"Creativity and Collaboration: The Relationship of Fact and Fiction in Personal Writing"

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I am eight years old. Outside scenery rushes past me through a car window—my first trip without my parents—but all I see on the drive from Florida to Missouri is my heart-printed journal. Inside, a story about a girl's dedication to her family amid the Great Depression. Next, I am ten years old, and from where I sit at the school picnic tables, I listen to my fourth grade classmates engage in a high-stakes game of recess soccer, but my eyes remain trained on my faded blue notebook as I scribble a story about one boy's quest to save the world. Then, I am eighteen, and after a long day at school, I climb into bed and pull out my laptop and continue to write a story about a made-up city, a girl's journey, and a mysterious forest.

From an outsider's perspective, it may appear that writing acts as a means of seclusion, and following along this same idea, the practices of creativity and the creative process have long been regarded as individual endeavors held to the extreme of being solely isolated in nature. Bearing this mindset, creativity then poses itself as an extremely unattainable end, the means to which can neither be planned nor practiced; further, in viewing the creative process as individual, one comes to the conclusion that creativity itself is of a divine nature (Howard, 55). In other words, anything marked "creative" also holds the stamps of "inspired" and, consequently, "unattainable."

Review of Literature on Creativity

In Romantic Theory

This relegation of creativity to the individual versus the collective comes as a product of early- to mid-nineteenth century Romanticism. Romanticism as a movement placed emphasis on individualism and ownership. This tradition's influence on Romantic literary theory is often attributed to the works and ideas of authors such as Wordsworth and Emerson (Howard, 55). Further, this evolution in literary theory gave way to a new "ideology of literary authorship" in which originality proved essential (Ruthven, 40). Within the newly conceived ideology, author K. K. Ruthven suggests products of Romantic creation to have been regarded as "autonomous object[s] produced by . . . individual genius[es]" (40). The theories posited during this era birthed the ideas of creativity as non-derivative and imitation as plagiarism, ideas continued to be held even today despite new knowledge of creativity's habit of building from the existing.

In Psychological Development

In his research regarding childhood and development, twentieth century psychologist L. S. Vygotsky refutes the Romantic theory of "divine" or isolated creativity. Vygotsky presents the argument that the creative process is part of every human being rather than a gift bestowed on the select few, fully attainable to all due to the view that humans are "creature[s] oriented toward the future," always vying to alter their presents (9). Humans are constantly reimagining the existing and generating new possibilities, and this, he contends, is creativity. While drawing from the existing, the creative process is not reproduction, or the regurgitation of facts and experiences. Creativity is the brain's work of "combin[ing] and creatively rework[ing] elements of . . . past experience and us[ing] them to generate new propositions and new behavior" (Vygotsky, 9). It is the method by which people synthesize the world around them. By this logic, creativity is a process rather than an event. It involves the intermingling of past experiences, present circumstances, and future predictions to produce something new. Creativity, Vygotsky contends, is derivative.

In Educational Settings

Researcher Jason Ranker supports Vygotsky's creative argument via a discussion of the inherent yet often overlooked creative works of young students. In school, he argues, educators most commonly peruse for "originality in highly unusual and never-before-seen types of compositions," anything fantastical or imaginative, while failing to notice what he deems "everyday creativity" (Ranker, 360). Ranker's "everyday creativity" stems from a sociocultural theory in recognizing how "individuals draw upon elements of their material and social environments in the making of signs and meanings," the contention being that creativity is not divine inspiration but inspiration deriving from the everyday (Ranker, 359).

Providing physical data advocating for Ranker's hypothesis of everyday creativity, researcher Anne Haas Dyson observed the written and visual production of elementary-aged students over the course of two years, determining a positive correlation between sociocultural interactions and what she deems creative production. Dyson observed how the children "brought their imagined worlds in close," creating fiction from fact by both implementing and altering elements of daily life; this synthesis, she argues, marks creative work (Dyson, 24). When writing, one does not just sit and produce but acknowledges both himself and the reader; likewise, when creating anything new, whether or not it be through a specifically artistic medium, the creator considers the outside world, one's milieu and cultural context, using the present to influence the imagined. These studies of both Ranker and Dyson provide modern support for Vygotsky's theory of derivative creativity and evidence against the Romantic autonomous lens.

In Collaborative Pedagogy

Albeit implicit, this view of creativity as the act of consideration for elements beyond oneself can be deemed a part of collaborative pedagogy, the idea of student improvement in critical thinking and learning abilities through engagement with others. Refuting the common image of the "solitary, autonomous genius," Rebecca Moore Howard describes the mutual benefits obtained through face-to-face peer collaboration. When working with others to develop a product, as opposed to working alone, one gains greater experience and is further exposed to new styles and techniques (55). Thus, Howard pushes the benefits of working with others for development, specifically in the field of composition.

Unfortunately, in introducing to the classroom different forms of and exercises in collaborative pedagogy, opposition continues to arise due to the belief of an intrinsic relationship between collaboration and plagiarism. Further, in the conclusion of her study, Howard describes opponents' continued view that collaboration brings with it a loss of unique thought. Despite the introduction of modern research, nineteenth century Romantic ideals remain, exerting influence on public conception of creativity. However, Howard does go on to recommend the discipline of collaborative pedagogy as "a topic ripe for further research," holding a potential to "[expand] students' linguistic repertoires" and "[increase] the authority of their . . . voices" if acknowledged as a necessary part of classroom instruction (67). She believes changing the public's perception of creativity and collaboration to be possible.

In the Everyday

I intend to support the proposition of collaborative pedagogy as a means to growth, focusing on its applicability in the context of writing and intimate creation. The relevance of collaborative pedagogy does not just hold in Howard's observations of face-to-face interaction but extends to the implicit, or the unseen. In fact, the principles of collaboration stand as roots of both Vygotsky's aforementioned argument for "combination creativity" and Ranker's "everyday creativity." When creating, we draw from the known, our previous experiences, our anticipated audiences, and our current circumstances, all contributing to the production of something new. This, in itself, is collaboration. By establishing creation as an "everyday" endeavor accomplished through combination and the reworking of the existing, creativity is promoted as an activity accessible to all, regardless of disciplinary interest or perceived "giftedness." While there is currently work being done to establish creativity as universal, I see the inclusion of creativity into the broader theory of collaborative pedagogy as a means to further this goal of creativity's multidisciplinary applicability.

Large amounts of scholarship currently exist to discuss the broad nature of collaborative pedagogy and professional partnership; however, there is little on collaboration as related to the specific context of personal, or fictional, writing, an activity in today's society referred to as "creative writing." Creative writing is often labeled so for it is thought to be unique and original, a product of the gifted, imaginative mind. This leads to the assumption that if one cannot write fictionally, or "creatively," one is not creative and, further, places a barrier on the inclusion of other genres in the realm of creativity.

Having grown up an avid writer, the reading of this literature on creativity and the existing collaborative pedagogy brought this gap in research to the forefront and led me to wonder if my own personal fiction writing could be deemed collaborative. If it could be seen to involve collaboration, this would support a move away from fictional writing as individually creative and towards the view that storytelling too is a product of collaboration, just like the other genres not traditionally perceived as creative.

Method and Approach

I gathered personal writing samples produced between the ten-year span of 2007-2017, analyzing these works on the bases of situated intention and sources present in collaboration through the examination of the works' overall themes as well as their visual elements. I knew with my more recent writing that I had indeed been motivated by authors read, but I was interested to see how far back (if at all) this relationship of fact, the experienced, and fiction, the imagined, carried in my own composition. I determined that if this sought after social process extended beyond my current work and into different genres of personal writing then it could serve as relevant evidence by which to support the existent claims of accessible creativity and sociocultural influence as well as introduce fiction writing to collaborative pedagogy.

Further, in order to analyze collaboration at work in these sample pieces, I referenced the Association for Intelligent Information Management (AIIM), a resource for corporate information organization. AIIM describes eight components present in "collaboration at the conceptual level": awareness, motivation, self-synchronization, participation, reciprocity, reflection, and engagement. Further, AIIM promotes the existence of collaboration in two forms: synchronous and asynchronous. The former involves interaction in real time; the latter is used to describe collaborative efforts which are "time-shifted." AIIM's components of collaboration served to provide a tangible means through which I could determine collaborative activity.

Although at the time of writing I viewed my creative ideas and works of writing as wholly unique, after analysis, I can now recognize the collective identity and social elements which were, and still are, continually present. It may appear that I write alone; however, I consistently use the outside world, my feelings, my

friends, and my experiences, all coming together to create what I view as original work. Extending from the previous research conducted and conclusions drawn on creativity as "everyday" and socially situated, this study aims to identify personal fiction writing as an innately collaborative process, exploring the connection between my lived experiences and the works of others, a combination of fact and fiction.

The Story

Ever since I can remember, I have been an avid reader, for as an inconceivably shy child, I found adventure hidden within the pages of my favorite storybooks. Books and stories served as the foundation upon which I grew; the fantastical realities tucked between two covers served as the places to which I escaped when I felt insecure or lost within my own world. Those colorful worlds jumping out at me from the lines of printed black and white text showed me a whole other life I could never have fathomed, and as all those newly discovered ideas, characters, and places found a home inside my mind, I found myself drawn to the clean, unadulterated pages of my notebook.

It was in elementary school that I wrote my first story, titled "I Am Magic." I was seven years old and had recently read and become slightly obsessed with the *Harry Potter* series. My ten-paged "I Am Magic" story I had considered to be a fully original production and something my creative mind had, almost magically, originated; however, in reality, it closely adhered to the main themes present within J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* (see Appendix A). In fact, looking back now, I can see that the plot of my "original story" read as almost identical to that of *Harry Potter*. Being that I was only seven, this imitation without realization is not an act unique to me, but the similarly structured plot does document the beginning of my tendency to draw inspiration from works read, an unacknowledged collaboration. At seven years old, through reading and immersing myself in others' worlds, I had discovered a concept—wizardry—that I loved and wanted to make my own, and in addition to the reworking of this wizarding world, I too drew in experiences and people from my actual life in order to bring this magic I so loved closer to myself.

The protagonist of my story was "a boy named Reid" who, at the time, happened to be my best friend. (A few years down the line, I would place Reid as the hero of my story once again—this time in a copy of Rick Riordan's *The Lightening Thief*.) Reid, the powerful wizard boy in my story, did not solely bear relation in name; rather, while I wrote—and even re-reading now—Reid shares my friend's seven-year-old appearance. I took someone I loved and made him the center of my fictional world. Following suit, the started sequel to my original "I Am Magic" story also draws elements from my personal life to place in the context of my fantasy world (see Appendix B). In the unfinished sequel, wizard boy Reid goes to his "grandparent's [sic] house," one complete with a pool. Although it may not seem like much, reading this story now, I can vividly picture the setting in which

now eight-year-old Rachel had intended Reid to find himself: a screened-in backyard pool, the set-up of my aunt and uncle's house at which I had attended a pool party earlier that year. For me, this act of writing, introducing elements of my reality to a wizarding world of which I so wished to be a part, presented itself as much more real than just running around in my Halloween Gryffindor robe; I created a tangible world, one easy to picture because it contained elements with which I was familiar.

As a child with little experience in the world—seven years to be exact—my scope of reference was incredibly limited. Thus, I used the elements of my life with which I was most familiar: my books and my friends. I acted creatively through the reconstruction of reality, by combining different experiences to create something new. This act of inserting myself and my surroundings into J.K. Rowling's crafted wizarding world exemplifies AIIM's conceptual elements of mediation and reflection. I not only sought a "middle point" between Rowling's magical landscape and my personal reality, but I also participated actively in "think[ing] and . . . consider[ing] alternatives" to my own situation.

Further, my elementary school story directly contributes to Rebecca Moore Howard's view on collaborative pedagogy. When working with others, or in my case, when working with others' ideas, greater knowledge is gained. My seven-year-old self did not know much about the world, but through exposure via reading and general life experiences, she was able to learn, synthesize, and create. My seven-year-old self would not have been capable of constructing her magical landscape without the implicit help of her friends and favorite author. In these ways, I participated in collaboration, my experiences and interactions working together to create something new: my "I Am Magic" stories.

The Magazine

Extending upon this concept of collaboration is the construction of my own magazine. While visiting our nana's house in 2011, my younger sister Megan and I decided to start our own magazines. Following along the same lines as my first short story, which copied the plot of *Harry Potter*, my magazine "company" was titled *Girlz* (based on the magazine *Discovery Girls,* to which I subscribed, and which read religiously). My writing, no matter the genre, found its start in existing publications.

To complete one single issue of *Girlz*, it took days, working non-stop from breakfast to dinner as I served as my magazine's lead reporter and design specialist as well as the whole of its board of directors, and upon finishing, my sister and I were enthralled when our nana "believed" our first pencil-drawn editions to be legitimate publications. I wrote articles giving advice on real-life problems; I wrote stories by "real girls" who shared experiences either through which I had previously gone or through which I wished to go. These structural

elements were taken directly from the pages of *Discovery Girls*; however, the content was changed to match my life and fantasies.

Instead of cutting and pasting pictures from other magazines or catalogues, I illustrated *Girlz* by hand (see Appendix C). Through drawing my own accompanying images, I was able to control more precisely the aspects of my magazine, including the clothes and style of my magazine's "featured subscribers" and cover model. Resulting from this control, I designed and implemented what I considered to be the trends of the time. (Clearly, headbands and chokers were, in my eyes, the peak of 2011 fashion.) Essentially, I took the structure of my favorite magazine, *Discovery Girls*, and reworked the content to match my personal style.

Being that the composition of these *Girlz* magazines was my first and only experience with the magazine genre, I followed a pattern of familiarity in order to "get it right." Everything inside my magazine, while differing in story content and quiz topic, followed the general structure of my favorite publication. The work I put into my magazines—from the combination of words and pictures to the development of new themes and fictional people—was undoubtedly creative; however, the general structure of my creation drew heavily from an existing source. This outside contribution did not negate my originality; rather, it served as an avenue through which I could enhance my creativity. Without the example provided through *Discovery Girls*, I would not have the base knowledge needed for magazine composition; without the preexisting format, I would not have the foundation upon which I could add my own ideas.

My sister's and my interactions with *Discovery Girls* and the magazine genre as a whole display the conceptual elements of awareness as we "[became] part of a working entity," the magazine corporate world (AIIM). Despite the fact that, in reality, we kept our stories to ourselves, we imagined them distributed across the country and read by people just like ourselves. We participated in collaboration, viewing ourselves as producers for the wider public. The writing and illustrating I did of my own magazines at eleven serve as prime examples of collaborative creativity and further support Ranker's and Dyson's theories of writing as a social process. Because of collaboration between *Discovery Girls* and myself, I possessed the means to act creatively.

Further, within my magazines' quizzes, I now observe an attempt at self-justification (see Appendix D). In addition to showcasing my own dated fashion trends, these hand-drawn magazines provide insight into my self-consciousness. At 11 years old, I was not allowed to wear makeup, nor had I ever touched it with the exception of my annual dance recital. Thus, at the time and in my mind, makeup (as included in quiz question one) was linked directly with elaborate decoration and special occasion. Nonetheless, I remember fifth grade as the year girls in my class had begun to wear mascara and the occasional lipstick or eyeshadow to school, something for which my mother still considered me too

young. Also, although Justice brand clothing and word-printed shorts were a huge fashion trend amongst elementary and middle school girls in 2011, my mother would not buy me shorts with words printed across the back (as included in quiz question two) despite my desire to "be cool" and own a pair. Lastly, question three addresses preferred hair style; my hair did not (and still will not) hold a curl for more than five minutes. The fact that my hair was "so boring" frustrated me.

Looking at pictures of myself from these years of my life, along with the memories I have, I can clearly see that I wrote this quiz with myself in the middle, "mostly Bs" category, the only quiz resolution where the explanation does not end in critique. In addition to providing a creative outlet and the opportunity to explore a different genre of composition, writing and illustrating my own magazines allowed me to reconcile my own feelings and perceived shortcomings, justifying myself as "normal" and "middle-ground." Thus, the quizzes also show to be social through the communication and presentation of my opinions and feelings. The magazines served as a collaborative production, both in motivation from an existing publication and reflection on my lived experiences.

The Allegory

In middle and high school, my writing style began to change. Taking cue from the "real stories by real girls" I had written for my magazine, my later writings included more realistic scenarios as opposed to imaginary, magical worlds. I wrote a short story about a competitive gymnast who would have been on her way to the gold if not for the setback of a broken leg. The realities from where I derived this fictional story are easy for me to identify. The protagonist was my age at the time (although bearing a different name, an extension of myself); I fostered dreams of someday becoming an Olympic gymnast (although then, I only took classes in basic tumbling); I loved the attention given to kids in my class with broken bones and sign-able casts (although I myself had never broken a bone). It is clear to me that this story plot posed as an amalgamation of realities I wished to experience.

Thus, I continued to write, crafting simple stories about fictional characters who, placed in realistic situations, resembled me in the nearest fashion. Around my sophomore year of high school, I started a story about a girl named Cassie, not me exactly but a character who mirrored my personality, my friends, and my fears. Cassie came from what I had deemed "a broken home," while I still lived with both of my married parents; however, in deviating somewhat from my own life and situation, I found I was more fully able to express myself. I had placed my character in a situation which would only accentuate her personality traits—her stubbornness, her resilience, her loyalty—and draw them blatantly into the open for recognition. I gave her elements of my life, tweaking them just enough to fly under the radar. Writing in this style continued to hold a social purpose: the

communication of my innermost feelings through the combination of reality with fantasy. My writings during this period focused more so on a collaboration between imagined realities and personal life experiences, rather than existing authored texts. Nonetheless, in my analysis, these works I categorize as collaborative for their interactions with and awareness of my current disposition and social milieu.

However, writing in this plain, straightforward fashion as I had at seven years old did not hold my interest for long, as this escape into worlds beyond my own was no longer what I needed. Filled with anxieties about college decisions, impending due dates, and stressful life events, senior year of high school presented itself as an overwhelming time. I felt completely stuck, but unable to explain all those thoughts and feelings swimming around my cluttered mind, I had no way to release the tension which weighed me down. I needed an outlet for everything I kept bottled inside, and in the late stages of my high school career, I found that creative writing could also serve as this means of catharsis.

I wrote "The Poppy" in December of 2017 (see Appendix E). Trying to make sense of a death in the family, I used a newly-learned style of allegory to represent my coming to terms with and understanding of the event. The symbols I implemented—everything from the flower chosen to the characters' names— alluded to the greater meaning of life and rebirth. And, as unique as my story may seem upon first glance, I, of course, did not come up with the allegorical writing technique all on my own. Assigned to read works like Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphoses* through my AP English Literature course senior year, I was led to the discovery of these new stylistic techniques, such as symbolism and allegory. I learned how ordinary colors can convey myriad emotions and how one seemingly simple plot can hold a whole other meaning entirely. These new writing styles so intrigued me, and I found myself sitting in front of my laptop to experiment with double meaning. It was through the work of others that I re-discovered my love of writing, my desire to create, my need for self-expression.

Being that, at this point in time, I was no longer seven years old, I did not copy the plot of my favorite books as I had done with *Harry Potter*; rather, I borrowed style, techniques, and themes. My new story resembled a physical journey like that seen in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*; my two characters, Eva and Batya, would "[walk] together to the flowers," and this narrative, like Carroll's, fully focused on the details of their journey. In touching on the cyclical nature of Eva and Batya's "every Sunday" travels through the forest, my story contained "searching for meaning" themes like those seen in many of Kafka's works. My story implemented religious undertones like those interwoven in John Steinbeck's *East of Eden*. Both with names of Hebraic origin—Batya means "daughter of God" and the name Eva means "life"—my characters represented creation and rebirth similar to the generational new life in *East of Eden*.

This new story, "The Poppy," was unquestionably my own; however, it too read as an amalgamation of myriad literary works, a product both my own and of the many authors who came before me. As shown, I expanded my writing repertoire through asynchronous collaboration with writing "experts" across the centuries and around the world (AIIM). Motivated by their writings and implemented literary devices, I participated in collaboration through the combination of these elements and inclusion of them into a new environment. Further, even when drawing inspiration from the works of existing authors, I continued to source main themes and ideas from my life, another source of collaborative activity. While I did not physically walk through the forest as my main character did with her grandmother, the written journey was based upon my emotional journey and gradual discovery of self throughout my senior year of high school. Thus, based on my own experience and analysis, it can be further hypothesized that, even within the most unique literary works by the most famous authors, there exist influences from reality, both experienced works and lived realities.

Conclusion

Through my data collection and analysis, I observed collaborative creativity in action, supporting the concept originally proposed by researchers Vygotsky and Dyson. Creativity is neither individual nor exclusive; rather, it is a process which involves many, an amalgamation of one's past, present, and future states. At seven, I combined my physical life and locale with J.K. Rowling's wizarding world. At eleven, I combined the structure of *Discovery Girls* magazine with my own "fashion sense" and perceived trends. At seventeen, I combined my innermost feelings and questions with an imagined world and my favorite writers' stylistic techniques.

These findings dually support Rebecca Moore Howard's previous research on collaborative pedagogy and her assertion that collaboration does not mean copying but rather working with someone or something to achieve amplification of voice and expansion of ideas. An extension of this conception of collaboration to the realm of creativity and personal writing can be seen in all three of my included writing samples as my experiences in life and with the publications of other authors worked together to produce something new.

Through AIIM's components of conceptual collaboration, I was able to identify specific elements of the collaborative process as used in professional and corporate environments, thus relating the established practice of collaboration to a new discipline: fiction writing. I found my pieces to exhibit actions, such as mediation, participation, and asynchronous collaborative behaviors. Whether it be another's created world, structural format, or stylistic technique, my personal writing took hold in experimentation with existing work. I neither plagiarized nor copied but in basing my stories in something I knew, I found a greater ability to explore and grow.

Further, my analysis builds upon the standpoint that creativity is not of divine nature but rather a product of synthesis and, as coined by Jason Ranker, "everyday creativity." Ranker proposed the amalgam of elements from one's "material and social environment" when one engages themselves in any form of creative enterprise. In my personal writing, I can see this proposition as holding merit. As stated previously, one draws from what one knows, and due to the observation that humans are future-oriented beings, we are constantly taking our world—ourselves—and crafting new scenarios based upon the "what if"; it is an employment of both mediation and reflection. In my *Harry Potter*-themed short story, I combined my real-life friend and J.K. Rowling's make-believe world to satisfy my seven-year-old "what if" scenario: what if I lived in a world where wizards existed and I could wield magic? The answer to my question took a ten-paged story: "I Am Magic."

These interactions observed between the material and social, fact and fiction, support the proposition for the inclusion of creative practices and personal writing into the broader theory of collaborative pedagogy. Writing is a social process; writing employs the constant interaction of outside sources (situations, publications, people) to create a new and original product. Promoting the association of creativity and collaboration is important to society as it will help grow a new generation of readers and writers unhindered by the thought of being unoriginal for recognizing the derivation of certain ideas. Further, collaborative processes, as shown in face-to-face collaborative ventures, enhance thought and production. Acknowledging fiction writing as an asynchronous collaborative endeavor encourages the writer to recognize and utilize both the present life experiences, tapping deeper into one's psyche, and existing authored works in order to foster motivation and encourage exploration.

This acknowledgement, bringing the recognition of collaboration to the forefront, also gives "non-writers" a chance to witness the multidisciplinary relevance of creativity. With the traditionally labeled "creative writing" shown to be collectively collaborative rather than a means of individual giftedness, it can be shown that engineering solutions or business strategy sessions are as creative as fiction writing. Creativity, through its association with collaboration, presents itself as a universal endeavor. Through simply living and experiencing, one gathers creative potential to use in any environment. In drawing attention to the accessibility of creativity, children have the opportunity to grow up with the knowledge that they are creative no matter what genre they choose to produce, offering benefit to society through the development of future-oriented innovators and the contributors of new ideas.

Appendix A: Page One of Harry Potter-inspired story with main character (my best friend) Reid

I am Magic   by Rachel
                                     Casey

Once there was a boy named Reid. A long long time ago A wiked Witch Cast a spell over the wolhe world! So now none of the people belive in magic! Everyone But Reid! He still reads books about Magic and everything else! Then one night A Wizerd came in to his bedroom and gave Reid magic powers! But he did not know it. Then one night A Ging't came in to the town and everyone ran in a different derection. Then the Giant went away. Reid could not find his parents! He only saw one family. So Reid went there to ask if he could stay for the night. They said yes! But unforctldy They were mean and there was a boy named Michel and his birthday was tomorrow!
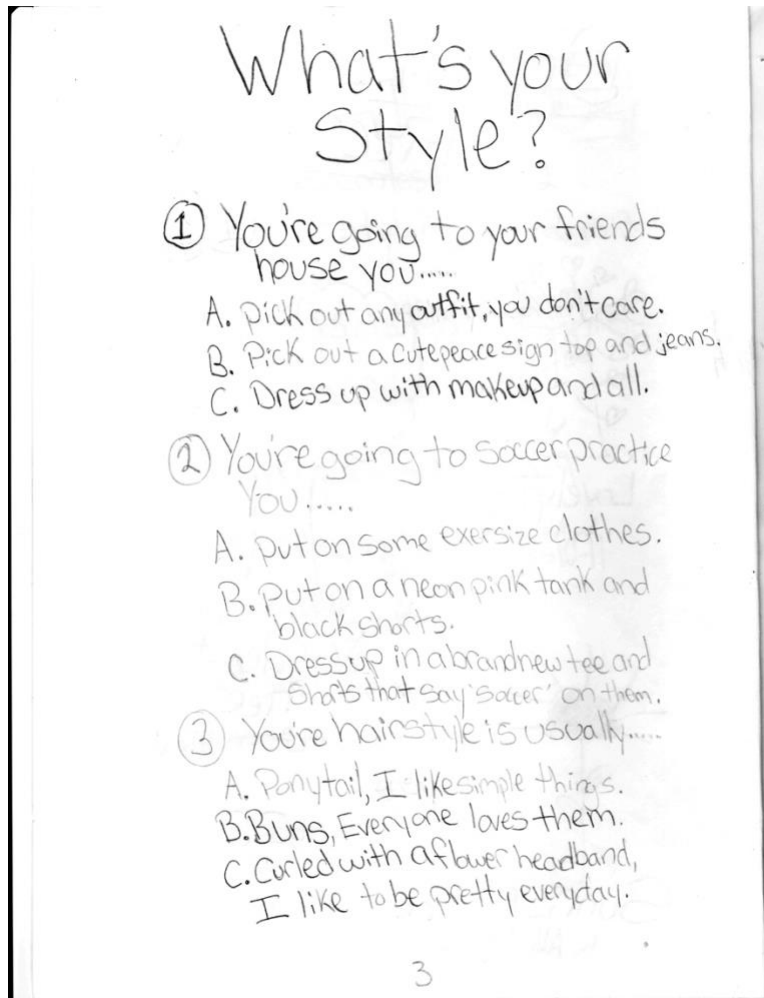
Appendix B: Sequel to original Harry Potter-inspired story referencing "grandparent's [sic] house" with pool
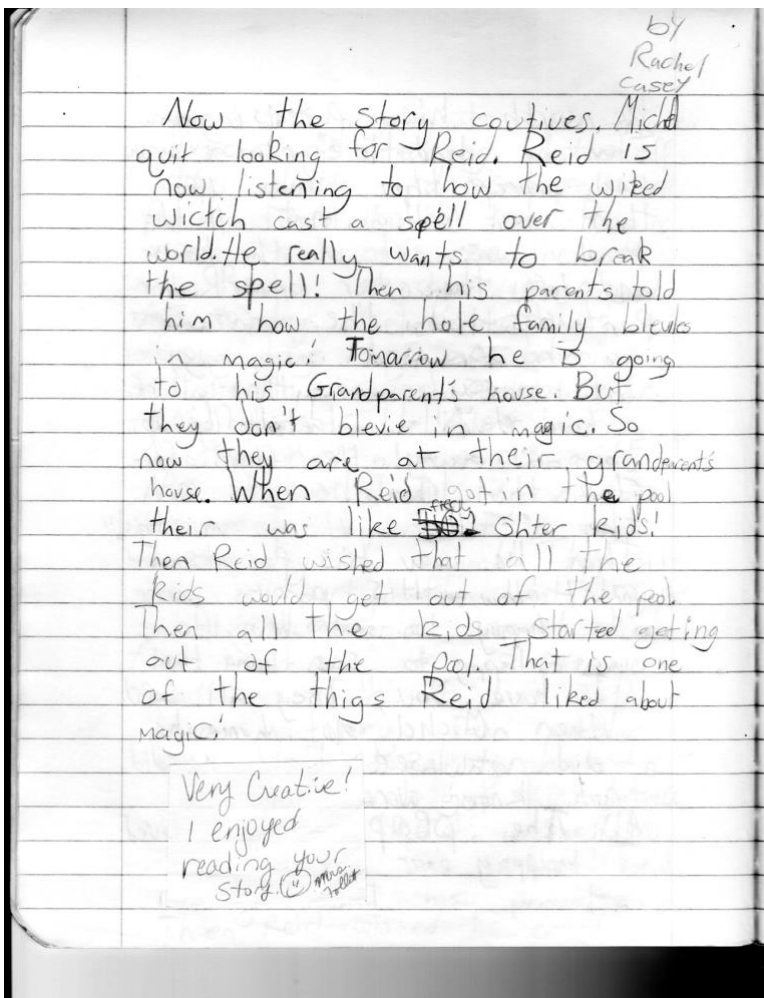
Appendix C: Cover of 2011 Girlz magazine

Appendix D: Quiz included in 2011 edition of Girlz magazine (two pages)

④ You're out shopping. You buy.....
A. New shoes. Ahhh, shoe shopping.
B. A new sparkly shirt. Sparkles rock!
C. New jewlery. Beauty is what matters.

Mostly As -

Your style is cute but, simple.
Your clothes and accesories are cute but,
You really don't care what you wear.

Mostly Bs -

Your style is pretty and sweet. You don't
go to wild but, that's good because, you
look great in sweet and pretty outfits.

Mostly Cs -
Your style is Fancy. You like to dress up
for every event even though you may not need
to.

4

Appendix E: "The Poppy"

Every Sunday afternoon for as long as Eva could remember, she and Batya walked together to the flowers.

Eva would skip down the dusty path carved into the forest which separated the flower-filled meadow from her home, loudly whistling random notes as if imitating the song of the light breezes spinning through the intermingled branches of the surrounding trees. Batya, watching her granddaughter leap with joy to the flowers, would follow slowly behind, taking care to avoid any stray branches which littered the path.

Last Sunday, upon reaching the old swinging rope, Eva realized she could no longer hear Batya's feet shuffling behind her on the dusty path, and she paused, looking back for her grandmother who seemed to follow at a much more leisurely pace than usual. Rule in place that Eva could not travel beyond the sight of Batya, she called for her grandmother to hurry and waited near the edge of the trickling river, impatiently twirling in circles.

The river used to be Eva and Batya's first stop on their way to the meadow. Batya would wade into the water while Eva swung in, holding tightly to the rope fashioned to the tree branch overhead. However, the old, frayed rope now hung far above the surface of the receded river, and recently, the trickle of water only existed as a trail marker on the pair's weekly journey to the flowers.

Eva, dizzy from spinning and looking to busy herself while waiting for her grandmother, dipped her toe into the cool stream which ran slowly over the now-visible pebbles. She waded into the light trickle, mimicking Batya's old habit of holding onto a nearby tree limb as she stepped down from the forest floor into the water. Batya would look up, letting the sun warm her face; Eva turned her head to the sky, staring up at the mesh of green and brown overhead, tree branches woven together as if holding hands.

She stood there, looking at the leaves fluttering slowly in the wind, so immersed into that old memory that she did not hear her grandmother approach from behind.

Batya quietly watched the little girl clothed in her lacy, white Sunday dress, a dress which now hit above Eva's knee and seemed to be shrinking as quickly as Batya herself. Standing back on the path, Batya observed how intently her granddaughter studied the sky above, and her heart swelled with pride.
It was not until a squirrel scampered across, crunching leaves noisily under its feet, that Eva was brought back to the forest, realized her grandmother had caught up, and sprung from the stream, eager to get to the flowery meadow.

Wide-eyed and carefree, Eva skipped ahead, loving the wind on her face and the dirt under her feet and the rainbow-colored field she could see in the distance. The flowers, as if expecting the pair, waved to the red-headed young girl flying through the meadow and the grayed woman who followed behind.

Among the flowers, Eva could sit for hours, sharing her deepest secrets and greatest wishes, whispering to the wind and worshiping the open sky. Batya always sat off to the side, eyes smiling, watching her young granddaughter spill the contents of her heart to the quiet, attentive meadow. As the sun began to fall in the sky and Eva's meditative monologue drew to a close, Batya would clear her throat to remind her granddaughter that dusk was nearing. Eva would then stand, scour the meadow, and choose one flower to take home with her before leaving.

She would always choose the prettiest flower.

Eva would pluck it from the earth and carefully carry her chosen wildflower back home. There, Batya would help her place it inside a black-leathered book, drying out the flower to save it from becoming wilted and lifeless like the ones left in the field. Eva kept all her pressed flowers tacked to her bedroom wall to create her own little garden. The flowers, although slightly faded, maintained their beauty, each preserving a memory, each patiently waiting to meet the weekly addition to the Eva's flower family.

Last Sunday, towards the edge of the meadow, Eva found her perfect new flower. Growing beside a fallen tree and surrounded by browning daisies, the bright red, unscathed petals shone like the setting sun. Batya smiled gently at Eva, content with her granddaughter's selection.

As if in a hurry for something—as if trying to edge Eva and Batya out of the meadow and back home—darkness rapidly painted the sky, and the song of crickets filled the otherwise still night air. Eva reached out and slid her small hand inside her grandmother's, and last Sunday, they strolled together back down the dusty path carved into the forest which separated the flower-filled meadow from their home, Eva's left hand embracing her grandmother's and her right holding tight to the fiery-red poppy.

But now, Eva returns to the meadow alone.

She walks somberly through the field, one small poppy seed pressed tightly into the palm of her right hand. The flowers, waving in the breeze, welcome the barefooted young girl clothed in a new, and slightly too large, white Sunday dress. Eva gently makes her way to the edge of the meadow near the fallen tree, and kneeling beside the ring of wilted daisies, she digs a small hole with her fingers, placing the lone seed inside and covering it over with a handful of earth.

The poppy, Eva knows, will grow, and in the later years, she can bring it home to join her little bedroom garden, preserved forever alongside the bright red flower she chose to pick last Sunday.

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