realize that their beauty is unique. The project is enforced with young female celebrities who have also signed the pledge and act as healthy role models. (Seventeen, 2013).

These above mentioned magazines have recognized the influence that media has on young women and have taken the responsibility to empower girls as a part of their code of conduct. With that decision, they reach out to more girls and spread the empowerment to vast areas with different groups of girls inside different geographies of girlhood.

6.3 Counter ideas: boys vs. girls

Here the reader is introduced to the counter ideas for girl empowerment before the analysis of GENaustin. One of the counter ideas on girls' studies has been formulated by Martin Robb (2007), who discusses the gender identities of young people. His starting point is to look at identity development from the perspective of young masculinity. He states that the most recent work in youth and gender studies have been done on the basis of young females' experiences and the voice of the boys has not been heard. He does not suggest

that the studies on girls' are not needed or important, but he wants to bring the young men of modern society to be part of the discussion. Crime and suicide rates of young men are staggering and yet, they are not as publicly discussed and pondered upon as the corresponding rates of young women. (Robb, 2007, pp. 109- 145).

The lack of interest and attention may originate from the past which carries the label 'boys will be boys' referring to the type of behavior described previously to be more acceptable and expected from boys. It was not until the 21st century that the boys' realities and problems emerged in gender studies. Martin Robb (2007, p. 141) would want to see the prejudiced idea of 'boys being boys' coming to a halt and start genuine reflections on boys. He calls for urgent further research into young men's emotional lives and personal relationships. In conclusion, Robb (2007, p. 141) sees that young women and men do experience different issues and challenges in their development and these differences should be taken into consideration from a gender specific point of view but with an equal amount of interest.

This idea leads up to the biggest and most established counter idea that is related to girl as well as to boy specific studies. The concept of gender deals with very vast and complex issues. Gender identity is constructed in relation to class, ethnicity, and environment of the individual. AAUW Educational Foundation organized a symposium called *Beyond the Gender Wars* (2001) where there were debates on girls and boys in the framework of education. The end product of the seminar is a written document, *Beyond the Gender Wars – a Conversation about Girls, Boys, and Education* (2001) where the ideas of the attendant scholars have been put together.

The main revelation of the discussions is that gender identity is crucially mediated and shaped by other social factors, such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, linguistic status, immigration status, age, sexuality, and region. According to this division, the previous girls' studies were seen to be too homogenous and to be based on generic groups where the different factors in an individual's life were not taken into account. Gender is seen to be relevant when talking about development of an individual, but it is becoming more difficult to characterize or speak about gender generically. Therefore, *Beyond the Gender Wars* highlights that the studies made on girls and boys need to forget the between-group differences and focus on within-group differences (AAUW, 2001, pp. 3-7). Concluding

from this idea, the emphasis of general girl empowerment would not be truly beneficial because it would not reach every girl in the world, let alone in a country or even a region.

Praeger Guide to the Psychology of Gender (ed. Paludi, 2004) deals with objection to gender specific reflections on girls' and boys' psychology. Throughout the book, various authors bring out the question of gender based stereotyping and its effects on an individual, especially when considering the psychological status. Paludi refers to this gender stereotyping as a psychological process that is constructed with beliefs and attitudes of men and women. She names few stereotypes related to girls and boys as the following: "*girls are more social than boys, girls lack the motivation to achieve, and girls have better verbal skills*" (2004, pp. xv-xvii). This stereotyping is most commonly viewed to happen in everyday life but it can be seen also in research. In other words, gender studies and girls' studies do not differentiate from this trend when they discuss girls rather as students and daughters, not as astronauts or footballers.

All of these counter ideas are excellent points for a researcher to consider while working with gender or girls' studies. They should not be overlooked or ignored in empirical data-based research on the lives of young women. It is precisely for this reason girl empowerment is here discussed in the framework of 'geography of girlhood' i.e. through a case study on Girl Empowerment Network Austin where the geography of the girls is an essential part of the analysis.

7 CASE OF GIRL EMPOWERMENT NETWORK AUSTIN

After discussing girlhood and girl empowerment, the case study of GENaustin will be introduced. This girl empowerment organization exists in a certain type of geography of girlhood. Firstly, I will introduce the geography, in other words the context in which the organization works. With this knowledge of the context I will move on to specifying the educational philosophy that guides their practices. Lastly, with a reference to the context, philosophy, and practices, ethnographic evaluation of the organization is performed. This is carried out with the help of my personal notes gathered during my practice in the organization. This evaluation will lead to the discussion on the importance of girl empowerment movement.

7.1 Geography

GENaustin, Girl Empowerment Network, is a non-profit girl empowerment organization in Austin, Texas, United States of America, since 1996. Austin is the capital of Texas. The state of Texas has approximately 27 million inhabitants (Texas Department of State Health Services, 2012). The work of GENaustin started in the upheaval of concern on the lives of girls. In GENaustin, they state that Pipher's (1994) *Reviving Ophelia* was the catalyst for their actions and they wanted to formulate their work on the basis of its message. Founders of GENaustin felt urgency to tackle the specific problems, introduced by Pipher, that young women were faced with. GENaustin states their mission to be to foster the self-esteem of teenage girls by engaging them to explore and define their values and skills in order to become confident and courageous young women. (GENaustin, 2013) This concern on the well-being of the girls has a great deal to do with the context that GENaustin works in. Part of this concern is the supporters of GENaustin. GENaustin is funded by private donations which is common in the non-profit organization work in the USA. Through sponsors and donors, GENaustin is able to provide empowerment for girls.

Part of this geography of Austin is the people living there. In the year 2011, population of Austin was stated to be approximately 820,000 (United States Census Bureau, 2013). People live in several suburbs that together constitute the city of Austin. Each suburb has a unique buildup of the population, showing great variety, but the two most dominant groups are people of white origin and hispanic origin (United States Census Bureau, 2013). The

history of the state and the city has had an effect on the relations and positions of the population. In other words, equal position of people from white and hispanic origins is not even today a reality. This can be seen through various historical events that cannot be addressed in this thesis. This unequal position of the people has to be stated because it is meaningful in the case study of GENaustin when talking about the girls attending their services.

Religion is an important part for the city of Austin and for the state of Texas historically. Austin is located in the 'bible belt' area of the US which means that it has a strong religious influence on its policies. The Southern United States formulated their education and legislation on the principles on Christianity and more specifically on the texts of the bible. (Mellow, 2008) Consequently, sex education in Texas is based on teaching the abstinence only-approach. This means that schools in Texas are compelled to teach that not engaging in sexual relations is the only way to avoid sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancy. It is stated that 94% of sex education materials in Texas are based on the abstinence only-method (Wiley & Wilson, 2009, p. 6). Yet, the statistics show that Texan teenagers are across the board more sexually active than their peers in other states. They have had more partners as well as engaged in unprotected sex (Wiley& Wilson, 2009, p. 1). This shows in the lives of the young women: the state of Texas holds the fourth place in the number of teenage pregnancies per year. Texas has number one position regarding the repeat births of teenaged mothers in the whole of US (Alley's house, 2013).

According to this geography, GENaustin and its reasons to exist follow the three dimensional division that has been followed in this thesis while discussing girlhood and girl empowerment. The reasons for GENaustin to operate are formed through biological, psychological, and sociological justification. Through their educational philosophy, GENaustin tries to find solutions to improve this depressing situation. GENaustin shows great concern for the problems related to the biology and physical well-being of the girls. The organization states in its *Why We Exist* section of their webpage that in the year 2006, staggering number of 84% of teenage girls believed that in order to be popular one has to be thin. The pressure on the body has a great effect on the psychological well-being of the girls. GENaustin affirms this with statistics concerning female high school students. Almost 40% of the female students in Texas high school report depressive symptoms, sadness, and hopelessness. This hopelessness can be also seen in the numbers of girls using

prescription drugs for intoxicating purposes. The number is notably higher than the boys using prescription drugs. (GENaustin, 2013)

When the individual girls suffer, their girlhood is greatly affected by others and this causes different kind of stress inside of the geographical context of girlhood. GENaustin draws attention to the sociological side of girlhood by elaborating the situation of young American girls by pointing out that 49% of girls between the ages 13 and 18 have been in a relationship where they have been forced by their partners to act against their own values and beliefs. Inside these relationships, 29% of girls have experienced pressure to engage in sexual acts that they did not want. The girls are feeling maltreated by their partners and this oppression is continued in their other peer relations. The overwhelming number of 77% of students in the US is bullied mentally, verbally, and physically. (GENaustin, 2013) GENaustin asks of how this biological, psychological, and sociological abuse shows in the lives of the girls and strives to find answers.

Geographically, the juvenile justice system in the US is interesting. In the last decade, the number of female juvenile arrests has increased exceedingly when compared to the situation earlier. Most perplexing is the number of female juvenile offenders in custody which has increased 52% from 1991 to 2003 (GENaustin, 2013). In less than 10 years, girls have started to act out with serious consequences. These consequences are of the sort that they permanently mark the lives of the girls and consequently, their womanhood is colored by these convictions. Understandably, this causes great concern inside GENaustin affecting its practices.

One might feel powerless and overwhelmed after learning about the geography of girlhood that GENaustin works in. The introduction to the geography, given above, is brief and naturally the context is more multilayered than this. Notwithstanding, with the help of this presentation of the geography of GENaustin, the reader is able to follow the discussion on the philosophy, practices of the organization as well as my experiences of the organization. The analysis on these sections of the organization has reference to the geography discussed in this chapter. Firstly, I will now proceed to equip the reader with the philosophy of GENaustin.

7.2 Philosophy

Behind every action, there is a reaction. It is crucial for an organization to also state a clear philosophy for why and how to act upon the reaction. This chapter introduces the philosophy of GENaustin. After discussing the mission statement, the practices of GENaustin will be presented for the reader.

GENaustin declares its methods and philosophy on its webpage in a section called *Our Methods*. The first part of their methods is greatly based on empowering the girls to become active part of their geography. The actions are based on teaching girls critical thinking which guides them to think independently on various matters such as their peers and the media. According to the organization, critical thinking is part of their philosophy. Workforce development and financial literacy skills are part of this critical thinking that they offer for their girls. Through its methods, the organization strives to offer meaningful employment which will result in finding space and gaining power in society. In other words, GENaustin wants to empower the girls to become powerful in geography of girlhood and in society at large. The concept of empowerment is imprinted in this philosophy of GENaustin as they want to see the girls changing their own realities. (GENaustin, 2013)

The philosophy of empowerment is the core of the method of GENaustin, and they also act according to this. GENaustin demonstrates that its actions are established on research-based prevention programs. The organization utilizes prevention programs that deal especially with girls' high risk behavior resulting in juvenile delinquency and high numbers of teenage pregnancy. GENaustin elaborates: "*We provide an outlet for girls during a time in their lives when they begin to feel the burdens rather than the advantages of femininity.*" (GENaustin, 2013) These burdens have been discussed in this thesis at large; in conclusion, GENaustin also bases its philosophy on handling these burdens.

In order to reach this goal of offering outlet for girls from their burdens, GENaustin has designed a curriculum that shows the educational purpose of the philosophy. Through their girl-specific curriculum, the organization wishes to ensure the girls to have culturally relevant environment where they use peer-assisted learning and other innovative approaches in teaching. This means that the geography of girlhood is taken into careful consideration when carrying out the practices of the organization. Crucial part of this curriculum is made of the educational activities such as after school programs and role-

model exploration as means to empower girls for example in their academic life. These after school and role-model programs imply that the organization wants to go there were the girls naturally spend their time.

As stated earlier, in order to discuss the action one has to be aware of the philosophy behind the action. After establishing the context and philosophy of GENaustin, I will now elaborate the topic by examining the praxis of empowerment carried out by GENaustin.

7.3 Practices

The philosophy of GENaustin is implemented through their practical work. In order to empower the girl, they have to have concrete means that work in the particular geography of girlhood. With the Freirean idea of praxis of empowerment GENaustin believes to fulfill its mission.

As the organization states in its philosophy, it believes that girls are best reached through action that happens in their own environment, i.e. in their geography. One way to get in touch with the girls is the program called *clubGEN*. This program is a research-based peer-led after school program for middle school girls. The clubs take place at the middle schools that the girls attend. The clubs are led by high school girls, who have been employed and trained by the organization. Their work is directed by the clubGEN curriculum which is produced by GENaustin. The curriculum deals with issues such as eating disorders, teen pregnancy, and juvenile delinquency. The goal of the club is to decrease high risk behavior and to encourage the girls towards critical thinking skills and academic achievement. The program of clubGEN is the flagship program of GENaustin and it is the most predominant form of action in the organization. (GENaustin, 2013)

Another flagship practice for GENaustin is the *We Are Girls Conference*. This statewide annual conference is held in a local school or auditorium. The goal of the conference is to help girls explore challenging and advantages of being a girl. Topics addressed in the one day assembly include bullying, cyber bullying, self-image, body-image, dating, diversity, financial literacy, media literacy, parent-daughter relationships, and physical health and wellness. The audience of We Are Girls Conference is most dominantly formed by middle and high school girls and their parents. Each year, the conference has a somewhat specific theme which will be discussed at large by the keynote speakers. The main purpose of the

conference is to connect individual girls with questions, with experts who can provide the answers. (GENaustin, 2013)

While clubGEN is a group of girls meeting weekly, and We Are Girls Conference is arranged once a year, other way of GENaustin reaching out to girls are the workshop programs. The idea of workshop programs is that of supply and demand. A school, a leisure center for girls or other community groups can request a workshop. The workshop will be carried out by trained GENaustin volunteer or employee. At GENaustin, there are two major types of workshop programs; *Girl Talk Workshops* and *GirlConnect Program*. The curriculum of Girl Talk Workshops explores the issues of being a girl with topics such as dating, body image, communication, friendships, and parent-daughter relationships. These issues are dealt with through various activities lead by the trained adult. Another type of workshop work is the GirlConnect Program in which technology is used to address the challenges girls face on a daily basis, such as body image, media literacy, and social media. Through incorporating technology and 21st century skills, the girls are provided an interactive and engaging medium to manage the burdens of girlhood. (GENaustin, 2013).

The practices of GENaustin are not limited in who can attend them. There are some age recommendations but they are a broad definition. The only program at GENaustin which is designed for a specific group of girls is the *180 Program*. The 180 Program provides services for court-ordered teen girls which is a growing group in the whole of the United States. The program works in collaboration with Austin juvenile justice judges and schools. The main goals of the program are to decrease rates of juvenile delinquency and increase in-school functioning, critical thinking skills and self-sufficiency for program participants. Therefore, the participants in the program are girls who are already part of the juvenile court system; in other words, they are convicted from a crime. *180* fills a gap in services available to these convicted adolescent girls. The purpose of the 180 Program is to reach girls after their first offense and help them break the circle of crime. This is achieved through preventing them from entering or re-entering the juvenile justice system. In order to achieve this, the program is divided into 8 week group session program. Each of the 8 week group sessions includes a curriculum that focuses on developing girls' bonding, goal-setting skills, self-esteem, mental health, attachment to school, violence prevention, issues with authority, and substance abuse prevention. After completion of the initial eight weeks, participants are encouraged to continue their participation via optional monthly workshops.

The name of the program stems from the 180 degree change of direction the girls are expected to achieve through attending the program. (GENaustin, 2013).

Naturally, the practices of GENaustin address girls but the organization views offering help for the parents important too. The organization considers parental support important in the empowerment of the girls. They state that the burdens of girlhood are for girls but also for their parents. The parents may find issues of girlhood difficult too, and this is where the organization wants to guide the parents. Through *Parent Workshops* trained adults provide tips, tools, and strategies for parents to raise a healthy and empowered daughter. GENaustin states that these workshops are an opportunity to connect and share with other parents experiencing similar challenges. (GENaustin, 2013).

In conclusion, GENaustin believes to meet its goal of empowering girls in certain geography through the above mentioned means of action. The organization wants to fulfill its mission statement and truly help the girls and their parents to cope with the burdens of girlhood. Having gained understanding of the goals and means of the organization, GENaustin will be observed through my experience as a trainee in the organization. Based on the results of the analysis, I can now better understand why girl empowerment should be performed according to certain geography of girlhood.

7.4 Experiences

Through my own experiences of GENaustin, I shall evaluate their work as a girl empowerment organization. The data from the organization was gathered through ethnographic case study described earlier in this thesis. I was part of the work of the organization and with this insight; I conducted the analysis of GENaustin. Having spent there a considerable length of time (6 weeks), I consider myself as an ethnographer who examines and evaluates their work through the theoretical framework of girlhood and girl empowerment. My experiences were gathered during summer 2011. The analysis of GENaustin is based on my personal observations and full-time involvement with the organization during the six weeks.

Based on the long list of tasks that I performed in my advanced professional practice, I was able to really familiarize myself with the non-profit girl empowerment organization's work (Appendix 3). For this master's thesis I have examined the girl empowerment field in the

American context, more specifically in the Texan context. Referring to this context and the general theories on girlhood and girl empowerment, I shall now evaluate how GENaustin is able to really affect and help the lives of girls. In other words, I evaluate their success in empowering girls in their geography. All aspects of the geography of girlhood are taken into consideration in this evaluation.

Hence, I will start my analysis by discussing the question related to the geography of girlhood that GENaustin works in, that is whether all the girls really were empowered according to their geographies. From this analysis I will proceed to deliberate the values that make the foundations for girl empowerment that I witnessed while working in the organization; this again relates to the unity of the girl empowerment and even to the funding of the activities. The funding and unity of girl empowerment will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

The main medium of GENaustin to empower girls is the after school program ClubGEN where middle school girls receive guidance from adult women as well as peer support from high school girls. The activities of the clubs vary but main topics that are dealt with in the group are body image, media literacy, bullying, and healthy relationships, just to name a few (GENaustin, 2013). The work of ClubGEN has been discussed more closely earlier in this thesis.

ClubGEN works in several locations within the Austin area but when asked who is the typical girl attending their services, the scope of their empowerment work was quite evident. Austin area has a great Latin community and this could be seen also in the girls attending ClubGEN. A 'typical girl' attending ClubGEN is a Latina girl, aged 10-13, who comes from a lower middle class family and has two mother tongues, English and Spanish. This homogeneity of the girls attending the clubs and seminars raised a question in me whether this profiling was purely beneficial for the girls attending or, in some way, even harmful for them. The geography of Latina girls in Texas requires certain kind of practices of girl empowerment which made me ask whether the work of GENaustin was designed for Latina girls only or had it just shifted towards that direction gradually.

The homogeneity of the girls made me think who the girls that did not attend these clubs were. What kind of problems were they facing and would they need the services or want to join the activities of GENaustin but felt some kind of a barrier due to ethnicity, socio-economic status, or religion. For example, if the clubs were attended by the Latina girls of

the school and the school had a distinct separation, or even prejudices, regarding ethnicities, how could girls from other cultural backgrounds join the club without breaking some kind of a social code of conduct?

Even as an outsider it was easy to catch the same language that the girls were speaking when talking about their own lives. They were all talking about boys, sex, school, friends, their bodies. For me, it became crystal clear that the girls would benefit from hearing these issues from peers coming from another social context. The ‘geographical exchange’ of girlhood would break down stereotypes that are still alive and well in the North American communities, such as: Latina girls are voluptuous and loud, Caucasian girls skinny and intelligent, and African-American girls opinionated and proud. These stereotypes are hard to explain, but once you have seen them in action, you know what I am here talking about. In my opinion, this creates animosity between the girls because they consider the other girls to be lucky or not plagued by the same problems as they are. It has to be said, that GENaustin serves and helps all of the girls that walk through their door but with a constant effort to take the girls’ different geographies into consideration and using them as a tool for the girls to empower themselves and girls from different backgrounds would be extremely beneficial for all parties.

Perhaps not on paper and but definitely in practice, this discourse between geographies seems possible. Relying on the knowledge of geographies of girlhood, this viewpoint should be taken into consideration. When the seminars and clubs were attended by one certain dominant group of girls, one felt the need to focus on that group and the issues of those girls in order to offer as much help as possible for the girls present at the time. And it goes without saying, the work and the results were priceless and rewarding. But the remarkable thing was that the problems amongst the different groups of girls were not so different from each other. I heard them talking about the same issues. They talked about the same pressures, concerns, dreams, just in a different context. They had different words, the same message.

My analysis on the girls attending the services of GENaustin concerns also the dilemma of financial issues related to GENaustin. The question of money and fundraising has never been separate from the non-profit organizational world, I have learnt that now, but previously I was naïve enough to believe that it was not. As I have been extremely passionate about the issues of girlhood and girl empowerment throughout my life, I

thought that everyone sees this work as passionately and hence, money would not be an issue. But this is not the reality of non-profit organizations. There are several reasons for why receiving money is problematic and means strenuous work for the organizations. Perhaps surprisingly, one of these reasons is the homogeneity of the girls attending the services of GENaustin. The problems of funding are discussed here.

It seems at first that all shareholders, individuals, collectives want to support the work of empowering girls. The general image is that responsible and concerned adults are doing whatever is in their power to help girls. But this is not the case when money steps into the picture. Therefore, another point to be made concerning the evaluation of GENaustin is the non-profit label of the organization. The work of GENaustin is not funded by the government and they need to organize constant fundraising events and create materials to lure more sponsors for their cause. And the pressure of creating constant money flow and capital in order to help the girls sometimes felt like it also affected the work with the girls. It felt that the work with the girls had to create some evident concrete results that could be reported back to the sponsors and supporters. In order to gain these results, large amount of work was needed and it took away resources, time, and energy from the actual work of girl empowerment.

The government or state money is not enough for the numerous foundations and organizations working just in the area of Austin, Texas. They need to find extra source of income in order to stay in business. The organizations are left alone to gather up the rest of the money. This can be done in several ways but the most common way is to appeal to the great masses and companies in order to receive monetary help. GENaustin has 50 odd sponsors (GENaustin, 2013) who help them to achieve their mission statement of guiding girls in the turmoil of teenage years.

Like I said, I had always thought that the money was never such a big issue for non-profit organizations and when people and companies would give money, they would do it because of genuine care and interest for the cause. I am not saying that they do not care at all but while going through the funding archives of GENaustin, I realized what kind of a trade it really is. So many of the companies and people want something out of the help they are giving. Some of them wanted just to help a certain group of girls, and in a special way, chosen and even conducted by them. Some of the sponsors requested that GENaustin

would not partner with other organization that they thought to be unsuitable. Thinking of the geography again, often these organizations were related to sex education.

I am not implying that any of these requests or wishes were followed or fulfilled. Nevertheless, this shows the huge amount of work and concern that was invested in the funding of GENaustin. Sponsors were seen crucial to the work of the organization and in order to continue the work of GENaustin, the sponsors needed to be happy. Furthermore, the sponsors were kept updated on all small details and tribulations of the organization. GENaustin wanted their supporters to know that all of the good results they reached were somewhat because of the sponsors.

It can be questioned whether in many non-profit organizations the money flow becomes more important than the well-being of the girls. This means that the money, and whose money it is, starts to dictate what is taught to the girls and how. Some sponsors had quite bluntly put their message out that they want to help certain kind of girls. It was always then up to GENaustin to decide what they were going to do: sell-out or struggle financially. I am pleased to say that GENaustin never sold out while I was there. It was a clear and continuous decision of the organization to follow their mission statement. If a sponsor agreed and supported genuinely the mission, they were more than welcome to join the work of the organization. I saw few cases where sponsors did not want to get involved because of certain ideas that did not suit the GENaustin attitude. For GENaustin, this meant that they were able to fulfill their goals of helping girls in the way they find as most beneficial.

How was GENaustin able to steer from selling out, from giving away one's true mission statement in order to get money? The answer is their vision. The most important issue is that money should never be the only reason to do non-profit work. But one has to acknowledge that it is the gateway to the work that is meant to support certain people. Robert Payton and Dwight Burlingame declare:

“Money by itself accomplishes nothing: vision without followers is an illusion. Vision supported by money, sustained by shared commitment, brought to bear problems and tasks – these are the elements that transform ideas into reality. Money without mission is impotent. Fundraising committed to mission puts idealism to work.” (Payton & Burlingame, 2002, p. 26).

Without genuine care and commitment to one's mission statement, one is only collecting money and actually not knowing exactly what to do.

For sure, girl empowerment can be done in different ways and for different reasons. The question occurred to me during my practice at GENaustin: is everyone in the field of girl empowerment doing this for the same reasons? Admittedly, my belief has been that girl empowerment work wants to see improvement in the lives of the girls and means to do so were not perhaps so important. But through research, thanks to a few phone interviews and email exchanges I learnt that this is not the case for non-profit girl empowerment organizations in Central Texas, let alone nationally in the US or globally. The empowerment of girls was almost seen to be of one sort only and preferably to be the one of the specific organizations'. This competitiveness is mainly because of the harsh and cut-throat competition of funding but it also has some footing in the idea of girl empowerment. Two academic articles with different views on girl empowerment are introduced here to clarify my point.

In their article, Currie, Kelly and Pomerantz (2006) focus on the empowerment for girls that happens in schools and in formal teaching. They interviewed girls that had been considered as the "geeky girls" in high school and, because of this, been outside the 'emphasized femininity' in a highly competitive, male-oriented youth culture (2006, p. 421). They viewed school as a ground of girl discrimination and disempowerment. And this discourse is dominant in the field of girlhood studies (Ojanen, 2011).

Nicola Gavey (2011) questions in her text whether girls can really become sexually empowered in a sexist world. She deliberates the attitudes of other feminist scholars who doubt girls own views of being empowered through "going wild", so-called glamour modeling, and stripping "for fun" to gain the "attention of male audiences" (Gavey, 2011, p. 3). Female academics have an opinion that this kind of behavior cannot be true empowerment for the girls. Gavey questions whether the female academics can have an opinion on this. The general message of the text is that it should be questioned what right older women have to impose their own ideas of empowerment on girls, thus the argument is that women almost dictate what girls should consider as empowerment.

Whether it is about schooling of girls or about sexuality of girls, I have realized that quite often girl empowerment is based on the shock and concern of adult women. We ponder, frown and gasp on the several issues that the girls are faced with. We consider ourselves as

the solvers of these problems, or at least little helpers, and we want to take full responsibility of girls. As part of this full responsibility, girl empowerment organizations tend to take sole responsibility and believe that they are the only party to fully empower young women. Somewhere in this process, the girl empowerment organizations drift apart from each other and cannot find anymore the common determinative features of empowerment. Concluding, from the analysis of the studied organization, in order to succeed in empowering girls, organizations should work together; not just compete and favor one group of girls when organizing their activities.

Currie, Kelly and Pomerantz (2006) acknowledge:

“We see our task as better understanding how girls can name and narrate their experiences in ways that render these experiences ‘objects’ of their own critical interrogation.” (2006, p. 434)

In other words, the authors believed that the ‘geeky girls’ should find empowerment in themselves without any adults telling them what it is. And when it comes to sex and sexuality, Gavey shares this view. She states that empowerment should include diverse and equitable opportunities and rewards for all girls, women. (2011, p. 5)

Through my experience in GENaustin, I have become convinced that girls are capable of finding their own empowerment within their own geography. GENaustin guides girls in their lives and empowers them to enjoy it fully. Although the organization is faced with issues of complex geographies of girlhood, fundraising, and disconnected co-operation, GENaustin succeeds to empower girls in their geography. This master’s thesis is the result of genuine and inspiring experience of girl empowerment that I had in the US.

In this master’s thesis I have given an example of girl empowerment organization that works through the needs of the girls. This case study convinced me that the well-being and the needs of the girls, whoever they are, should be the sole focus of girl empowerment; this realization has become even stronger the more I think and learn about the girls’ lives and their needs. I have also realized that all people involved in girl empowerment work should have enough knowledge of theories of girlhood and preferably, even of geographies of girlhood.

8 DISCUSSION

The main objective for this thesis was to provoke the reader to consider girlhood and girl empowerment as important issues to be discussed in world we live in. In an attempt to convince the reader, a theoretical analysis has been carried out on girlhood and girl empowerment, supported by an ethnographic case study of GENaustin. This Texan girl empowerment organization is evaluated with a regard to how successful it is in achieving its goal of empowering girls in its geography.

This thesis sets out to reach high reliability and validity. The reliability of the thesis is confirmed by a careful analysis of the ethnographic data; the reader should be able to follow the discussion on methodology while numerous references and background information are provided for the reader. As for the validity of the study, the reader should be able to see that the author of this thesis has achieved what she set out to achieve to answer the two research questions, viz. first, what is defined as girlhood and girl empowerment and second, why and how should girl empowerment be performed according to certain geography of girlhood. To answer the first question, a sample of selected academic publications was analyzed and to answer the second, the organization *Girl Empowerment Network Austin* was evaluated with reference to its geography, philosophy and overall knowledge based on ethnographic observations. The answers given to the research questions are by no means definite; rather the aim was to give valid perspectives of what girl empowerment could be both in theory and practice. Thus the criticism expressed in the thesis is meant to address the challenges apparent in girl empowerment work so that the theoretical and practical work can be redefined if needed, and the set goals reached contributing to all girls' well-being in their own living environments.

As one can gather from the theoretical framework of girlhood and girl empowerment, 'being a girl' is not as simple as we might assume, rather it is quite a complex issue. Girlhood is constructed by all the different girls in all the different places in the world, and therefore, in widely different modes and manners. Being a girl is not something we can generalize i.e. be similar for all the girls. This is partly individual - every girl is special in her own way and should be treated as such – partly cultural depending on the various geographies that the girls live in. This idea is supported with the case study of GENaustin

which proves that girls in the geography of Austin, Texas, USA, are empowered according to their specific context.

It should be evident that girl empowerment in certain geography of girlhood is of great help when it is arranged according to the geography of girls in question. According to research, the work done by GENaustin is successful precisely because its philosophy and practices are devised to help girls in their specific girlhood. Geography is of vital importance to the girls. Yet, the work of the organization is challenged by several factors such as fundraising, complexity of girlhood within individual geographies, and the lack of co-operation within the field. These issues at times preclude the organization from fulfilling its mission statement properly. However, these challenges should not affect the girls and create barriers between them. Through answering these questions, the main finding of the study concludes that the existence of girl empowerment should be defended and the accessibility to the empowerment activities inside the different geographies of girlhood supported.

Bettis and Adams state that when the girls' realities are seen as versatile, we are able to celebrate these diverse ways of girlhood (2005, p. 13). And through this diversity, we can even empower them. As educators we should all strive for genuine empowerment but in order to do so, the girls themselves should also celebrate the diverse landscapes of girlhood and girl empowerment. Therefore, to really fulfill the goal of girl empowerment, the girls from various geographies of girlhood should meet through any means and converse their experiences of being a girl. When a girl is empowered to be an active member of her geography, she is equipped to empower another girl to achieve active membership. Yet, the empowerment work between geographies has to be supported financially and educationally, which is a task GENaustin as an educational organization needs to cope with.

The aim of this thesis was to advocate the reader to see that through girl empowerment according to the geographies of girlhood, we are able to support the girls of the world to become the 'rulers of the world', starting from their own geography and moving on. Significantly, Bettis and Adams conclude: *"Yet, we also recognize the importance of strategically using girlhood as a universal construct for the purposes of social change."* (2005, p. 276).

To conclude, it is necessary to see girl empowerment as an important means in affecting the social change. As the author of this thesis, as an educator and as a woman, I truly hope

that this thesis offers knowledge and means to support the girls in becoming agents of their lives, whatever part of the world or the culture they happen to be born into.

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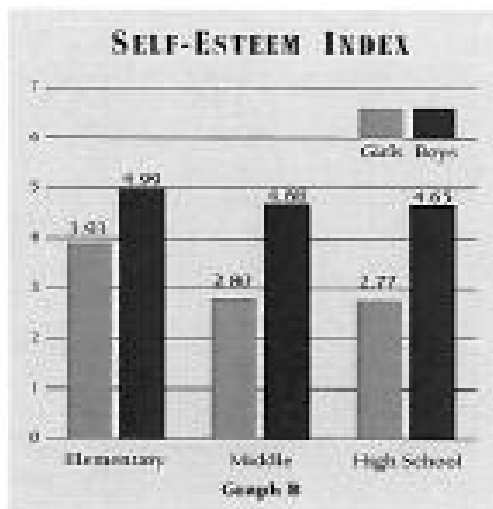
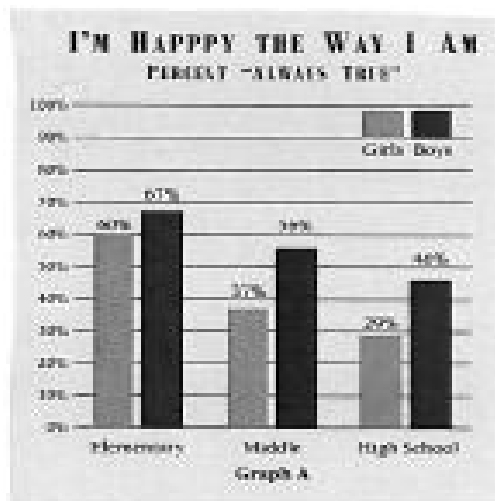
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

AAUW (1994) Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America, p. 7



Picture 1. Self-esteem Index and 'I'm Happy the Way I am'-index

Appendix 2.

Girls Inc. Girl's Bill of Rights,

Girls Inc. 2013

Girls have the right to be themselves and to resist gender stereotypes.

Girls have the right to express themselves with originality and enthusiasm.

Girls have the right to take risks, to strive freely, and to take pride in success

Girls have the right to accept and appreciate their bodies.

Girls have the right to have confidence in themselves and to be safe in the world.

Girls have the right to prepare for interesting work and economic independence.

Appendix 3.

Advanced Professional Practice: Girl Empowerment Network Austin, GENaustin, Austin, Texas, USA, summer 2011

Task list of Vappu Rantala at GENaustin, July – August 2011

- Read and commented on manuals for future volunteers for the ClubGEN program
- Drafted a fundraising letter and a thank you card for sponsors
- Arranged the fundraising archives and familiarized herself with the fundraising of a non-profit organization
- Took part in various staff trainings: United Way After School Programs meeting, Strengths finder training and Organization retreat
- Took part in three workshops that were held in a settlement home: the topics of the GirlTalk workshops were body image, communication, healthy relationships
- Planned few activities for ClubGEN curriculum and also helped the preparations for the next school year through performing volunteer phone calls, collecting information on recruitment materials, arranging an inventory of the materials
- Made business calls for the We Are Girls conference
- Held a presentation about her upcoming Master's thesis
- Took part in a recruitment process and observed a group interview
- Performed interviews with two applicants
- Performed an interview with a representative of girl empowerment organization Girl Start
- Interviewed the head principal of Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders