

Introduction

Girls' Studies

What's New?

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If you think you know it, there's a problem. If you know you're learning it, that's where it's at.

—Sears (2010)

This is a good time to work in the field of girls' studies. One cannot help but notice the rapid growth and development of the field. Many new books have come out in the last decade about all aspects of girls' lives. Most centrally, these books have addressed: the impact of popular media and advertising on girls' body image and self-esteem; the psychology of girls' adolescent and developing sexuality; teenage pregnancy; girls' equity in education; the impact of child and sexual abuse on girls; and different standards of living, rites of passage, and legal constraints facing girls around the globe. There exists a book about girls' studies called *Girls Studies* written by Elline Lipkin, which examines historical events and questions that have shaped and that continue to shape girls' studies as a legitimate and provocative academic and activist enterprise. There is also a peer-reviewed journal called *Girlhood Studies*, which provides a forum for the critical discussion of girlhood from a variety of disciplinary

perspectives, and for the dissemination of current research and reflections on girls' lives.

It was not always this way. Girls' studies is considered by some to be a relatively new discipline, even though it has actually been around for awhile. There was scholarship focusing on girls before the actual term *girls' studies* was coined. Early studies date back as far as the mid-1800s. Interdisciplinary in nature, girls' studies is an outgrowth of the work of scholars working in the fields of "Youth and Cultural Studies," anthropology, sociology, history, psychology, and literary criticism. Early studies of girlhood have helped to provide the field with its current structure and foundation. Later studies have contributed greatly to this foundation.

Women's studies produced research on girls during the 1980s, but primarily as a means to better understand womanhood, rather than making girls the center of those investigations. It was posited then that a deeper understanding of the lives of girls had the potential to actively change the women these girls would eventually become. There was never, however, the type of synergy and connection between the two disciplines that many believed would naturally develop. This left burgeoning girls studies scholars longing for a field of their own. There are important connections worth noting though.

The 1990s ushered in one of the most fervent periods in the development of girls' studies. This era is characterized by studies and activist work done on behalf of girls' educational equality and their psychosocial development. It is also an era that was highly influenced by women's studies activists and scholars, whose impact can still be felt in the field today. Landmark studies (i.e., Brown and Gilligan, 1993; Sadkar and Sadkar, 1995; Orenstein, 1995; and AAUW, 1995) were produced during the 1990s. They succeeded in capturing the general public's attention, and in educating the public on matters important to achieving equity for girls in education. They also captured the imaginations of a generation of burgeoning girls studies scholars, who would become the leaders of this newly defined area of study.

Feminist frameworks offered critical lenses for girls studies scholars, and before too long, those in the field began to critique the discipline, utilizing critical feminist frameworks, and charged that too much of girls studies scholarship, either subsumed, silenced, and/or marginalized the lives and experiences of girls from diverse cultural, racial, and socio-economic backgrounds. In many of the early cultural or youth studies scholarship, girls occupied the position of "being" in contrast to male experiences. This was not *explicitly feminist scholarship* that sought to understand the ways in which girls' experiences might differ significant-

ly from boys. Studies were often cited as lacking a *contextual* approach, wherein the development and impact of gender identity was studied in specific contexts, from different standpoints, and through the lens of the various power- relationships that girls commonly find themselves in as they move through their lives. While some studies attempted to use a critical lens (e.g., looking at poor girls or girls of color), few of these studies were what feminists now call *intersectional*. Intersectionality is the study of the intersections that exist between forms or systems of oppression, domination or discrimination. The Intersectional Frame in Feminist research asserts that how we define the categories of “us” and “them” is based upon many factors (including race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion and nationality), and that these factors must be considered and cannot be studied in isolation. It is significant, for example, that girls living in poverty are also frequently girls of color. Intersectionality implores us to investigate and to analyze such intersections. It also taught us that patterns of privilege and oppression are constantly being rewoven, and that girls studies scholarship must reflect girls’ social, cultural and political realities.

It became increasingly clear that girls studies needed a distinct research, political and pedagogical base, separate and apart from even women’s studies, although the two share a commitment to the politicization of knowledge, and its direct link to activism. Soon, activism was recognized as being the heart of girls studies, and as a key factor that distinguishes girls studies from gender and other disciplines of study about girls and boys.

Girls Studies did not walk into the Academy in the same way that women’s studies did. Girls studies’ development as a field took place over a much longer period of time, and its scholarship was not always political. Women’s Studies entered the dance on the arm of the women’s movement in the 1970s. Working alongside feminist activists, women’s studies scholars immediately began to critique research and methodologies that worked to separate the personal from the political, to claim “universal truths (about men and women)” and to approach knowledge, experience, and “identity” as something that is not stagnant and decontextualized. There is, however, a core of girls studies scholars and scholarship that will always be influenced by women’s studies and feminist activists. Understanding the impact of key women’s issues such as domestic abuse, workplace discrimination, or the feminization of poverty did not necessarily enlighten us about how *girls* experienced these issues, however, it provided contemporary girls studies scholars with feminist frameworks, methodologies, and models of activism from which they could begin to develop girls’ studies as its own distinct discipline and area of study.

Central to the field of girls' studies are the issues of *voice and agency*. During the 1990s, it became apparent to many scholars that very little research on girls *included girls' own voices*.

This was an important moment in the culture, as it represented a shift in social science research. In the past, the experiences of girls were often subsumed by those of boys. Also, when studies were conducted about girls, they were routinely objectified by researchers, and reports about them rarely provided their perspectives, or included their voices. There were legitimate concerns about girls self-esteem and development connected to voice as well, resulting from a series of studies about girls and adolescents (American Association of University Women (1991); Brown, L. M. & Gilligan, C. (1992); Orenstein, P. (1995); and Phiper, M. (1994). It was revealed that because girls' voices were trivialized by much of society, most learn at early ages to censor, and to silence themselves. Formal interviews of girls would often produce resistant and rehearsed responses that hid their truths from researchers. Brown & Gilligan were the first to suggest in *Meeting at the Crossroads* (1992), that the voices of girls needed to be embedded in the larger context and practice of relationships. They raised the question, "Just because girls are talking to us, does it mean we know how to listen? As a result, they created a listening guide for researchers investigating girls, designed to create a more collaborative and relational method of data collection that broke with more traditional, hierarchical divisions, and placed matters of voice and agency center-stage. This changed the way that girls studies scholars would think about and conduct research.

The issue of voice was dominant in early studies about girls gender inequality in education as well. AAUW (1994, 1991) & Sadkar, M. (1994) conducted extensive studies that revealed gender inequities in American schooling. They reported that teachers more often called on boys, provided them with academic feedback, and more often encouraged boys to take advanced math and science courses, while discouraging girls to do the same, regardless of girls' academic performance. According to these studies, girls enter kindergarten on equal footing with boys in terms of academic ability and self-esteem, however, by the time that they graduate high school, many girls are found to have lost ground academically, and to experience a tremendous loss in academic and personal self-esteem.

While these developments were taking place in the Academy, teen girls started their own "Voice Movement." The girls' zines movement burst on the scene in the 1990s. An age-old form of self-publishing that Piepmeier (2011) connects to a more than 150-year-old feminist "tradition of informal publishing, has been credited with inspiring feminists of

the 1990s to embrace self-publishing as a space for girls and women to comment on mainstream culture and also to construct community and solidarity.” Adopting the practice of second-wave feminists of the 1960s and ’70s women’s health movement, who utilized fliers and pamphlets, mimeograph machines, and other low-cost media vehicles of their era to transform the world of female sexuality, and to produce such classic manuals as *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, third-wave feminists produced the 1993 issue of *Riot Grrrl*. This publication reignited the feminist legacy of early grrrl zines, gave voice to the thoughts and desires of teen girls, and in the process provided them with critical agency. It was asserted that a reason for this was that girls’ voices were muted and trivialized in much of society, and that girls learned from a young age to censor and, in many cases, silence their own voices. This understandably was believed to be the cause of huge problems in girls’ *self-esteem* development (e.g., some girls did not think their opinions would be respected and/or taken seriously), *leadership* (e.g., girls often conceded leadership and power to their male counterparts), and *relationships* (e.g., girls often played a more passive role in relationships—not just with males, but all authority figures).

We chose chapters for this book that promote dialogue about both the methodology and content in girls’ studies, that raise critical questions about how to listen to and interpret girls’ voices, and that examine how to use girls’ studies research to promote the interests of girls themselves. Some of the issues raised in the text are reflective of difficult dialogues going on among girls’ studies, practitioners and scholars regarding the evolution and future direction of the field. They also bring to the forefront, the challenges that those in girls’ studies must address as the field continues to evolve.

Some of the questions raised and addressed in this text include: *How do we research and understand the psychology of girlhood, without creating a “universal girl?” Likewise, if we reject the category of “girl,” do we risk losing the connection and narrative thread that underlies and validates girls’ studies? How does an intersectional perspective on girls change the way we approach our work in girls’ studies? In what ways is gender contextual and performative? In what ways have researchers coopted the Intersectional model for an agenda other than intended, particularly as it relates to the lens of race? What are the motivations and implications of such disruption?*

Difficult Dialogues About Twenty-First Century Girls is written from a particular ideological stance, which is articulated below:

- Girls’ studies must always be connected to the sociological reality of girls lives, rather than an idealized or stereotypical notion of girlhood.

- While our ultimate goal is to expand opportunities for girls, we understand that girls *already have agency*. We are not “saving them,” speaking for them, or deciding what is best for them. (We may “think we know it,” but we’re *always* still learning it.)
- Research about girls *should benefit girls*, and should respect and honor the diverse communities they come from, as well as the communities they may themselves be building.
- Research about girls should, whenever possible, include girls’ voices and many other forms of self-expression. There is no substitute for girls’ own understanding of their own experiences. Moreover, we need to do more than “listen” to girls, we have to reflect on what we are paying attention to and what we are filtering out. Sometimes we have to have difficult dialogues in order to progress.
- Research in girls studies should always be intersectional. This means paying attention to earned and unearned privileges, as well as issues surrounding power, cultural capital, and social capital.
- Gender is constructed. This does not mean that we can’t address real biological and physiological differences between and among girls and boys, or that socialization is not a deeply gendered project. It does mean, however, that as we go deeper into the twenty-first century we have to be aware of the fact that not all women experienced a “girlhood.”
- Difficult dialogues that emerge in girls studies are dialogues that illuminate new ways of looking and thinking about girls, and are valuable as they create opportunities for self-reflection, discussion, and ultimately praxis.

Chapter Outlines

This book is divided into two parts: “New Ways of Knowing About Girls” and “Girl Power Redefined.” Each consists of essays and studies that raise important questions about the field and about girlhood. “New Ways of Knowing About Girls” highlights new methodologies for studying girls, especially those that bring girls’ voices more authentically into the pro-

cess and helps researchers to create sustained and trusted relationships with girls. The chapters in the second section, “Girl Power Redefined,” focus more on what we are learning about the best ways to promote girls’ strength and resilience through girls’ programs and evaluation studies, and how new knowledge can broaden our perspectives and inform our practice. In both cases, chapters were chosen to introduce new voices and theories, to showcase new research and program designs, to provoke the reader to rethink long-held assumptions about the field, and to discover new possibilities for their work. As our opening quote signals, it’s not about knowing, it’s about learning.

In chapter 1, “Disrupting Invisibility: Scholarship and Policy Supporting African American Girls’ Education,” Dr. Donna Johnson focuses on the historical underrepresentation of scholarship, policy, and best education practices pertaining to African American females at pre-K–12 education levels, particularly in this era of educational equity. Johnson utilizes a multicultural education framework, and juxtaposes common assumptions about Black girls’ schooling experiences against crippling statistics about their overall lack of academic achievement to dispel common beliefs about Black girls’ educational standing, which is generally perceived to be higher than it actually is. Johnson makes a strong argument that many people do not know the actual state of Black girls’ education well at all. In Chapter 1, Johnson makes a passionate plea for action to education researchers, policy-makers and practitioners. She also makes a strong argument that, “A unique opportunity exists within girls’ studies to have the voices of African American girls finally heard, to have them to serve as co-participants in the creation of knowledge about their identities and experiences, and to engage them in the process of their own empowerment, rather than continuing to treat them as subjects, ghosts, or as second-class citizens.” Johnson calls for a more “focused and fervent scholarship agenda,” which, among other things, provides an up-to-date synthesis of existing research on African American girls’ education; highlights a plethora of empirical and critical studies that stand up to rigorous review; and examines ways to directly link scholarship on Black girls’ education with their needs on the ground.

In chapter 2, “Girl Uninterrupted: Using Interactive Voice Diaries as a New Girls’ Studies Research Method,” Dana Edell laments: “During the years I have spent interviewing teenage girls, I paid close and particular attention to the ways that my personal history with each girl was a loudly silent part of each interaction.” By this, Edell means that girls often control their responses to her questions based on issues of trust, body language, and perceived approval. Edell eventually created a methodology, which, in

her words, “offers researchers specific tools to invite girls as participants and active agents in the research process, borrows from interviewing and personal journaling methods, and puts girls in control of their own voices, while in intimate partnership with the researcher.” Edell tapes interview questions and prompts for girls, to which they can then respond in their own time and space, including asking questions of their own. When the girls return the tapes with their input, Edell listens to the tapes and continues the “conversation.” Notes Edell: “By presenting each girl with a new tape just for her, she sees that I have really listened to her voice, taking it seriously and responding in detail.” According to Edell, a two-hour “interview” might last three to four weeks, and while Edell admits that such a process does not ensure authenticity, she concludes that “As we accept and respect that girls’ actual physical voices are core to their knowledge and identities, new research methodologies must match this insight. Through rigorously and systematically documenting and analyzing the ways in which girls speak their feelings, experiences, and stories, we welcome part of the future of girls’ studies research.”

In chapter 3, “It Means that I Am Knowledge’: *GirlPAR* as an Emergent Methodology,” Laura Boutwell and Faduma Guhad begin by posing the question: “Can research by and with youth be relational, collaborative, activist, and nonhierarchical?” Boutwell and Guhad seek to interrupt discursive and structural barriers in traditional subject-object research, ultimately merging scholarship with activism and creating something they call “relational activism.” Through the use of participatory action research with African and Afro-Caribbean young girls and women, Boutwell and Guhad help to identify research questions, design methodology, conduct collaborative research, and create interactive relationships that allow them to reflect on issues of positionality and power, as well as to create avenues of future inquiry. Moreover, Boutwell and Guhad seek to privilege girls’ indigenous knowledge and to ensure that the research is more than authentic, but actually *beneficial* to the girls involved. They note that “Forming nonhierarchical, mutually supportive relationships with girls must be an embodied practice, not a spoken ideal.” For Boutwell, this meant that “I wrestled with numerous of questions: How could I build meaningful, authentic, reciprocal relationships, knowing I had a research agenda? How would I hold and honor Imani researchers’ stories as more than mere bits of interview data?” Ultimately, the authors conclude that creating spaces for girls to say what they want to say “their way” is a form of embodied activism.

In Chapter 4, “‘Talking Out of School’: Crossing and Extending Borders with Collaborative Research in Girls’ Studies, Women’s Studies, and

Teacher Education,” Sheila Hassell Hughes and Carolyn S. Ridenour’s chapter provides a rare look at the interactions of practitioner research, activism, and program design—working in support of girl’s empowerment. Their research project, titled *Voices of Girls in Urban Schools (VOGUS)*, had a dual goal of better understanding the experiences of girls in urban Ohio schools and of using the findings to improve teacher education and women’s and gender studies curricula at their university. According to Hughes and Ridenour: “We knew that beyond our starting point—which began with the question, ‘What does it mean to be a girl in Dayton city schools?’—our questions needed to emerge from an open-ended ethnographic research process.” She and her team quickly realized that data needed to emerge from established relationships with the girls in their study, who were given an “open-ended invitation to exploration.” The authors note:

the title for this piece, ‘talking out of school,’ suggests the way our research privileges the voices of girls in and out of school—taking seriously what they have to tell (tell of and tell on) as more than mere ‘tattle’ or ‘prattle’—and also points to the sense in which we as scholars have both stepped out of our comfort zones and defined spheres of academic ‘competence’ and ‘control’ with this project.

The authors underscore that this kind of research process is significantly less predictable: “Clearly, given the evolving nature of our inquiry and our team process, our method was not in any way ‘tidy.’ It was, rather, a messy, collaborative, and perpetually unfolding work of discovery, conversation, and reconsideration.” One of the most significant findings to come out of their study is their humility to critique their own relationships, which meant learning to be more in sync with the girls’ own rhythms of speaking and reasons for silences. The authors further note:

Much of our team discussion, in the end, focused on how to gain access to girls’ voices—how to get them to talk to us about their lives—and how to listen and respond when we succeeded and when we failed. Sometimes it also meant acknowledging that listening may not be enough—or may, in fact, be so powerful as to feel too dangerous for a girl to handle. Learning when to talk and when to wait patiently; when to accept reticence and when to inquire further, is difficult and delicate work, and none of us mastered it in the process of our fieldwork.

The authors in this chapter provide a potent model for researching girls and uncovering new knowledge.

In chapter 5, “Stop Saving the Girl? Pedagogical Considerations for Transforming Girls’ Studies,” Katy Strzepek explores the impact of colonialism on girls’ studies methodology, particularly on the way that we come to understand and represent the experiences of girls across the globe. She encourages girls’ studies scholars to “unpack the agent/victim dichotomy” that she finds in many media images of transnational girlhood. In her teaching and research, Strzepek usually begins with a number of complex questions such as: How do different cultures define girlhood? How is the image of the downtrodden girl related to colonial and neocolonial policies? What do we mean by transnationalism? and How do race, class, gender, and history impact animosities and alliances between people from different nations and cultures? Strzepek also criticizes the “additive approach” to girls’ studies, where teachers and researchers “add some girls’ issues from various cultures—throw in race, class, gender, etc., and stir.” By contrast, Strzepek proposes an “integrative approach that considers the intersectionality of race, class, gender, sexuality, and colonial heritage,” and the ways that these intersections are sanctioned and strengthened. Strzepek explicitly expects her students to engage in research on the impact of systematic and structural oppression: “I will ask students to consider this further: is teaching girls to be more assertive all that is needed to stop violence against girls? What are the structural issues and government policies that must change to decrease violence?” Finally, Strzepek underscores that while we must create an activist agenda that does not try to “save the girl,” it still remains critically important for scholars of privilege to be engaged in and committed to social activism for those less privileged: “I do not want students to think that scholars who argue against protectionist language are negating the real problems girls face. . . . Violence against girls must be addressed, but in a way that will lead to systemic changes that impact whole communities.”

In chapter 6, “Beyond ‘Us’ Versus ‘Them’: Transnationalizing Girlhood Studies,” Shana L. Calixte examines her research to explore the ways in which the *Girl Guide* movement in Antigua, an organization formed to support girls’ development, served to shape the norms and values of young Caribbean women. Calixte argues that “the Girl Guides did not simply shape young girls; they produced a population of young women caught between subversive resistance to (post)colonialism and their nation’s move to independence.” As a result, it is imperative that

colonial girlhood be read as a time when young women were inducted into a project designed to produce a new Black bourgeoisie for independent Caribbean nations, and that centralized making young girls active capitalist-supporting consumers. Calixte emphasizes that transnational research on colonial girlhood needs to be understood within a much larger framework that includes Western nations and organizations that regularly interact with Caribbean nations, and the values they seek to impart to Caribbean nationals. In examining the ways that we transnationalize girls' studies, Calixte underscores "the need to link what happens 'over there' (i.e. outside of the Western world) to what happens 'over here.'" She further explains, "This is understood by deconstructing the idea that borders around countries are fixed, and that there are no seepages (of economic control, social and political policies, ideologies, etc.) outside of these fixed nation states."

In chapter 7, "High School Classrooms as Contested Sites of Future Feminist Power: Explicating Marginality Beyond Disadvantage into Power," Kerrita K. Mayfield disputes the assumption that girls who are quiet or unpopular in schools—often identified as marginalized—are "losers" with no personal power or cultural capital. By contrast, Mayfield presents marginality as a possible site of power where girls are free from restricting stereotypes and normative expectations of their gender. Schools reify perceptions about who is successful and unsuccessful at navigating the cultural currencies of social centrality, similar to other public institutions like popular media. Mayfield begins by calling attention to the way in which popularity is legitimated in school settings, including "where a learner is situated in the classroom hierarchy." Notes Mayfield: "[I]n any secondary classroom, there are multiple hierarchies in the classroom ecology at play in any point and time. There is a clear hierarchy in secondary schools around who is the central and peripheral focus of peer and teacher's attention in the classroom." Mayfield goes on to deconstruct these hierarchies using a self-designed rubric based on what she identifies as the three *Ps* of Power from the margins: "Position with peers; views on the Purpose of school; and Perspectives about peers' acceptance of normalized gender roles." In her research, Mayfield underscores that anyone can be marginalized despite power or privilege, while exploring the way that marginalization can also be a space for subversion. Mayfield concludes that "if we are to have and promote a new generation of feminists, educators need to understand and identify the unobvious worlds of girls to promote activist students' drives and to channel that energy into powerful, feminist, and socially conscious adults."

In chapter 8, “From Cyborgs to Cybergrrrls: Redefining ‘Girl Power’ Through Digital Literacy,” Leandra Preston-Sidler builds on longtime feminist critiques of sexist images in the media by exploring the ways in which a wide range of twenty-first-century technologies impact girls. Preston-Sidler rightly notes that girls are both users and targets of these technologies, yet rarely are they in the role of creator, which can be highly problematic as “young people with regular access to technology are often so enmeshed with media that their identities and relationships depend on it.” Preston-Sidler further notes that “convincing girls that they have the power to participate in the construction of the very images that tell them how to behave, and the ability to write code, build websites, and teach their friends HTML provides girls with agency to subvert and even re-create media and technology.” After establishing that “economics and conglomerate power structures largely control media sources but individuals shape media landscapes,” Preston-Sidler suggests that girls can use new technologies to create “safe spaces” of self-expression where they can share, shape, and navigate their identities without the physical constraints they often face in other relationships in their lives. Preston-Sidler argues for the importance of teaching girls “digital literacy” as early as possible, a process through which they can critically question the impact of new media and technologies, and also be a dominant force in shaping them. Preston-Sidler strongly believes that girls born into a digital culture should be learning the codes that can create and re-create that culture: “Girls talk back through media production and such activity affects not only girls, but media itself. It is not enough to simply engage girls in patriarchal spaces, we must empower girls to enter those spaces and own them.” Preston-Sidler concludes that, “Fostering girls’ interest and engagement with alternative media and making it available to local and global communities amplifies its possibilities. Cybergrrrls cross borders.”

In chapter 9, “‘Off Balance’: Talking About Girls’ Health in the Era of the ‘Obesity Epidemic,’” Marie Drews examines Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move!” campaign, designed to promote healthy bodies through greater awareness of diet and exercise. Drews argues that while the campaign is well intentioned, the initiative “promotes a model that treats girls’ bodies simply as sites for reform, instead of encouraging girls’ participation as viable partners in achieving their own embodied wellness, and fails to consider the potentially negative impact its numbers-oriented agenda can have on American girls’ body consciousness and self-esteem.” Drews thus explores the question: “How can communities encourage healthy living among girls

without reinforcing a climate of body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem?” She then considers the impact of the Health at Every Size (HAES) program, which uses contrasting strategies to “create a more accepting and empowering climate where girls can practice and discuss healthy living.” Drews concludes that reifying contemporary rhetoric that “ostracize[s] girls who do not fit normative body types” serves to “obstruct rather than encourage whole body health.” In this way, Drews makes a strong case for the idea that “girls’ health advocacy begins when we can learn to change our language.” Drews also addresses the issue of visible and invisible bodies, citing the work of Elspeth Probyn (2009), who likewise argues that when emphasis is placed only on images or visible bodies, “conversations about lived experiences in diverse bodies are stunted” (p. 115). The result is an overemphasis on what parents, doctors, and other adults in girls’ lives “see” happening to their bodies in contrast to what a “girl might be feeling herself—physically and psychologically—as she uses her body.”

In chapter 10, “‘Babies Havin’ Babies’: Examining Visual Representations of Teenage Pregnancy,” Candice J. Merritt examines historical images of teenage mothers. She argues that “the differential treatment based on race and class found in visual images construct girls of color as undeserving welfare subjects and White, middle-class girls as sympathetic victims.” Drawing on her own experiences as a mother at the age of thirteen, Merritt, who now teaches and mentors teen mothers, reflects on her initial impulse to distance herself from other teenage Black girls who were commonly conceived of as Welfare Queens (e.g., having babies so they could collect government funding). Merritt’s research is focused on three major questions: How has history created the notions of teenage pregnancy as a “Black” or “poor” phenomenon? How have both race and class informed the visual imagining of teenage mothers in the past? What have been the policy implications to these visual representations? She then deconstructs archetypal images of teenage mothers found in the *Time* magazine of the 1950s and 1960s, uncovering the often implicit ways in which these images prompted readers to form very different opinions of White, Black, and Latino girls with children. Issues of social class are inherently woven into each of the ideologies. Merritt refutes the idea that girls of color who become pregnant are lazy, an unnecessary drain on public funds, and a threat to the American ideal of a hard-working, two-parent nuclear family. The final section of her chapter focuses on social policies and laws implemented under prior administrations that still have import, and that hold girls of color and those from low income communities to a different set of

standards. This include the Personal Responsibility Work Opportunity and Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), both of which introduced stipulations and punitive policies to curb illegitimacy and welfare rolls. Although Merritt does not address present-day images and policies regarding teenage motherhood, her deconstruction of the recent past serves as a particularly important place to begin doing so.

In chapter 11, “‘At-Risk’ for Greatness: Girls Studies Programs and the Art of Growing Up,” Dr. Alice E. Ginsberg investigates a unique arts-based coming-of-age or rites of passage program for adolescent girls. The program is designed to help girls to learn about the world and themselves by reflecting on different global definitions of girlhood and womanhood, along with the traditions, rites, ceremonies, and relationships that mark important milestones in different cultures. Ginsberg evaluates the impact of program activities on the girls, who engage in different forms of creative writing (poetry), mask-making, and dance as the basis for group bonding, discussion, and identity development. Ginsberg notes that an outstanding program feature is that the girls help to design the program content and format. Each program is slightly different, and attempts are made to bring girls’ families into the process, as sources of knowledge, and to serve as the foundation for a supportive community that the girls can sustain and build upon. Unlike many other arts-focused programs, whether they are school or community based, learn that process is as important as product, and that self-expression need not necessarily always be verbal. The arts provide a new medium for adolescent girls to “voice” and document their experiences at a critical time in their lives. This chapter lends itself to an important goal of the book—to lift up and to examine exemplary girl-centered programs with a practitioner as well as a researcher lens.

The culminating chapter in this book is titled, “Standing on Shoulders Strong: A Conversation with First and Second-Generation American girls’ studies scholars.” This special chapter consists of a transcript of a conversation between first- and second-generation American girls’ studies scholars, activists, and practitioners about their views of the field and its future direction. Discussants also talk about their work, the thought leaders who inspire them, and young voices in the field that they admire. Readers are provided with a rare glimpse into the experiences and views of some of the field’s pioneers, leaders, and promising new voices.

Included in the conversation are moderator, Donna Johnson, along with Peggy Orenstein, Lyn Mikel Brown, Elline Lipkin, Alice Ginsberg,

Bianca Guzmán, Sheila Hassell-Hughes, and Stephanie Sears. Collectively, they represent a range of perspectives and work in the field, leading us to some critical questions as girls' studies evolves and continues to grow.