Introduction

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In this edition devoted to girlhood, readers will find a set of essays that show girls as others see them and as they sometimes see themselves. Through a variety of lenses and from a range of disciplines that include Women’s and Girls’ Studies, Film and Media, Education, Cultural Studies, Sociology, and History, these authors consider the sociocultural, sociopolitical and socioeconomic oversimplification of some of the issues of girlhood and provide a thoughtful critique of contemporary frameworks that on the surface appear to help girls but that in reality only confine and define them in new ways. The authors question pervasive notions of understanding girls through any one measure and then advocate for them through the unique circumstances of each situation.

The opening essay by Kera Lovell provides an important historic look at a generation of teen girls as feminists and as activists in their own right. With the help of adult women, these girls find a way to challenge oppressions and discriminatory practices meant to hold them in place.

Katie Clonan-Roy, Charlotte Jacobs, and Michael Nakkula build on what it means to challenge stereotypes by offering a model of development for girls of color that defies the deficit-oriented view so frequently offered us. By focusing on the value of resistance and resilience, they cast the girls in a positive light that amplifies who the girls are rather than diminishing them. Perspectives on this matter are rarely seen through the eyes of the girls themselves, so to hear what the girls have to say is especially compelling.

From Emily Bent and Heather Switzer’s outlining of problematic neoliberal narratives like *The Girl Effect* meant by the West to empower girls from “the rest”

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of the world to Emily Kate Chandler's consideration of normative femininity and gender entitlement as seen in Disney's successful television series entitled *Recess*, the authors of both essays argue that girls continue to be constituted and commodified in the name of good intention. Bent and Switzer expose how the normative construction of girlhood works against transnational girls, while Chandler problematizes representations of tomboyism in a postmodern world and suggests that performativity of gender might be viewed as a way to subvert femininities.

Rounding out the edition is a thought provoking piece by Pamela Bettis, Nicole Ferry, and Mary Roe concerning post-feminist discourses of what it means to be an "Alpha" girl and the limitations inherent in the prevailing definitions. Drawing on a new breed of girls who seem destined to have it all, the authors maintain that many girls, including those others might view as models of "Alpha", continue to struggle to rise above traditional and essentialist notions of what it means to be a girl.

All of the authors explore critical questions and examine concrete issues about girls in a variety of contexts that insist on an understanding of girlhood as something uniquely experienced that cannot be reduced or measured by any one set of criteria. They have given us much to think about in their explorations.

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