

Article

Welcome to the Table: A Bourdieusian Take on Gifted New Zealand Young Women

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Abstract: The field of gifted and talented studies has its origins in the intelligence quotient research of the late 19th and early 20th century. These psychological foundations remain a strong influence even though the field has since expanded to include other paradigms and greater diversity in conceptions of giftedness and talent. Some researchers argue that the field could benefit from greater interdisciplinary engagement, especially in studies of gifted and talented girls, which tend to include a focus on how gifted girls' external environments influence their emotional worlds. This article proposes that concepts developed by critical sociologist Pierre Bourdieu are useful for expanding and deepening understandings of the internal and external worlds of gifted and talented girls. It offers evidence from a recent qualitative study with academically gifted and talented teenaged girls in New Zealand. The results highlighted the marginalised position of the gifted and talented identity and the privileging of identities that were based on dispositions versus innate ability. The study also identified a hierarchy of valued forms of capital within the teenage girl social landscape and a resulting theorisation of an empowered gifted and talented girl habitus. This article demonstrates how Bourdieu's work is a constructive addition to the field.

Keywords: gifted; talented; girls; Bourdieu; sociology; theory; girlhood



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1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to discuss how the theoretical concepts of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu can help advance the gifted and talented field's understanding of gifted and talented girls' lived experiences as they navigate their social landscapes. This article is based on a qualitative research study investigating gifted and talented girls' identity constructions and their understandings of empowerment. However, because this article has a theoretical focus, it will emphasise the contributions of Bourdieu's theory to the research. It achieves this by first distilling the key findings of existing research in the gifted and talented field, including the research on gifted and talented girls. Next, it highlights relevant theoretical contributions from Bourdieu's corpus of work and demonstrates how empirical research conducted with a Bourdieusian approach can yield findings that deepen and extend the field's understanding of gifted and talented girls.

Modern scholarship and research into giftedness and talent corresponded with the rise of interest and research in psychology in the late 1800s, particularly on the intelligence quotient (IQ) and intelligence testing [1–4] and has since evolved into a distinct field of its own in which multiple paradigms about giftedness operate. However, while two of the three dominant paradigms—talent development and differentiation [5]—demonstrate growing recognition of the influence of external social worlds on whether gifted and talented children, including girls, are able to actualise their talents [4,6,7], there has been surprisingly little in-depth engagement with sociological theories.

The profound influence of psychology remains particularly evident in the first of the three dominant paradigms, the gifted child paradigm, which takes an essentialist view of an individual in which being gifted is part of the unchanging, permanent essence of a person. According to Dai and Chen [5], this paradigm assumes that giftedness, as originally measured and determined by the score on an IQ test, is a quality possessed by some people and not by others. Along with this high IQ score, gifted individuals are understood as able to gain mastery over skills faster, and more easily understand complex ideas as compared to non-gifted peers [5]. The gifted child paradigm prioritises its focus on the individual and thus lends itself to studies related to gifted identities [8] and the social and emotional lives of gifted individuals [9–12].

The remaining two paradigms acknowledge the influence of the external environment but neither has yet taken the next step to a deeper engagement with social theories. In contrast to the gifted child paradigm, the talent development paradigm recognises strengths and talents outside IQ-based definitions of giftedness [4,5]. With its foundations in developmentalism, which reflects the idea that capabilities and potentialities are malleable and can be developed over time, the talent development paradigm challenges the intellect-focused foundations of giftedness by arguing there are different types of intelligence encompassing a variety of domains not measured by IQ tests. Several researchers developed models of giftedness and talent in line with a developmental approach [7,13–15]. The talent development paradigm acknowledges that general intelligence *can* play a part in the development of certain talents but believes that other factors, such as motivation and in-depth experiences at crucial moments in a developmental pathway, have a strong influence on the manifestation of the gift [5].

Finally, the differentiation paradigm identified by Dai and Chen [5] has its roots in the inclusive education movements of the 1990s, which saw an increase in diversity and heterogeneity in classroom makeup. It retains a focus on the individual, arguing that curriculum and instruction should be adapted to the needs of individual students, including gifted and highly able learners, via flexible progressions in learning rather than adhering to age-based expectations [2,5]. Unlike the gifted child paradigm, but similar to the talent development paradigm, the differentiation paradigm assumes that the timing and speed at which a gifted student masters a subject or skill is changeable, subject-specific, and context-dependent [5]. In acknowledging the influence of context, this paradigm at least implicitly recognises the influence of the external world, which is a focus of sociological theories.

Narrowing down to the subfield of academically gifted and talented girls, there appears to be some recognition of the impact of girls' external social worlds on their internal (emotional, psychological) experiences [11,16–19]. However, this recognition occurs in the absence of deep, theoretical engagement with sociological theories that could offer conceptual tools for understanding the intersections of the girls' internal/emotional/psychological worlds and their external social worlds. One field of research that potentially offers a relevant sociological focus is girlhood studies, particularly its focus on "successful girls" [20–24]. Scholars from this discipline tend to approach success, such as high academic achievement, as constructed or performed and embedded in sociocultural norms of femininity. With its focus on success for girls, including academic success, girlhood studies potentially complement the psychological orientation of research on gifted and talented girls.

While each field appears to place different emphases on the role of internal and psychological (gifted and talented) or external and sociological (girlhood studies) factors affecting gifted and talented or successful girls, reviewing the research in both fields reveals a complex interplay between girls' internal emotional and external social worlds. Bourdieu's sociological concepts, particularly his concept of habitus, which is described in more depth later, offer a meaningful way to conceptualise and deepen researchers' understandings of the experiences and lives of gifted and talented girls. In short, habitus is a concept that enables researchers to work across existing divides between the external and

the internal, the objective and the subjective, and the social and the emotional. The next section identifies three key concerns for gifted and talented successful girls as highlighted in the literature across both fields: (1) psychological challenges; (2) emphasis on the individual; (3) and the persistent influence of sex-role/gender-role stereotyping.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Psychological Challenges

Psychological research has identified four important challenges faced by gifted and talented girls in realising their talents: self-defeating struggles, imposter syndrome, perfectionism, and multipotentiality. Internal struggles can lead to feelings of self-defeat, which is argued to lead to decreasing self-esteem, self-doubt, self-criticism, and lowered expectations [19,25–27]. Imposter syndrome, coined by Clance and Imes [28], is described as “a low sense of self-esteem that occurs when females attribute their successes to factors other than their own efforts and see their outward image of a bright successful achiever as being undeserved or accidental” [19](p. 7). Imposter syndrome means that gifted and talented girls develop an internal belief that they are not as capable as others perceive them to be and that their success is not due to their ability but rather to hard work or external factors such as luck, having the right mentor, or being able to fool other people [16–19,29]. A third often-cited risk factor for gifted girls is perfectionism [18,19,30–32]. According to Wardman [12], “Perfectionism is characterised as a multi-dimensional construct with different types, some of which are considered more adaptive than others” (p. 69), such as close attention to detail and a healthy commitment to high standards; the more maladaptive forms, such as the obsessive need to exceed high standards [33,34] being unhealthy, dysfunctional and particularly problematic for gifted girls [18,32,35]. The fourth challenge is multipotentiality, which describes gifted girls’ high capabilities across multiple domains: thus, girls with multipotentiality tend to be high achievers across many subjects or domains and have various extra-curricular interests [16,19]. Multipotentiality has been cited as a psychological barrier to success, as gifted girls’ involvement in many endeavours can lead to extra pressure, stress, and exhaustion [16], resulting from its interaction with self-exploration, self-criticism, level of intellectual maturity, and other value systems [19]. Some gifted and talented girls have found having multiple capabilities and many choices beneficial, but others experience difficulty and paralysis when having to choose between subjects and extra-curricular activities [16,19]. Bringing these four psychological challenges into conversation with the girlhood studies research reveals that researchers from both fields acknowledge that the challenges may result from external factors such as the social environment and the socially constructed expectations and norms placed on girls.

2.2. Emphasis on the Individual

Girlhood studies researchers have conceptualised an academically-successful, high-performing girl identity using various terms including *smart girl*, *successful girl*, *supergirl*, *can-do girl*, *future girl*, and *alpha girl* [20,23,36–38]. They argue that gifted and talented initiatives encourage students to identify as individually ambitious, competitive, self-responsible, and self-determined [37]. As a result, current discourses about female success omit structural barriers and “invisible relations of dominance” (p. 234). Neoliberal, post-feminist, and meritocratic ideologies position girlhood as a project of female self-invention, choice, and individual agency [39], and characterise the successful girl by her confidence, resilience, independence, flexibility, self-assurance, talent, and motivation [20,22,36].

Such traits are aligned to social and economic objectives, and develop students for future workforce roles, particularly through the skills of flexibility and adaptability [24]. In these approaches, traditional collectivist ideas of feminism are replaced by the neoliberal narrative of the self-determined empowered female subject, an independent consumer with unlimited choice and opportunity if she works hard [40,41]. Although the terms *perfect*, *right*, *correct*, and *successful* are used to describe such successful girls, Harris [20] argues instead that, “What is constructed here is the never-good-enough girl who must perpetually observe

and remake herself” (p. 33). Such comments reflect a similar recognition to the existing gifted and talented research that academically high-achieving girls are subject to significant psychological pressures, particularly with such an emphasis on individual success.

2.3. The Persistent Influence of Sex-Role/Gender-Role Stereotyping

A third concern in the research is the influence of sex-role stereotypes. Despite the purported postfeminist positioning of girls as successful, researchers from both the gifted and talented and girlhood studies fields believe that the internalisation of prevailing sex-role stereotypes impacts the achievement and success of gifted girls [16,18,19,25,27,42–44]. According to Reis [45], although the situation has improved, socialisation of sex-role stereotypes in the younger years continues to impact whether gifted and talented girls reach their potential later on in life. Literature from both fields highlights the influence of parenting and the childhood environment on the socialisation of specific heteronormative feminine and masculine behaviours [16,26,27,42,46]. For example, boys are more often given spatial-temporal toys to play with such as vehicles and sports gear, and girls are given nurturing-caring toys such as dolls and dollhouses [16,26,27,42]. As girls grow older, they are encouraged to display passive and nurturing behaviour and discouraged from risk-taking behaviour [16]. Gender-role stereotyping is also evident through a hidden curriculum at school and the perpetuation of unstated norms, values, and beliefs through the processes, structures, and social relationships within the education system [47,48], where gifted or successful girls are rewarded with high grades through the affirmation of good, compliant, docile, quiet, adaptable, and controlled behaviours whereas boys develop their argumentation skills through their confidence in challenging the teacher, calling out and questioning, and academic assertiveness [17,25,42,49,50].

In relation to career expectations, literature from girlhood studies argues that the successful girl discourse prevails as they have been repositioned as ideal workers for the labour market and “women’s and girls’ lives have become visibly de-traditionalised” [51] (p. 210) with pathways no longer centred around domestic expectations. McCall [21] and Paule [37] identify teenage girls’ deep concerns about their future career paths and the job market, often punctuated with anxieties about entering into appropriate college courses. As such, successful girls are committed to high academic achievement and extra-curricular commitment in their secondary school years in order to ensure exceptional career pathways [20,21]. However, findings from the gifted and talented field contend that although the commonly-held belief is that society has made progress in gender equality, empirical evidence suggests otherwise [15,17,18,44,52]. For example, societal attitudes still promote females’ dominant role in domestic responsibilities [16,40,44], whilst gender differences still exist, as males dominate in STEM pathways and careers [16,53] and females in health, education, and business administration [47].

Finally, girls’ representation in popular culture continues to privilege heteronormative, white, physically-appealing ideals of beauty [23,36,44,54–56]. Some imagery of gifted girls perpetuates “geek” identities whilst other images of successful girlhood now encompass beauty appeal alongside intelligence as part of an “ideal woman” package [57]. These findings from existing research from both fields highlight the significant influence of external social environments on gifted and talented girls’ psychological processes, essentially impacting the way they navigate their academic spheres, which affirms the need to engage with sociological theories, such as those offered by Bourdieu, in a more in-depth manner.

2.4. Placing Bourdieu in the Research

Bourdieu’s theoretical ideas have been influential in educational research, including his own work on success, education, and the social reproduction that contributes to inequality in educational outcomes [57]. However, within the gifted and talented field, Bourdieu has received surprisingly little attention aside from the work of Smith and Campbell [58] who used Bourdieu’s ideas on social reproduction, cultural capital, and habitus to study gifted and talented children (and their families) from working-class backgrounds. We

propose that there is significant value in extending this work further in the field, especially as Bourdieu's theories offer researchers concepts for robust sociological analysis.

Bourdieu was a sociologist who was committed to work that was simultaneously empirical and theoretical [59]: "Research without theory is blind, and theory without research is empty" (p. 162). Unlike the work of other more abstract social theorists, Bourdieu's field experience and empirical foundations make his theories suitable for the type of research often conducted in gifted and talented education. He focused on understanding how individuals operate in the social world, specifically how groups of individuals reproduce or resist certain practices and behaviours, which has relevance to research on gifted and talented girls. The study on which our argument is based highlights how social conditions influence the ways in which these girls adjust their practices in relation to the external messaging they receive and perceive about what is appropriate behaviour for smart girls.

Bourdieu's theory of practice offers a coherent model for theorising and understanding the interplay between the external (sociological) and the internal (psychological), particularly through the interrelationships between his three key concepts of habitus, field, and capital. The essence of Bourdieu's Outline of a Theory of Practice is best captured in the French title, *Le sens Pratique* [60], which translates to "practical sense". Bourdieu's model proposes that individuals' behaviours (practices) demonstrate a practical sense (logic) of their external fields [61]. In other words, *le sens pratique* is the "subjective understanding and manipulation of objective structures" [60] (p. 67). *Le sens pratique* assumes that practice, or what people do, is neither totally random, or accidental nor is it fully consciously organised. Rather, it is a process that occurs as a result of previous, cumulative acts [61]. Essential to his theory of practice are the concepts of habitus, field, and capital, as well as his theorisation of the concept of doxa, which are discussed next.

Habitus is described as the socially transmitted norms, dispositions, values, conditioning, and capital ingrained in family and close social structures and was developed as a result of Bourdieu's question, "How can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?" [62] (p. 72). According to Maton [63], Bourdieu desired to understand how social structures and individual agency could be reconciled, as he believed social life was not just about the choices made by individuals, nor was it just dictated by a person's place in society. According to Bourdieu [61], an individual's habitus is *structured* by their history and current circumstances such as childhood, upbringing, education, and employment. Habitus is also *structuring* because of the potential of its practices to influence the field. It is furthermore a *structure* because it is a patterned, as opposed to random, "system of dispositions which generate perceptions, appreciations and practices" [61] (p. 53). Habitus is particularly useful in research on gifted and talented girls as it offers a way of interpreting their experiences that reconciles the often dichotomised dialectic of the external versus internal, the objective versus subjective, and sociological versus psychological.

A second key concept is field. According to Maton [63], both habitus and field shape each other and usually represent the same social structure, with habitus representing the subjective (or psychological) and field representing the objective (or sociological). The field is the social context within which we live, the social spaces we occupy, and it plays a role in structuring the habitus of the individuals within it [52,62]. Bourdieu [59] states that a field is a social space encompassing power relations that decide the structure of social positions within it. In an interview with Loïc Wacquant, Bourdieu explained,

I define a field as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, individuals or institutions, by their present and potential situation . . . in the structure of the distribution of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to the other positions.

[59] (p. 39)

Thus, habitus acts with field in an unconscious relationship [59]. They are both relational structures and it is the relationship between these two structures that help us understand practice.

Related to field is the concept of doxa. According to Bourdieu [64], doxa, which is present in every field, refers to “a set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit self-conscious dogma” (p.16). Doxa may be viewed as similar to the notion of ideology but, according to Deer’s [65] interpretation, it moves beyond that to reflect pre-reflexive, naturalised, taken-for-granted, and unquestioned shared opinions, attitudes, and beliefs. Doxa is instrumental to the stability of a field’s objective structures and this stability determines the extent to which structural reproduction occurs through the habitus [62]. The power of a field’s doxa is also demonstrated through the extent that field and habitus strengthen, rather than contradict, one another [59]. This concept of doxa is relevant to research on gifted and talented girls as it offers a way of understanding the tension between the girls’ espoused beliefs versus their actual behaviours by highlighting processes of socialisation wherein societal expectations are internalised into girls’ psyche.

Finally, the concept of capital is useful for understanding power relations, dominance, and inequalities and is especially relevant to this study as it provides a term that encapsulates the aspects of social life that are valued in the fields in which gifted and talented girls move, such as their school field, their peer field, and the wider sociocultural field. Capital refers to “the different forms of power that determine the position of the social individuals in the social hierarchy and their relative distribution in the space of social relations” [66] (p. 134). We can understand capital in the way that certain values, tastes, and lifestyles of some groups of individuals in certain fields are elevated over the tastes, values, and lifestyles of other groups [67]. Groups within a field ascribe value to forms of capital, particularly symbolic capital, such as high test scores, social connections within peer groups, or certain physical features, which can then offer status, authority, and legitimacy to those who possess them.

3. Materials and Methods

This study sought to understand the ways in which external structures influenced gifted and talented girls’ understandings and experiences of empowerment and the negotiation of their identities through the main research question: “What are academically gifted and talented girls’ experiences of, and engagements with, social media and how might these engagements empower and/or disempower them in their sense of identity as gifted and talented young women?” For the purposes of this particular article, the emphasis of the reported findings will be on how Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts contribute to the ideas around identity and empowerment.

The research methodology, which was underpinned by a critical constructivist approach, used multiple modes of inquiry including semi-structured interviews, a dialogue circle, and collective storying, to explore participants’ identity negotiations as high academic achievers in their social worlds. The 19 female participants in their final year of high school (16–17 years of age), who were recognised by their schools as being academically gifted and talented through their previous year’s results in the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), were selected from four diverse secondary schools in the wider Auckland region, the largest city by area and population in Aotearoa New Zealand. The schools were located in different socioeconomic communities as represented by their school decile rating, a system that was used at the time to identify the socioeconomic status of the community and thus influence how much government funding was allocated to the school [68]. Table 1 below outlines the demographic information of the 19 participants in the study, alongside school information.

Table 1. Information on participating schools and students.

School	School Information	Student Participants (Pseudonyms)	Ethnicity (Self-Identification)	Broad Ethnic Category
Tōtara School	Single-sex State Year 9–13 Decile 2	Helen	Cambodian	Asian
		Ange	Tongan/English	Pasifika
		Tia	Chinese	Asian
		Andrea	Samoan	Pasifika
Rimu School	Co-educational State Years 9–13 Decile 4	Sally	NZ European	NZ European
		Marina	European/Indian	Indian
		Wendy	South Korean	Asian
		Jeanie	NZ European	NZ European
Nīkau School	Co-educational State Years 9–13 Decile 8	Natalie	NZ European	NZ European
		Elanor	NZ European	NZ European
		Gale	NZ European	NZ European
		Kiri	European/Māori	NZ European
		Iris	White South African	White South African
Kōwhai School	Single-sex Private Religious Years 1–13 Private but meets Decile 10 criteria	Audrey	NZ European	NZ European
		Katrina	NZ European	NZ European
		Yael	NZ European	NZ European
		Jem	Chinese	Asian
		Elizabeth	Chinese	Asian
		Carly	NZ European	NZ European

Table 1 above shows the ethnic representation based on broad ethnic categories with Asian ($n = 5$, 26.3%), Pasifika ($n = 2$, 10.5%), New Zealand European ($n = 10$, 52.6%), Indian ($n = 1$, 5.3%), and White South African ($n = 1$, 5.3%). General categories also demonstrate broader representation categories, comprising Asian ($n = 5$, 26.3%), brown ($n = 3$, 15.8%), and white ($n = 11$, 57.9%). This data demonstrates that although school selection met the school diversity criteria, the ethnic representation across the entire sample of participants indicates a major weighting towards those under the “white” general category of representation with more than half the participants identifying as New Zealand European and none identifying as indigenous Māori.

The first mode of inquiry was individual interviews. Interviews can be a taken-for-granted mode of data collection due to their prevalence in qualitative research but they are valuable as a “source of knowledge about personal and social aspects of our lives” [69] (p. 278). This study used a semi-structured format, which allowed a conversational style of dialogue without compromising the need to explore specific areas of interest that addressed the research aims. These individual interviews were conducted face-to-face, and a digital voice recording was taken and transcribed. Table 2 below shows the interview guide.

The second mode of inquiry was collective story-writing. Richardson [70] explains, “A collective story tells the experience of a sociologically constructed category of people in the context of larger sociocultural and historical forces” (p. 14). Rather than an individual’s story being expressed, the protagonist represents a collective, a group of individuals categorised by a social construct [71]. Richardson [70] explains that a collective story “displays an individual’s story by narrativizing the experiences of the social category to which the individual belongs” [70] (p. 32). This approach can include the growing method of fiction-based research, which uses fictional writing as part of the research process [72].

Table 2. Interview guide.

	Gifted and Talented	Social Media
Experiences of	1. You've been invited to help me with my research because you've been identified as academically gifted, talented, or a high achiever. How does it feel? a What is it like to be identified as gifted, talented, or a high academic achiever? b Can you tell me what it's like being gifted/talented/a high academic achiever in your school? c Is it similar or different to your experiences outside school?	10. What forms of social media do you use and how often? a What kinds of sites do you like best? b What attracts you to them? c Why don't you use the other sites or apps?
	2. What are the opportunities and challenges of this experience? a What advantages does being identified as gifted and talented give you? i. . . . at school? ii. . . . outside school? b Does it have any drawbacks?	11. What do you spend the most time doing on social media? 12. Describe your experiences of using social media. a What are the best things about it? b What are the worst things about it? c Can you remember any online experiences that really stand out to you? d What is it about these that have made an impression on you?
	3. What kinds of things or people have helped you develop your gifts and talents? a What hinders you in developing your gifts and talents?	13. What influences the choices you make online? 14. What do you see are the opportunities and challenges of using social media? 15. What do you like about using social media? What don't you like about it?
	4. I am interested in the concept of empowerment. What do you think that means? a What empowers you as a gifted and talented girl? b What would the opposite, disempowerment, mean to you? c What disempowers you as a gifted and talented girl?	16. Has your social media use been affected by your identification as a gifted or talented student, or high academic achiever (and vice versa)? If so, how? 17. Are you a member of any communities? If so, which ones? Why did you join? 18. Have you found any sites or do you know of any about gifted and talented or smart or high achieving girls? a If yes, what do you think of them? b What is useful to you? c What kinds of discussions happen on them? d Are you learning or developing your gifts and talents through social media? If so, how?
Perspectives on	5. Where do you feel most empowered or free to express your gifts and talents? a How and where are your gifts and talents celebrated? b How often does this happen? c Can you describe a time when you felt really good about being gifted and talented?	19. Have you noticed any social media posts/sites/pages that relate to female, high school student achievement/success/giftedness/talent? Describe them. 20. Do you think social media is a tool/space for empowerment for you? Why or why not? 21. Does this empowerment relate to your specific gifts and talents, or your identity as a gifted and talented young woman?
	6. Have you ever tried to hide your gifts and talents? Can you tell me more about this?	
	7. Has anyone ever said anything negative about your gifts and talents? Can you tell me more about this? What did they say? How did they act? How common is this kind of reaction?	
	8. How do you feel culture (school, peer, pop, societal) supports the development of your gifts and talents? Can you give examples?	
	9. Can you explain what you think are reasons for some smart girls succeeding and others not?	

The third mode of inquiry was the dialogue circle, a term that is similar to the terms *focus group*, *group interviews*, and *group discussions*, which are more commonly used methods [73–75]. This was a suitable mode because the concept of “dialogue” addressed critical-constructivist research aims to ensure that multiple voices and interactions between the participants contributed to the construction of meaning [75]. Madriz [75] places group-based modes of inquiry “within the context of collective testimonies and group resistance narratives” (p. 836), and for research with women, for whom the supposedly simple act of conversing about taken-for-granted details of their lives can be both validating and empowering. One face-to-face dialogue circle involving three participants was conducted

and recorded using a digital voice recorder. The recordings were then transcribed. Table 3 below outlines the discussion questions of the dialogue circle.

The study was granted approval through the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. The required protocol was followed to ensure the research design met the university's ethical requirements for research involving human participants, including ensuring participants had full information about the research aims, processes, risks, and benefits, what participation would look like for them, and that their consent to participate was voluntary without coercion or deception [73,76–79]. They were also informed about their right not to answer any question at any time during any research interaction (interview, dialogue circle, email), or to withdraw from the study itself before a given date. Any participation after the interview phase was also optional. Parental consent was not required as all participants were over 16 years of age.

The data were analysed and interpreted using a modified version of Braun and Clarke's [80] thematic analysis process, a way of undertaking analysis with methodological robustness. The process begins with ideas, moves to codes, and finally to themes. It is described as modified because aspects from collective story writing-as-analysis and Bourdieusian-inspired analysis were pieced together to form the analytical framework for this study. The information on thematic analysis was predominantly drawn from Braun and Clarke's articles [81,82]. The six steps of thematic analysis were initiated by the first author (phase one) and reviewed by the second and third authors (phases two onwards). These steps are outlined below.

Phase one requires researchers to familiarise themselves with the data. In this study, the first author immersed herself in the transcripts and audio recordings of the interviews and the dialogue circle and created a mindmap of initial ideas. In the second phase, codes were generated from the transcripts both inductively (coding without a pre-existing frame) and deductively (analyst-driven with pre-determined codes related to Bourdieusian concepts). After coding, the third phase involved searching for themes, followed by the fourth phase where these themes were reviewed, and an initial conceptual map was created to reflect the themes emerging from the fourth phase. In the fifth phase, the themes were defined further and named. During this phase, we were able to "distinguish between the structures of a theoretical social space and the evidence provided for those structures through empirical analysis" [83] (p. 248). This phase also involved interpreting the semantic themes through the lens of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts. The final phase involved writing up the results, which will be discussed in the next section to illustrate the value of engaging with Bourdieu's sociological concepts.

There are several ways in which qualitative research work is deemed to be credible [78]. This is termed validity in quantitative work, and authenticity, trustworthiness, or rigour in qualitative work. Braun and Clarke [80] affirm the need to engage in rigorous thematic analysis as this can yield trustworthy and insightful findings. Trustworthiness (or rigour) in qualitative research can be evaluated based on the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Table 4 below shows how rigour is ensured at each phase of Braun and Clarke's [80] thematic analysis process.

Table 3. Dialogue circle guide.

1	My Intro	Thank participants Explain process thus far Explain confidentiality and privacy
2	Student intros Initial response	Participants to introduce themselves briefly (what courses they are doing, interests, hobbies) What was your favourite story? Why? What about this story spoke to you? Ask about each specific story . . .
3	Performing School Gifted to Serve Found Online	-What do you think are the main ideas (about giftedness, social media) in this story? -What do you think of the main character in this story? -Which parts of this story resonate with you the most? -What is most believable? -What is confusing/improbable? -How would you change this to improve it?
4	I Can't Stop The next step	Are there any stories or experiences missing? Either your own or others you may know? Discuss Bourdieu's overall premise and key terms of habitus, field, and cultural capital. How can we apply the above ideas to our collective stories?
5	Bourdieu	What implications do these ideas have on how we view giftedness/high achievement? What implications do these ideas have on how we view how girls use social media? How do you feel habitus, field and cultural capital fit or don't fit with your experience of the world as a gifted girl and social media user? How do you think habitus, field, and cultural capital are demonstrated in the collective stories? Or not demonstrated?
6	Themes	List the themes they came up with in Section 3 and add any extra themes from overall interview analysis. Are there any of this list of themes that you connect with especially well or want to respond to/discuss? How do the above Bourdieusian thinking tools relate to the themes that have emerged?
7	Other possibilities	Looking back on your experiences at high school, how have they changed or remained the same now that you have the value of retrospect?

Table 4. Ensuring rigour through the thematic analysis process.

Phases of Thematic Analysis	Means of Establishing Trustworthiness	What I Did
Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with your data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolong engagement with data • Triangulate theoretical and reflective thoughts • Document thoughts about potential codes/themes • Store raw data in well-organised archives • Keep records of all data field notes, transcripts, and reflexive journals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several years. • Multiple listenings/readings of recordings and transcripts. • Raw data organised in cloud-based and hard-drive storage archives. • Notes taken on hard copies of transcripts. • Initial list of themes and codes created. • Collective stories written.
Phase 2: Generating initial codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer debriefing • Researcher triangulation • Reflexive journaling • Using a coding framework • Audit trail of code generation • Documentation of all team and peer debriefings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debriefed with second and third authors. • Reflexive journaling. • Audit trail of code generation. • Documentation of all supervision meetings. • Voice recordings of all supervision meetings. • Hard copies of written annotations on transcripts kept and filed. • Excel spreadsheet of codes and themes created.
Phase 3: Searching for themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher triangulation • Diagramming to make sense of theme connections • Keep detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued discussion with second and third authors (recorded). • Reflexive journal showing theme development. • Document of themes and sub-themes created.
Phase 4: Reviewing themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher triangulation • Themes and subthemes vetted by team members • Test for referential adequacy by returning to raw data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themes and subthemes discussed with second and third authors. • Re-read transcripts to test for referential adequacy. • Thematic map created • Further annotations written on transcripts.
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher triangulation • Peer debriefing • Team consensus on themes • Documentation of team meetings • Documentation of theme naming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme development and narrative arc discussed with second and third authors. • Changes attended to. • Continued development of thematic maps. • Documentation of meetings. • Commenced second iteration of collective stories.
Phase 6: Producing the report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member checking • Peer debriefing • Describing process of coding and analysis • Thick descriptions of context • Description of audit trail • Report on reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full results written (80,000+ words). • Recorded discussions with second and third authors. • Results synthesised into three empirical findings chapters. • Methodology chapter written outlining research choices and process.

4. Findings

The results of this study highlighted three broad thematic categories related to the interplay between the psychological and sociological. These themes are identity and belonging, expectations and pressure, and motivation and empowerment. Each of these themes demonstrates how gifted and talented girls' external/social fields influence their internal/psychological worlds. Thus, Bourdieu's theoretical concepts offer the coherence needed to engage meaningfully with the data to elucidate the dialectical nature of their experiences. It is important to acknowledge that the diversity of experiences has not been captured fully in this specific article due to word limit constraints, even though Bourdieu's

concepts lend themselves to understanding the complex and the intersectional nuances of lived experience.

The results from the first theme, identity and belonging, demonstrated how giftedness and talent occupied a marginalised position in gifted and talented girls' sociocultural fields as evidenced through popular culture and its negative associations with nerd status [55,56], and through New Zealand's tall poppy culture, which denounces outward displays of pride in one's intellectual successes [84,85]. As a result of such structural expectations, most participants adjusted their practices to distance themselves from the gifted and the talented label. For example, all the participants exercised academic modesty, similar to Marina's experience when it came to celebrating her high achievement: "I feel like I have to hide how proud I am". Eleven participants described practices that showed how they downplayed their abilities. Carly, for example, stated, "If it was maths class and the teacher asks us a question and . . . it's a moderate question . . . I would tend to shrink back". Because of the negative connotations associated with essentialist conceptions of giftedness and talent [5], participants aligned themselves strongly with dispositional conceptions of academic identity; that is, they preferred to focus on what they could do (their practices) versus who they were (innate intelligence). Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of doxa and field assist in developing a deeper understanding of how these structures influence the processes of socialisation, whilst habitus explains the dispositional nature of identity development.

The second theme was expectations and pressure. Bourdieu's concept of capital was useful in interpreting the ways in which gifted and talented girls perceived what was of value for them, and thus what was expected of them, in their social worlds. The results propose heteronormative feminine, white-centred beauty, and popularity as valued capitals in the girls' social fields, affirming research on gifted and talented or successful girls [25,46,55]. Beauty and popularity were perceived as capitals that could offset the negativity associated with gifted and talented labels and their subsequent marginal social positioning within school fields. Jem explained, "I think regardless . . . if you are ugly, you are not going to get the same claim and praise than if you were pretty. That is just one of those things where society has kind of screwed up with that". However, beauty also added extra pressure to gifted and talented girls' complex identity constructions. Meritocratic doxa contributed to the perpetuation of busyness as an ideal practice concomitant with idealised notions of feminine beauty. All participants were involved in multiple extra-curricular activities, with more than half of them involved in six or more activities. This appeared to be an internalised expectation to be well-rounded. For example, Audrey commented, "At our school, they push you to try and stay involved and make yourselves . . . help the school and help the people around you". On the other hand, Carly felt it was her family that encouraged her to "do lots of things" and "to have a well-rounded lifestyle, rather than just focusing solely on studying". Whilst twelve of the participants explicitly relished in such a lifestyle, the pressure of being busy was reflected in the stories shared by other participants. For example, Jem shared, "sometimes I can't sleep because I do this, this and this", which led to other health problems such as "getting stress rashes all over my body". The continuous busyness, pressure, and high academic standards became a core component of gifted and talented practices.

Those participants who were excluded from either beauty or popularity capital by virtue of their physical appearance displayed a greater critical consciousness as a result of being "a fish out of water" within their sociocultural field, which preferred heteronormative, white, middle-class femininity and successful girlhood. This feeling of being "a fish out of water" is described by Bourdieu's notion of habitus, in particular a *habitus clivé*, or a habitus divided within itself. On the other hand, participants whose physical appearance and dispositional practices were congruent with idealised norms of their social fields did not explicitly recognise these norms in themselves but instead appeared to embody the doxa. The combination of beauty as the ideal capital, popularity as validation of identity, and busyness as the default practice created a pressure-cooker lifestyle for gifted and talented

girls whose varying identity constructions had them juggling competing tensions [16,19]. Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of capital, habitus, and doxa assist in explaining these tensions in an integrated manner.

In the final theme, motivation and empowerment, Bourdieu's concept of habitus is extended further through the theorisation of an empowered gifted and talented girl habitus. In this theme, participants' ideas about empowerment mirrored the focus on dispositional practices discussed earlier, as they believed empowerment was related to variables over which they felt they had direct control, such as mindset and actions. Tia, for example, explained that empowerment was "drawing on your own strengths and using them to the best of your ability." The findings of this study highlighted how the successful girl identity was a white, middle-class construction based on embodied practices of busyness, involvement in multiple extra-curricular activities, and white-centred notions of beauty, alongside high achievement. Further to this, "girl power" as a middle-class form of female empowerment discourse, was accessed and internalised by all of the participants, despite their varying socioeconomic backgrounds [40,86] as evidenced by the white-centred examples of female success cited by many of the study's participants (e.g., Taylor Swift, Sheryl Sandberg, Emma Watson), and their subsequent ways of being mirroring the rhetoric from these role models. Eleven participants dismissed and side-lined collective feminist discourses, which reflects the ways that girl power rhetoric is currently located against the underlying postfeminist logic of the sociocultural field [24,40]. For example, Jem believed that "The ball is already rolling, so you don't need to keep the emphasis on it, because I think there are also other problems with inequality, and the sexes are becoming more equal. So we need to focus on other things now". However, these 11 participants had conflicting and complex ideas about girl power and empowerment due to lived experiences of sexism in their own social fields, which reflected inherent structural gender inequalities:

Society is saying, "You go girls! . . . You do what you want to do. You go to uni. You get your study. You do whatever else it is that you want to do. But then marry, have kids and stay at home" is what I sometimes feel, and like an example that my dad often uses is that he is sending me to Kōwhai School to get that empowerment, go out and do that, but then . . . permission slips would go home expecting the mothers to be in for a school trip next Wednesday and not be at work.

(Katrina)

The structuring principles of the sociocultural field were embodied and habituated by the participants through what we theorise as an empowered gifted and talented girl habitus. This habitus is comprised of three psychological domains: dispositions, mindsets, and motivations, which were simultaneously structured by the participants' social fields and thus reflected neoliberal, postfeminist, meritocratic discourse. The integration of the psychological and sociological is actualised through our theorisation of Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Participants' reflexivity also contributed to their desires to change structural conditions that limit women, particularly for eight of the participants who inhabited intersectional spaces. The empowered gifted and talented girl habitus demonstrated participants' attempts to reconcile structurally-reproductive agency (empowerment that merely reproduces the logic of the field, allowing young women to access forms of capital that support their individual success within their social fields) and structurally-transformative agency (empowerment that challenges field doxa and transforms the logic of the field, supporting the collective success of young women who occupy diverse personal social locations). Regardless of background, the majority of the participants had desires for a structurally transformative agency but because their practices were so aligned to a structurally reproductive agency, this became *sens pratique*, or their practical sense.

5. Conclusions

After more than a century of studies dedicated to understanding the experiences and needs of the gifted and talented, the field is expanding to include more sociocultural approaches and conceptions of giftedness and talent but rarely engages meaningfully with

sociological theories. This article addresses the surprising absence of Pierre Bourdieu's contribution to social theory despite his significant impact on the field of education more broadly. Through this study, we have established that the subfield of gifted and talented girls is particularly suitable for sociological engagement due to the influences of the external (societal and social) environment on the girls' internal (emotional) worlds.

This article demonstrates how Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, field, and doxa can offer a deeper, more integrated way of understanding the internal and external lived experiences of this group of teenagers. By using Bourdieu's theoretical concepts in empirical research, we are able to conclude that the gifted and talented girls in this study tended to embody dispositional forms of identity in order to mitigate the negative social capital associated with the gifted and talented identity, yet still access the cultural capital inherent in high academic success. Bourdieu's concepts also lead to the identification of a hierarchy of capitals perceived by the study's participants as important for their peer group. These capitals (beauty and popularity), along with the habituated practice of busyness, are reflective of the girls' social field doxa, which reflect the sex-role stereotyping identified in the girlhood studies research. The Bourdieusian concept of habitus allows us to theorise a specific gifted and talented girl habitus, which highlights the girls' habituation of neoliberal and postfeminist field doxa that encourages individual empowerment through the narrative of meritocratic success and the self-as-project.

These concepts demonstrate the ways in which a Bourdieusian approach to research offers deeper theoretical framing and new understandings of a previously researched population group. The findings point to the relevance of engaging more intentionally with theories and approaches outside the more conventional educational psychology paradigm most commonly associated with gifted and talented research. The study also offers the opportunity for further research. For example, Bourdieu's concept of habitus lends itself to longitudinal research that follows the development of individuals' habitus over a lifespan. Whilst this current study captures the lived experiences of gifted and talented girls in their adolescent years, following their trajectories over key junctures in their lives, such as their transitions to further study or employment, could offer another layer of understanding of how structural influences impact subjective experiences.

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