A Girl Can Do

Recognizing and Representing Girlhood

Edited by

Tiffany R. Isselhardt
Girl Museum

Women's Studies

VERNON PRESS

www.vernonpress.com

In the Americas:
Vernon Press
1000 N West Street, Suite 1200
Wilmington, Delaware, 19801
United States

In the rest of the world:
Vernon Press
C/Sancti Espiritu 17,
Malaga, 29006
Spain

Women's Studies

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022931209

ISBN: 978-1-64889-405-3

Also available: 978-1-64889-406-0 [Hardback, B&W]

Cover design by Vernon Press using elements designed by Freepik.

Table of contents

List of figures

Acknowledgements

This book was inspired by the "Remembering American Girlhood" panel held virtually during the National Council on Public History's annual meeting in 2020. Realizing that many public historians – and scholars, educators, and museum professionals – were working with girlhood, I saw the need to bring their insights together into the first volume dedicated to recognizing and interpreting girlhood within public spaces. My eternal thanks to the team at Vernon Press, who offered us this opportunity, as well as the panel members and attendees who demonstrated the growing interest in girl cultures and histories.

I also give eternal thanks to my editors, Melissa Hayden and Kathleen Weidmann, and the peer reviewers who dedicated their time to making this a coherent volume. I also thank each contributor – as well as the many who proposed chapters that could not be included in this volume – for continuing to work with and study girls' unique identities, cultures, and histories. It is your work that has informed my own, cultivating passion and activism on behalf of present and future girls everywhere. Thank you.

Finally, to my parents, Ron and Cathy Rhoades, thank you for always believing that I, a girl, could truly do anything – and helping me believe it, too.

Foreword

Ashley E. Remer

> "Little girls are cute and small only to adults. To one another they are not cute. They are life sized."— Margaret Atwood, *Cat's Eye*

Such a fitting quote to introduce this book: it upends assumptions that are tightly held by societies and institutions alike. With it, Margaret Atwood strikes at the core of this collection. Girls are life-size in their present moment. They are not women-in-waiting. Time spent as children—as *girls*—to adults seems fleeting and minor compared to the rest of their 'real' (adult) life. However, this assumption negates and suppresses the significance of the childhood years; years that contain multitudes of learning, challenges, and successes that literally and figuratively create their grown-up selves. Beyond just being a girl, processes beyond their control, like maturation and social changes, tend to overwhelm both their lives and the literature about them. Who they are in their girlhood, their experiences and inner lives are as significant as their achievements during what is commonly accepted as adulthood. The fullness of their potential as well as their capacity and capability to be deep and valuable members of society is not lost on them— just on adults. It is past time to acknowledge and embrace this so that girlhood can be a celebration, rather than a time to rush through as fast as possible.

I know this topic well. Beyond my own full and exciting girlhood, formative to the woman I have become, it has directly guided the path I have taken. In 2009, I founded Girl Museum[1], the first and only museum in the world to celebrate girls. In part, I started Girl Museum to honor this part of myself and all the girls that have ever lived. Since the start, we have been researching and exhibiting aspects of girlhood ranging from fine art to anthropology to contemporary social issues, with no rivals. While females make up half the planet, girls and their experiences are still not valued in any abundance. Over the last decade, Girl Museum has produced more than 40 exhibitions, as well as other types of projects and podcasts covering topics from girl surfers to girl witches, and girl gamers to girl activists. We have explored girls of impressionism, girl saints and illustrated girls. In 2011, I wrote an article 'Girl Museum: An International

[1] Girl Museum, www.girlmuseum.org, Accessed 1 February 2022.

Project' for *Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*.[2] This was the first time I saw girlhood celebrated in formal print, and it was thrilling. But it was not the last. More recently, I was fortunate to co-author a book with Tiffany Isselhardt, *Exploring American Girlhood through 50 Historic Treasures*.[3] This was our first time publishing a substantial work together about how girls have contributed to history, specifically American history. It is not enough to know that these girls lived, but that they were contributors to capital 'H' history.

Tiffany and I met in 2013 when she started an internship with Girl Museum to complete her MA in Public History. Right away, I knew that she had the passion, creativity, and dedication that would propel her to help transform this field. Her breadth of interest and depth of curiosity about the world of girls past and present gave me hope for the future of our work. The hope that it is possible to make a place for girls in both academia and in popular culture that isn't just about pathologizing, or sexualization, or commodification. Our first writing project together was a book chapter entitled 'Girl Museum: Using the Digital to Showcase Feminism in Cultural Heritage' for the first volume of *Feminism and Museums: Intervention, Disruption and Change*.[4] This began our journey as scholars of girlhood in museums and our respective fields, me in art history and Tiffany in public history. Despite the challenges already faced while establishing Girl Museum, it was our American girlhood book that showcased what we are up against in trying to expand the reach of girls' studies. The process of finding objects and historical sites, examining those spaces and places girls inhabited and affected, demonstrated to us that not only were the choices vast, but that we as historians, curators, and museum professionals could be doing a much better job recording, preserving, and protecting girls, let alone telling their stories. The interest in girls' lives is there, and the overall archive is growing, but slowly. This is part of Girl Museum's mission. It is not for us to record every girl, but to help encourage, support, and even prod others to do that work as well.

Girl Museum has been at the forefront of new methodologies and frameworks through which to see and examine girlhood. Pioneering a girl-centered approach to research and interpretation, Girl Museum offers opportunities for girls themselves, for their voices to be heard, and their history to be told. It is

---

[2] Ashley E. Remer, 'Girl Museum: An International Project' for the *Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol.3 No.2, March 2011.

[3] Ashley E. Remer & Tiffany R. Isselhardt, *Exploring American Girlhood through 50 Historic Treasures,* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2021.

[4] Ashley E. Remer & Tiffany Rhoades, 'Girl Museum: Using the Digital to Showcase Feminism in Cultural Heritage', *Feminism and Museums: Intervention, Disruption and Change*, MuseumsEtc Ltd in 2017.

enormously affirming as well as inspiring that Girl Museum has been able to provide possibilities for girls and young women to see themselves as participants in history and culture as well as the collectors, protectors, and interpreters of it. The more girls that are supported to go into history fields, the more progress and undoing of the status quo will occur. I do not take it lightly that Tiffany credits Girl Museum with changing her life. It is humbling and deeply satisfying to know that the work we have done has been so important to her and others. It is an honor to write this introduction. Not only for the reasons previously mentioned, but also because the essays she has compiled are genuinely interesting and informative about stories beyond the expected.

This book is needed because even after decades of work, girls' studies is still marginal and lacks integration into broader fields. In popular literature, there is *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls*, *Herstory*, *Wonder Women*, and of course *Bad Girls Throughout History: 100 Remarkable Women Who Changed the World*, which isn't about girls at all, but grown women being called girls. While these types of books serve a particular purpose for a general audience, often they address the same group of women and don't allow for deep dives or much nuance. There have been several academic volumes in the past 20 years that have collected and analyzed the histories of girls, *The Girls' History and Culture Reader* (two volumes), *Girlhood: A Global History*, and *Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills*, and *How Young Ladies became Girls*, to name a few. Yet the surface is merely being scratched. A single American Civil War battle site or French artist likely has more books written about them than the entirety of girls on this planet, which must be remedied. This is the first book of its kind to bring girls into the field of public history and interpretation. Its collection of essays showcases stories of girls and how to talk about them in public history and interpretation. As a result, it contributes to girls' studies and history as well. Echoing the words of Stephen Mintz that "children's history is an expansive field that should not be pigeonholed into narrow silos,"[5] so too is girls' studies. To my knowledge, there are no other books that focus on how to interpret girlhood for public audiences. The increasing volume of new and untold stories of girls and women of the past, both long ago and recent, has increased because of this growing understanding that only a limited version of history has been told.

Tiffany sets out to answer questions surrounding the girls themselves and why they haven't been welcomed into our public histories. What girls do is often taken for granted: the emotional support, the domestic contributions they're expected to make. These are standardized and normalized into

[5] Steven Mintz, “Children’s History Matters.” American Historical Review (October 2020): 1290.

complete invisibility. This book demonstrates that a myriad of voices and perspectives are required, showing that each girl is unique and adding her own history to all our histories. It is also a credit to the book to include a range of methodologies and frameworks through which to view these different stories. While the range of this volume is not a checklist of global regions, it is clear that was the intention. From start to finish, this book was produced during the COVID 19 global pandemic, so against the odds, these authors were able to produce the work that goes into this volume. Particularly important is the diversity of stories told despite these challenges. It is exciting to see the intersectional work people are doing, and they need to be given every opportunity to present and write about girls. Each essay contributes its own uniqueness as well as to the whole, speaking to audiences from a variety of academic and professional backgrounds. They are provocative and demonstrative for others doing similar work to take inspiration and ideas for their own practice.

What is fascinating is that girls' stories and consequently girls' studies have emerged as inherently activist. Girls often cannot help but speak up, and when they speak up for themselves and others, this presents as activism. But any kind of request for acknowledgment that challenges the status quo can be seen as agitation, even when it is such a blatant omission as the lack of girls in history books. Be that as it may, girls' work continues, all over the world, in whatever ways and methods it takes to get it done. This book, and hopefully future volumes, will help build up our knowledge about girls' lives because girls have always been doing—girls doing is not new—it is time to celebrate it.

Introduction: What can a girl do?

Tiffany R. Isselhardt
Girl Museum

> *Much of what we present as knowledge in collections and exhibitions is speculative – yet, when attached to material, physically evident, objects, it 'reads' as known, certain, authoritative.* – Gaby Porter[1]

In late 2012, I was seeking a museum internship to complete a Master of Arts in Public History. Having attended a rural university, I interned with a local Revolutionary War living history museum, but I needed a second internship to achieve the required credits. I went Google-searching for virtual internships to avoid the costs of commuting. This was pre-pandemic when virtual internships were few and far between. I stumbled upon Girl Museum – an entirely virtual museum, founded three years prior by art historian Ashley E. Remer, that offered what I needed.

Interning with Girl Museum changed my life. It was the first museum I encountered that presented itself as a workshop – not a shrine – and embraced the "active and creative production, the presentation and exchange of diverse viewpoints, and the dynamic (re)interpretation of collections and histories" that has since become a major part of museum methods.[2] My internship was not devoted solely to administrative or menial tasks. I became an active participant in researching, interpreting, and creating for the museum. My contributions were valued in a way I never expected so early in my career; however, even more meaningful was learning about a new field: girl studies. My history courses and books rarely mentioned childhood – and when they did, it was a shallow history that saw children as little more than *future* actors. What Girl Museum introduced me to reaffirmed later readings of Steven Mintz, who asserts that childhood is a vibrant, dynamic experience whose histories are intimately connected to themes now at the forefront of public history: social justice, intergenerational trauma, and intersectionality. As public historians embrace these themes, we can draw guidance from methods that Girl Museum

---

[1] Gaby Porter, "Seeing through Solidarity: a feminist perspective on museums," The Sociological Review (1996): 111.
[2] Porter, "Seeing through Solidarity," 114.

and girl studies embraced. As Mintz asserts, historians of childhood (and girlhood) "speak not only to other historians but to social scientists, legal scholars, policymakers, and others" who are involved in these issues while also embracing our subjects "not as objects or symbols but as independent beings".[3]

Defining 'girlhood'

Girl Studies is a relatively new field. Emerging in the 1980s, historians and scholars combined women's history and the history of childhood to focus exclusively on girls and girlhood. It is an interdisciplinary field, combining history with social issues, psychology, and public policy to see the work of historians as more than just research and interpretation. By studying girlhood, the field's pioneers sought to both *understand* girls' experiences while *positively impacting* girls today. For much of the 1980s and 1990s, the field focused on "bedroom culture" – "positioning girls in relation to the family but also encapsulating their culture as distinctly private."[4] Only in the last twenty years did girl studies expand beyond the home to truly embrace girls as a distinctive, independent population capable of both being influenced by and influencing society at large. With the emergence of postfeminism, girlhood studies now seeks to define both mainstream and alternative girl cultures. In so doing, scholars embrace intersectionality, realizing that girlhood is not a fixed or defined point but rather has multiple meanings based upon the sociopolitical definitions existing within a particular time and place. As Catherine Driscoll states, this realization drew "attention to the differences between girls, including how race, ethnicity, class, location and sexual, political, and other identifications vary the available and acceptable practices of girlhood and its experience."[5] Thus, girlhood studies is a truly intersectional field that embraces history as a guide to understanding who we are *and* a means for being activists for girls' rights today.

Such intersectionality also complicates the ability to define "girlhood" itself. For this volume, I chose a broad definition that attempts to include both modern and historical definitions of childhood: contributors were asked to submit works where "girls" are defined as "self-identifying females under the age of 21." Two factors thus define girlhood in this volume. First, the girl must *self-identify as female* – embracing historical and modern girls whose biological

---

[3] Steven Mintz, "Children's History Matters," American Historical Review (October 2020): 1287, 1292.

[4] Catherine Driscoll, "Girls Today: Girls, Girl Culture and Girl Studies," Girlhood Studies (Summer 2008): 21.

[5] Driscoll, "Girls Today," 23.

sex at birth may not be female. This opens doors to viewing "girl" as a self-defined category, in part influenced by cultures in which "girl" is applied to adult females who embrace the term as their own as well as emerging realizations of gender fluidity and multiplicity. This recognizes gender as a spectrum whose core issues concern "inequality, power differential, stereotypes, perpetuated misogyny, and sexist norms."[6] Yet within this spectrum, identification as female has almost universally been perceived as being less valuable than being male. Despite the girl power discourse of the past forty years, being female continues to be an experience of social inequality. This discrimination starts in the womb. As Mariachiara Di Cesare explains in a 2014 article on the marginalization of women, "The biological sex ratio at birth averages 106 boys for every 100 girls. In Eastern, South, and Central Asia, the sex-ratio has reached values up to 130. Such levels can happen only under specific circumstances such as selective abortion or infanticide."[7] These practices almost always target girls. This discrimination continues into early and middle childhood, where food allocation, healthcare, education, and household expenditures are prioritized for males in much of the world. These are the first steps to lifelong discrimination, producing intergenerational effects that trap girls and women in a cycle of poverty, disenfranchisement, and vulnerability that prevent them and their societies from reaching their full potential. Such discrimination is not a third-world phenomenon – as the World Economic Forum detailed in their 2014 *Global Gender Gap* report, "there is no country in the world in which the gender gap has been closed."[8]

Complicating this gendered experience is our second factor: age. For this volume, I define girlhood as the period of life from birth to age 21, in order to prioritize the early life experiences of girl culture. This is a chronological category, which "allows us to situationally mark and index cultural lifespan norms, preferences, and activities."[9] The use of *chronological age* is a modern phenomenon, emerging in seventeenth-century Europe to define who bore political rights and who did not.[10] As a politically motivated category, chronological age is a power structure that helps to organize society and define group identity. It becomes part of the intersectional lens through which we

---

[6] Ashley E. Remer, "Editorial," MUSEUM international 72: 1-2 (2020), 3.

[7] Mariachiara Di Cesare, "Women, marginalization, and vulnerability: introduction," Genus 70, 2-3 (May-December 2014), 1.

[8] Di Cesare, "Women," 3.

[9] Clary Krekula, Pirjo Nikander, and Monika Wilinska, "Multiple Marginalizations Based on Age: Gendered Ageism and Beyond," in Contemporary Perspectives on Ageism, ed. L. Ayalon & C. Tesch-Romer (2018), 36.

[10] Corinne T. Field and Nicholas L. Syrett, "Chronological Age: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" American Historical Review (2020), 371.

must view people, since age – like gender – can dictate a person's ability to fully participate in society. Yet like gender, age is a construct whose definitions are fluid. As Corinne T. Field and Nicholas L. Syrett assert in their historical analysis of age, "Measuring years, months, and days since birth by an internationally standardized calendar is but one way of conceptualizing age, an arbitrary convention that is no more natural, objective, or scientific than reckoning age by the moon or by relative seniority."[11] Prior to the imposition of chronological age, the category was measured in milestones defined by cultural – not political – tradition. Such milestones are also flexible. For example, the onset of menses has come earlier in modern times thanks to better nutrition; thus, the traditional age at which a girl is viewed as ready for marriage and/or motherhood – menses – has decreased from adolescence (fifteen to eighteen calendar years since birth) to as young as eleven or twelve calendar years since birth.[12] These milestones are culturally defined, recognizing that people are capable of certain acts or roles depending on their physical development (not age since birth). Yet other means of defining age also exist. In precolonial Africa, *relative age* defined people based on seniority or juniority to others, while *generational age* defined people by their experience of one specific event.[13] Further still, other systems calculate age differently, such as the Confucian system wherein individuals are one year old at birth and gain age based on the lunar New Year. The imposition of Western age norms has disrupted these cultural systems, imposing a chronological age system that seeks to show maturity – and imposes power imbalances by dictating that some people (women, people of color, colonized peoples) never mature. These are complicated by the continuing need to prove chronological age. For some, such proof is difficult – if not impossible – to obtain and can easily be rejected by public officials. As Field and Syrett assert, the need to verify age allows power imbalances to continue, especially among people affected by war, displacement, or natural disaster in which the fragility of a documentation-based system for knowing age is revealed.[14] In these many ways, age is akin to gender – another sociopolitical determinant that enables discrimination.

Nuances

For girls, their gender and youth combine into double discrimination (termed *gendered ageism*) that is then compounded by other demographic categories

[11] Field and Syrett, "Chronological Age," 373.
[12] Leslie Paris, "Through the Looking Glass: Age, Stages, and Historical Analysis," Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth 1, 1 (2008): 107
[13] Field & Syrett, "Chronological Age," 373.
[14] Field & Syrett, "Chronological Age," 382.

into an intersectional system of oppression. As Miriam Forman-Brunell has asserted, important nuances exist in girlhood due to the multiplicity of ideals that define girlhood by race, class, ethnicity, religion, and other factors.[15] Within the legacy of colonialism, girls of color experience even greater oppression as their bodies are seen as less valuable – a means that both enslaved and marginalized them in the past and present. Historians have increasingly recognized this in the context of Black women, who during American slavery were not subjected to white gender norms. A similar recognition is happening with chronological age, as histories of Black girlhood increasingly reveal that they were exempt from both gender and age-based protections. For example, the youngest person ever executed in the United States was a Black girl, Hannah Occuish.[16] An orphan of African and Pequot heritage, 12-year-old Hannah was hanged in Connecticut on December 20, 1786, for beating and strangling a six-year-old white girl to death. Neither her gender nor her age protected her from being tried and punished as an adult. Hannah's story is compounded by many factors: orphan, mixed heritage, possible mental disability, and indentured in servitude. The judge saw value in punishing Hannah, convicting her of first-degree murder, asserting that she had "premeditated malice" and a "mischievous and guileful discretion" and sentenced her to execution as "sparing you on account of your age would…be of dangerous consequence to the public".[17]

Similar stories exist through modern times, with Black girls of the Civil Rights Movement subjected to adult-like punishments. In 1963, over a dozen Black girls aged 12 to 15 were held in a small, Civil War-era stockade near Leesburg, Georgia, for two months. Known as the Leesburg Stockade Girls, they were never charged with a crime – having been arrested while participating in nonviolent demonstrations challenging desegregation in neighboring Americus, Georgia. For two months, they went without a working toilet or shower and little food while being kept hidden from their families. Their release

---

[15] Miriam Forman-Brunell, "From the Margins to the Mainstream: Girls' History and the U.S. History Curriculum," The American Historian (March 2020), accessed June 19, 2021, https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2020/the-history-of-girlhood/from-the-margins-to-the-mainstream-girls-history-and-the-us-history-curriculum/.

[16] Crystal Lynn Webster, "The History of Black Girls and the Field of Black Girlhood Studies: At the Forefront of Academic Scholarship," The American Historian (March 2020), accessed June 19, 2021, https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2020/the-history-of-girlhood/the-history-of-black-girls-and-the-field-of-black-girlhood-studies-at-the-forefront-of-academic/.

[17] Julie Stagis, "A Girl, 12, Is Hanged In Connecticut For Murder In 1786," The Hartford Courant, Dec. 12, 2018, https://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-250-hannah-occuish-20140401-story.html

was granted because a branch of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) learned of their captivity and sent photographer Danny Lyons to document it in secret – and the published photographs created public outcry.[18] Their stories were largely kept out of the mainstream until 2015, when the girls – now women – gathered to discuss their time imprisoned and its effects. As Emmarene Kaigler-Streeter stated in an interview with National Public Radio's StoryCorps, the men who imprisoned them "were not looking at us as children. They were not looking in their hearts. All they were looking at was the fact that we were black."[19]

This lack of viewing Black girls as young and female has persisted, with Black girls seen as "bossy" or "dangerous" even when such performances are similar – if not identical to – that of white girls. Recently, the murder of 16-year-old Ma'Khia Bryant while trying to defend herself demonstrates this white supremacist notion that Black girls are inherently rebellious, quick to anger, and a threat to social order. Such notions are also proved by studies, such as *Girlhood Interrupted* by Georgetown Law's Center on Poverty, which demonstrated that adults perceive Black girls as less nurturing, less deserving of protection and support, and more able to deal with adult topics and forced independence than white girls of the same age.[20] Black girls are but one example of how race compounds the gendered ageism of girlhood.

Complicating this still are other sociopolitical demarcations – class, sexuality, and migrant or refugee status among them. UNESCO has frequently reported on how class – specifically poverty – magnifies oppression. As demonstrated in UNESCO's 2010 study, *Reaching the Marginalized: Education for All*, which studied Indigenous girls in Guatemala, girls from extremely poor households are more likely to enroll in school later, to drop out of school, and to engage in a combination of school and work than their non-poor peers.[21] Indigenous girlhoods also provide a glimpse into oppression based on sexuality, such as seen in Native American traditions of Two Spirit.[22] These traditions were

---

[18] Jud Esty-Kendall and Emma Bowman, "'I Gave Up Hope': As Girls, They Were Jailed in Squalor For Protesting Segregation," NPR Morning Edition, January 18, 2019, https://www.npr.org/2019/01/18/685844413/i-gave-up-hope-as-girls-they-were-jailed-in-squalor-for-protesting-segregation

[19] Etsy-Kendall and Bowman, "'I Gave Up Hope.'"

[20] Rebecca Epstein, Jamilia J. Blake, and Thalia Gonzalez, Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood (Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, August 2017).

[21] UNESCO, Reaching the Marginalized: Education for All (2010): 170.

[22] Today, "Two-Spirit" is a pan-Indigenous term used to describe individuals who fulfill a traditional third-gender (or gender-variant) social role in their cultures. According to the Indian Health Service of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Two-Spirit

marginalized by white settlers since it did not fit into the colonial-imposed binary of male and female.[23] Only recently have Two Spirit traditions emerged from the margins, providing Indigenous peoples – including girls – a way to better situate their identity. Finally, work with migrant and refugee girls reveals layers of oppression, as these girls are not encompassed by mainstream images of girlhood and become spatially situated between their old and new cultures as transnational persons. Summarizing Yasmin Jiwani's 2006 study on second-generation Canadian girls, Catherine Vanner discusses this blurred identity, where the fifty-two girls studied "felt like outsiders while in Canada, but Canadian when visiting their cultural homelands, a process that Jiwani refers to as 'walking the hyphen' between constructs" of Canadian and ancestral identity.[24] These factors compound oppression felt because of age and gender, creating girlhood experiences that can be simultaneously adherent to and divergent from dominant girlhood narratives.

Variations

Contributors to this volume found their own ways to define "girl" and "age" while showcasing the broad range of factors that can compound girlhood oppression. Throughout these variations, we see the heart of girlhood studies and what embracing intersectionality means for public historians: every category we utilize has various meanings and connotations, often complicated by legacies of colonialism and white supremacy. The work of Catherine Vanner is crucial to understanding girlhood in this way. She points out that the category of girl has "various meanings, including being a reference to age and an insult, as well as having connotations of community, inclusion, and solidarity" while being a concept that "has imposed an experience of Western girlhood on non-Western contexts."[25] This denotes the need for context-specificity to understand girls' experiences at specific times and places.

In line with this need for context-specificity and best practices of community curation, contributors were encouraged to pursue their own forms of structure,

---

is part of the LGBTQIA+ spectrum and may apply to sexually male, female, or intersexed individuals who occupy specialized work or social roles; demonstrate gender variations in temperament, dress, or lifestyle; may be spiritually sanctioned or hold special religious roles; and typically form sexual and emotional relationships with non-two-spirit members of their own sex in both the short- and long-term.

[23] Meg-John Barker and Jules Scheele, Gender: A Graphic Guide (London: Icon Books Ltd, 2019), 19.

[24] Catherine Vanner, "Toward a Definition of Transnational Girlhood," Girlhood Studies 12, 2 (Summer 2019): 121.

[25] Vanner, "Toward a Definition," 119-120.

with a focus on telling a cohesive story and representing those they discussed in the method best suited for that representation. Thus, some chapters adhere to a traditional structure, clearly demarcating and explaining their methodologies. Others challenge tradition by incorporating methodology in the reader's journey – rather than outline the chapter beforehand, the authors guide readers through their own process. In some cases, this acts as a decolonizing force, allowing us to open the fields into new ways of seeing, and doing, work. In all chapters, I encouraged the authors to avoid – or clearly define – jargon, so that students and the public can also better understand (and through understanding, appreciate and support) our work. This freedom is crucial to broadening and decolonizing our fields with new perspectives, methodologies, and relationships. An editor's note prefaces each chapter to reflect on the methods chosen.

The willingness to embrace non-traditional methods is crucial for public historians seeking an intersectional lens through which to view the people they study and represent in public spaces such as museums, historic sites, and cultural venues. While single-lens studies help to recover histories of the marginalized, it is only within complex case studies of identity rooted in the voices of those being studied, such as this volume, that we can begin to uncover the polyvocality of place and experience that help us truly understand our histories and become activists for our communities. These methods are just as valid and stringent as the traditional academy. Rather than following the strict Introduction-Methods-Data-Conclusions format and adhering to the use of often complex jargon-filled narratives, the methods represented in this volume focus on taking readers with us on the journey of discovery – offering insights into process in a more accessible, and often more engaging, manner than traditional academic monographs. This is the hallmark of a public historian's work: bridging gaps that jargon, format, and the "expert-reader" distinctions often obscure. The journey is both our form of work and our means of communication, through which we reveal both that which we study and the legitimacy of our methods to the public. In an age of misinformation, revealing ourselves within the work is crucial to maintaining the public's trust and, in so doing, fostering appreciation, understanding, and support for our work.

Additionally, for public historians seeking broader representations in museums, understanding variety in sources, methods, and interpretation for a marginalized population – and embracing that population's ways of communicating, studying, and understanding itself – is critical work. We have welcomed the histories of women, people of color, and LGBTQIA+ into our halls in recent years. What has stopped us from welcoming children and, specifically, girls? Who is doing the work to welcome them, and what does it look like? What can we learn from their projects? This volume sets out to answer

those questions, exploring the polyvocality of girlhood and how public historians (and related scholars) situate girlhood within their work.

What girls can do

Thus, this volume aims to demonstrate what historians can learn from girl studies, how girlhood can contribute to our understandings of time and place, and how intersectionality comes into play when studying a target population. The girls within this volume provide examinations of identity rooted in gendered ageism, intersectional identity markers, and historical place and time – methods which public historians can apply to nearly any population. The girls also represent a variety of sources available to study girlhood, including Indigenous folklore, oral histories, daybooks, scrapbooks, autoethnographic fieldwork, and archaeological and historic sites. These are complemented by a variety of methods, including primary and secondary source analysis, spatial analysis, phenomenological autoethnography, and analyzing interpretive programs to measure both effectiveness of interpretation and effect on interpreters.

When first approaching girlhood studies, many of my colleagues at Girl Museum ask how they can identify appropriate sources for girlhood, believing the sources must be few and far between. Yet as these chapters demonstrate, such sources *do exist.* They merely wait for us to view them through the appropriate lens, allowing our own definitions to expand and encompass lived experiences beyond our own. Just as it can be difficult to assign gender to artists in earlier, non-Western periods, so can it be difficult to identify when a source – or a person – identifies as girl. This is a legacy of colonialism that compounds historians' work, as many early curators, anthropologists, collectors, and historians simply did not find it pertinent to record names, genders, or ages. Yet, as Dr. Jill Ahlberg Yohe demonstrated at the *Unanonymous Native Women Artists* conference in 2016, digging deeply into early field notes and historic records while embracing knowledge embedded in descendant communities can help us rethink and challenge assumed absence.[26] This is exemplified by Dr. Renée E. Mazinegiizhigoo-kwe Bédard, whose work on Anishinaabeg girlhoods in chapter one embraces her ancestry and self-identification within scholarly process, providing a unique lens that more accurately represents Anishinaabeg girls past and present. Embracing self-identity as a girl is also exemplified by Dr. Georgia Thomas-Parr in chapter six, whose exhibition, *The Secret World of Fangirls*, chose to celebrate the multiplicity of voices who

[26] Kaywin Feldman, "Guerrillas in our Midst: A Museum Director's Appeal for a New Feminist Agenda," in Anonymous Was a Woman: A Museums and Feminist Reader, ed. Jenna C. Ashton (Boston: MuseumsEtc, 2020), 32-33.

identify as "fangirl," including those that other studies may relegate to the male sphere because of participants' biological sex. Embracing these decolonized methods is key to broadening our research and becoming truly inclusive of those we represent. In so doing, we assert that – as a field – we will no longer ignore fifty percent of the population simply because society has always done so.[27] This volume is a step in demonstrating that such practice should no longer be the norm if we are to truly understand who we are and from whence we came.

However, one volume cannot cover the multiplicity of girlhood experiences, interpretations, or sources employed by scholars. Some reasons are common among edited volumes: restrictions on publication length, ability to complete contributions among other responsibilities, support for undertaking unpaid work, and the diversity represented in responses to the call for proposals. While the call for papers resulted in many proposals from established scholars and traditional methodologies, only a few (most of which were accepted) represented the emerging and non-traditional. Additionally, most proposals were from scholars located in Europe and North America, further complicating aims for inclusivity.

For this volume, these factors were complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Studying and interpreting marginalized populations is difficult work, often involving in-person interactions to build trust and thus gain access to source materials. COVID-19 challenged how we work, forcing much of this to remain virtual or reflective of previously undertaken work, while also requiring us to endure physical, psychological, and emotional trauma in having and/or bearing witness to life-threatening infection. The impacts of COVID-19 have affected the public history field in many ways, notably in the ability to contribute to volumes like this one, which require significant time, travel, and relationship building. This compounds existing challenges, such as the tradition of edited volumes as unpaid work that marginalizes those whose efforts must focus on activities that bring economic benefits to them and their families. There is also the marginalization of non-traditional scholars (those holding less than a terminal degree or who embrace non-traditional sources and methodology) from the academy and its publishing venues, which keeps many from viewing their work as publishable.

Several proposed chapters were unable to join this volume due to COVID-19 and its effects on travel and personal health. As the pandemic began shortly after the call for chapters concluded, I adapted the overall goals to represent as much as could be included, recognizing the skew that might result as well as

[27] Feldman, "Guerrillas in our Midst," 35.

the timeliness of completing this volume. I also embraced the freedom for authors to withdraw or adapt their proposals as they saw fit. Several authors – notably those from Asia and Africa – withdrew due to the personal impacts of COVID-19 or the inability to travel to sources that had not been digitized. Others changed their proposals to reflect what could be accomplished under new travel restrictions. The resulting volume includes case studies by American or European authors and representing girlhoods in the United States, Canada, Sweden, Peru, and United Kingdom. Present within are Indigenous, Black, and Euro-American (white) girlhoods of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (with one chapter dedicated to the sixteenth-to-nineteenth century). Absent are the voices of Asian, African, and Pacific scholars, as well as girlhoods of these regions, which are distinctly different in definition and experience from those within this volume. Additionally absent are pre-nineteenth-century girlhoods, a field that – in my experience – is just now being explored in depth as we refute decades of misconstruing girlhood as a modern phenomenon. It is my hope that future volumes will address this gap in representation, both spatially and temporally.

In adapting to these challenges, the editorial aim has been to represent a broad range of sources and historic sites, divided into two sections: *Recognizing* girlhood in sources, followed by using those sources to *Represent* girlhood in public history sites and programs. The first set of chapters showcase distinct methods of finding and researching girlhood: Indigenous folklore and descendant knowledge, biographical approaches through primary and secondary literature, analysis of previously marginalized sources like daybooks and scrapbooks, and spatial analysis at archaeological sites. In chapter one, Dr. Renée E. Mazinegiizhigoo-kwe Bédard provides insights into Anishinaabeg girlhood, located in the Great Lakes region of Canada and the United States, including their worldview and the myriad of gender identities embedded within it. Through Anishinaabeg girlhood and Bédard's reflections on her own girlhood experiences, the complexity of Indigenous girlhoods becomes evident while also imparting wisdom on decolonizing strategies for working with Anishinaabeg – and by inference, other Indigenous – communities. In chapter two, Eli E. McClain undertakes a biographical approach to the girlhood of Helen Miller Gould, a late nineteenth-century American girl for whom the boundary between girlhood and womanhood is central to understanding her individuality and her place in society. McClain's approach illustrates just one of the ways to approach age-based study, integrating gender and class to foster an intersectional look at late-nineteenth-century girlhood that can better inform research of Helen Miller Gould as a woman. By inference, studying the girlhoods of well-known women provides us with key insights into how childhood experiences inform adult identities and achievements, and Miller's approach situates this methodology for future scholars. Chapter three travels

to Sweden, where the ongoing work of Dr. Åsa Ljungström provides insights into a new type of source material (a mother's daybooks) as well as the value in integrating our own life experiences – through a phenomenological approach (which studies consciousness and the emotive aspects of material culture) – into our research, when appropriate. The daybooks of Clara Lundeberg, through which Ljungström interprets Clara's daughter's life, become artifacts of agency through which we explore how girlhood can link generations of a family while providing insights on women, work, and gender roles. Notably, Ljungström incorporates her own upbringing and family traditions, as the wife of Clara's descendant, to her study, allowing insights into Swedish culture that non-Swedish scholars might not observe. Chapter four highlights the work of archaeologist Maria Smith to interpret girlhood at a colonial textile mill in Peru, the *Obraje de San Marcos de Chincheros*, which operated from the 1570s to 1820s. Using spatial analysis of the site, Smith demonstrates how Indigenous girls were disciplined into colonial identity categories during their workdays, providing a basis for future studies of how labor shapes identity and how colonized social space was utilized to marginalize Indigenous girls. Finally, part one concludes with Haley Aaron's study of early-to-mid-twentieth century scrapbooks held at the Alabama Department of Archives and History, through which we can view core societal themes such as the increasing influence of the mass media, the rise of conspicuous consumption, and changing visions of womanhood. For a field that frequently works with archives, Aaron's insights into these oft-overlooked records of girlhood provides a compelling argument to reconsider girls' engagement with changing societal norms through scrapbooking, as well as provides recommendations on working with and interpreting sources that are composed of many different types of archival materials.

The second set of chapters addresses how girlhood is then interpreted for the public through exhibitions, National Register of Historic Places designations, guided tours, and costumed interpretation. Dr. Georgia Thomas-Parr begins the section with a case study of her 2019 exhibition, *The Secret World of Fangirls*, and the creation of "big fangirl energy" through a truly community-centric curatorial process. Based on autoethnographic research into the resistance youth culture of *kawaii* ("cute"), Thomas-Parr provides key insights into how community exhibitions should be developed as well as explores a definition of girlhood – *shōjo* – which acts "as a space of inclusion beyond gender" by inviting many different types of girl-identifying individuals into the exhibition process. In chapter seven, Dr. Ruby Oram provides a case study exemplifying why National Register of Historic Places nominations should consider girlhood as a means of diversifying preservation of our built heritage. Through a case study of her research and successful nomination of the Lucy Flower Technical School for Girls, Oram makes a compelling case for the National Register of

Historic Places to add women's and gender history to its areas of significance, as well as demonstrating how the nomination of an all-girls public school provides key insights into Black and immigrant girls in early twentieth-century Chicago. Chapter eight shifts to interpretive programs, as Dr. Elizabeth D. Worley Medley explores the use of gendered school group tours at the Agrirama (now the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village), wherein girls' tours focused on traditional domestic activities that potentially perpetuated gender stereotypes. Through interviews with site staff and review of archival materials, Dr. Medley reconstructs why gendering of tours may have occurred and its potential effects, proving that even something assumed to be obvious – that gendered tours are problematic – can reveal as much about the interpreters' values and intentions as it does about the period it represents. In chapter nine, Rachel Serkin, Nancy Beiles, and Alex Delare detail their creation and presentation of a living history program on activist Clara Lemlich for the Museum of Eldridge Street in New York City. Timed with the 110th anniversary of the Revolt of the Girls, this program invited a trained actor (Delare) to "let Clara speak for herself" to families. The resulting program provides a model for achieving relevance and historical understanding while fostering modern-day youth agency. Finally, in chapter ten Dr. Heather Fitzsimmons Frey and Tania Gigliotti explore the employment of girls as costumed interpreters at Fort Edmonton Park, analyzing how both those portraying and those being portrayed are perceived by audiences. The observations of employed girls reveals the negotiations of racism, sexism, and stereotypical gender norms that they engage with and seek to correct. The resulting analysis provides insights into how the use of girls as interpreters can help to dispel stereotypical conceptions of girlhood among visitors while providing the girls with a border space in which to negotiate their own identities.

Meanings

As public historians, museum workers, and community scholars seek to better represent and welcome our communities, we must include girls. They are, after all, one of our future target audiences. So why not be targets now? Why not embrace them, welcome them, and represent them fully? To do so opens new opportunities for study, interpretation, and engagement that also help reconcile the difficult histories present in every place. It also provides public historians with an activist stance, a way to engage with one of the most intersectional social justice movements of our time – the empowerment of girls – in order to end structural inequalities once and for all. It complements ongoing work by movements such as Museums are Not Neutral, Gender Equity in Museums Movement (GEMM), and others. Most of all, embracing girlhood works across the divides and disciplines, the linear and typological definitions,

to use feelings, emotions, and personal connection as points of departure that produce plural, often contradictory, discourses and help stimulate conversation, exchange, and positive social change. This is what a girl can do.

Bibliography

Barker, Meg-John and Jules Scheele. *Gender: A Graphic Guide*. London: Icon Books Ltd, 2019.

Di Cesare, Mariachiara. "Women, marginalization, and vulnerability: introduction." *Genus* 70, no. 2-3 (May-December 2014): 1-6.

Driscoll, Catherine. "Girls Today: Girls, Girl Culture and Girl Studies." *Girlhood Studies* (Summer 2008): 21.

Epstein, Rebecca, Jamilia J. Blake, and Thalia Gonzalez. *Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood*. Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, 2017.

Esty-Kendall, Jud and Emma Bowman. "'I Gave Up Hope': As Girls, They Were Jailed in Squalor For Protesting Segregation." *NPR Morning Edition*, January 18, 2019. https://www.npr.org/2019/01/18/685844413/i-gave-up-hope-as-girls-they-were-jailed-in-squalor-for-protesting-segregation

Feldman, Kaywin. "Guerrillas in our Midst: A Museum Director's Appeal for a New Feminist Agenda." In *Anonymous Was a Woman: A Museums and Feminist Reader*, edited by Jenna C. Ashton, 22-40. Boston: MuseumsEtc, 2020.

Field, Corinne T. and Nicholas L. Syrett, "Chronological Age: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" *American Historical Review* (2020): 371–384.

Forman-Brunell, Miriam. "From the Margins to the Mainstream: Girls' History and the U.S. History Curriculum." *The American Historian* (March 2020), accessed June 19, 2021, https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/cmos_formatting_and_style_guide/periodicals.html

Krekula, Clary, Pirjo Nikander, and Monika Wilinska. "Multiple Marginalizations Based on Age: Gendered Ageism and Beyond." In *Contemporary Perspectives on Ageism,* edited by L. Ayalon and C. Tesch-Romer. *International Perspectives on Aging 19*, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73820-8_3

Mintz, Steven. "Children's History Matters." *American Historical Review* (October 2020): 1286-1292.

Paris, Leslie. "Through the Looking Glass: Age, Stages, and Historical Analysis." *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (2008): 106-113.

Porter, Gaby. "Seeing through Solidarity: a feminist perspective on museums." *The Sociological Review* (1996): 106-126.

Remer, Ashley E. "Editorial." *Museum International* 72 (2002): 1-7.

Stagis, Julie. "A Girl, 12, Is Hanged In Connecticut For Murder In 1786." *The Hartford Courant*, Dec. 12, 2018. https://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-250-hannah-occuish-20140401-story.html

UNESCO. *Reaching the Marginalized: Education for All*. 2010.

Vanner, Catherine. "Toward a Definition of Transnational Girlhood." *Girlhood Studies* 12, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 115-132.

Webster, Crystal Lynn. "The History of Black Girls and the Field of Black Girlhood Studies: At the Forefront of Academic Scholarship." *The American Historian* (March 2020), accessed June 19, 2021, https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2020/the-history-of-girlhood/the-history-of-black-girls-and-the-field-of-black-girlhood-studies-at-the-forefront-of-academic/

PAGES MISSING

FROM THIS FREE SAMPLE

Contributors

Tiffany R. Isselhardt holds a Master of Public History from Appalachian State University and is the co-author of *Exploring American Girlhood in 50 Historic Treasures* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021). She currently serves as Development and Exhibitions Manager at the Kentucky Museum at Western Kentucky University as well as Program Developer for Girl Museum. Her research focuses on uncovering the hidden history of girls to advocate for gender equality, and how museums can better interpret and provide programming inclusive ofgirls' unique history and culture. She has presented on girlhood at several conferences, including the International Girl Studies Association and the National Council on Public History, and enjoys working at the intersections of history, material culture, and girl studies.

Haley E. Aaron holds a BA in journalism and history from Samford University, an MA in history from Georgia State University, and an MLIS from the University of Alabama. Since 2014, she has worked at the Alabama Department of Archives and History in Montgomery, the nation's first publicly funded, independent state archives agency.

Dr. Renée E. Mazinegiizhigoo-kwe Bédard is of Anishinaabeg ancestry and a member of Dokis First Nation. She holds a PhD from Trent University and has previously worked at Nipissing University as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Native Studies. Her area of publication includes work related to Anishinaabeg mothering, maternal education, and contemporary issues facing Anishinaabeg women.

Nancy Beiles holds a Bachelor's in English from Wesleyan University and is the Manager of Family Programs at the Museum at Eldridge Street. In that role, she develops and implements programs for children and their adult companions that bring to life the people and history of the late-19th and early-20th century Lower East Side of New York City. Prior to joining the museum, Nancy was a magazine writer and editor. Her work has appeared in publications ranging from *This Old House* and the *Wall Street Journal* to *Teen People* and *Parenting*. She is a third-generation native Staten Islander who now lives in Brooklyn.

Alex Delare is the Associate Director of Education at New York City Children's Theater and holds a Master's degree from Brooklyn College and Bachelors's degree from Sarah Lawrence College. She designs educational programming

for theaters, cultural organizations, museums, and her own walking tour company. She also serves as the Vice Chair of the Museum, Arts and Culture Access Consortium (MAC), which is dedicated to accessibility and inclusivity for all. Additionally, Alex serves as an access consultant offering professional development workshops on implementing inclusive teaching practices. She also serves as a Living History Consultant/Costumed Interpreter for the Museum at Eldridge Street.

Tania Gigliotti is the Executive Director of Drawn to Books, a non-profit organization in Edmonton, AB. She has been working in children's books since 2005 when she began work at Greenwoods' Small World, an independent bookstore in Edmonton. She started her journey into children's comics at Happy Harbor Comics in 2014 and, while there, founded both Drawn to Write comic book camps for young creators ages 9+. When Happy Harbor closed in 2019, she decided to launch Drawn to Books in order to keep that program going, and to continue growing opportunities for kids who love comics in Alberta. She received her diploma in Arts & Cultural Management at MacEwan University in 2020 and has also been teaching belly dance since 2008.

Dr. Heather Fitzsimmons Frey is an Assistant Professor of Arts and Cultural Management at MacEwan University in Edmonton. Using archives, qualitative research, performance-based historiography, and practice-based methodologies, her research focuses on the arts, performance and young people, especially girls. Recent girl-centered work is published in *Girlhood Studies, Jeunesse, Journal of Childhood Studies, Performance Research* and in her edited collection *Ignite: Illuminating Theatre for Young People* (Playwrights Canada Press 2016). Heather is on the International Theatre for Young Audiences Research Network (ITYARN) Board of Directors, is a co-investigator for *YouthSites* and *Gatherings*, and is a principal investigator for *Young People as Living History*.

Dr. Åsa Ljungström is an Associate Professor in Ethnology at Mid Sweden University, living in Uppsala. Presently, she is interpreting emotions in a work journal by a housewife 1890–1914. Her research interests include material culture and folklore studies, especially relating to cooperage, arts and crafts, and narrativity. Her doctoral thesis explored artefacts triggering life stories of emotions and values. Recent articles include topics such as narrativity, small stories, farmers trading long-distance, women's history, consequences of the contraceptive device, folk medicine, folk legends, and eighteenth-century manuscripts of magic art.

Eli McClain is a current MPhil candidate in Heritage Studies at the University of Cambridge (2020). He received his BA in History and Sociology with minors in Art History and Anthropology from Hunter College, State University of New York (SUNY). He was the recipient of the 2019 Lucy V. Goodwine Memorial Prize for History for his honors thesis entitled *Filling the Met with Scarabs: Helen Miller Gould and the Chauncey Murch Collection of Egyptian Antiquities*. His research interests surround issues of gender and class in nineteenth and twentieth-century United States and Latin America, and histories of collecting and museums.

Dr. Elizabeth D. Worley Medley, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of History at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. She received her PhD in History from Florida State University. She contributed to *An Encyclopedia of American Women at War: From the Homefront to the Battlefields* (ABC-CLIO, 2013) and has presented at conferences for the Georgia Association of Historians and the National Council on Public History. Her research interests surround women and gender history with an emphasis on cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity, and public history with an emphasis on memory.

Dr. Ruby Oram, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Practice in Local and Community History at Texas State University. She holds a joint doctorate in US and Public History at Loyola University Chicago. Her research explores how women reformed vocational programs for girls in progressive-era Chicago and how their reform efforts shaped the schooling experiences of female students between 1880 and 1930. She is an active preservationist of historic public schools in Chicago and has held public history positions at the Chicago Architecture Foundation, Newberry Library, and Art Institute of Chicago.

Rachel Serkin is the Manager of School Programs at Eldridge Street and holds a Masters in Education from Hunter College. She develops and delivers K-12 education programming with a focus on immigration, New York and Jewish history. She has previously worked as an educator at The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, The Brooklyn Historical Society, and the New York Transit Museum. Rachel enjoys researching and writing about little-known stories from history, and her work has appeared in *History Today*, *The Forward* and *American History Magazine*.

Maria Smith is a doctoral candidate in the Anthropology Department at Syracuse University and a Junior Girl with Girl Museum. Her dissertation research combines historical and archaeological data to investigate the ways in which colonial textile producers at the Obraje de San Marcos de Chincheros and Monasterio de Santa Catalina de Siena influenced the colonial aesthetic

through their labor. Her research explores the ways differently positioned weavers were encultured into the colonial aesthetic, the ways weavers implemented innovative techniques and technologies into their weavings, and the ways in which their textiles helped to define caste during the Colonial era.

Dr. Georgia Thomas-Parr received her doctorate at The University of Sheffield, UK. Her ethnographic research explores Japan-inspired feminine subcultures in light of anime fandom and cosplay practices in the UK. Georgia creates visual essays on the topics of girlhood and coming-of-age in global cinema. Her work is available on YouTube and Vimeo, under the channel title, "Through a Different Lens."

Index

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O

P

R

S

T

U

V

W

Y