

Mobilizing a Social Justice Agenda

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As this issue of *Girlhood Studies* went to press, two very dramatic moments in the history of girls and young women were in the public eye. One was the large 8000-strong gathering of NGOs, researchers, politicians, and activists from 165 countries at the *Women Deliver* Global Summit on gender equality that took place in Vancouver, Canada, from 3 to 6 June 2019. There, according to the program, the focus was on how power can both hinder and drive progress and change for a world that is more gender equal. On 3 June, the long-awaited report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) in Canada was released, with its 231 recommendations or calls for social justice to address what is now acknowledged as being part of what was (and continues to be) cultural genocide. Both the Global Summit and the report on MMIWG are reminders of the need for the blend of scholarship and activism that is so critical to advancing issues of equity and to implementing recommendations to achieve this. This unthemed issue with its broad range of geographic locations, concerns, and methods and its attention to activism, along with scholarship that features work from both the humanities and social sciences, is key in relation to mobilizing a social justice agenda.

We begin this issue with two articles on rape culture. In Aiyana Altrous's "Silence and the Regulation of Feminist Anger in Young Adult Rape Fiction" she examines what she calls the "silent victim script" in young adult (YA) literature about rape and suggests that these novels present "rape as an individual, pathological defect and a precondition to be managed by girls on an individual basis, rather than an act of violence committed against them." Then, in "13 Reasons Why the Rape Myth Survives," Delphine Letort considers the Netflix adaptation of this YA novel and points out that "its causative narrative reinforces the rape myth by putting the blame on girls for events that happen to them" and suggests that this "TV series . . . endorses [this] rape myth through [its use of] the entertaining frame of [a] teenpic"



that chooses the suicide of the protagonist as its focus, and “downplay[s] discussions of rape.”

In “Black Girl Thought in the Work of Ntozake Shange,” Naila Keleta-Mae “introduce[s] the term black girl thought as a theoretical framework” through which she considers “the complex lives of black girls who live in the post-civil rights era in the United States” as represented in two works by Shange, the choreopoem “for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf” (1977) and the novel *Sassafras, Cypress and Indigo* (1982).

In “Black Girls and Dolls Navigating Race, Class, and Gender in Toronto,” Janet Seow uses textual analysis and “qualitative research with ten Afro-Caribbean girls and young women in Toronto to reveal the racial and cultural meanings of dolls” in their lives. She looks at how black girls “demonstrate unacknowledged skills in their ability to navigate barriers that reinforce racial inequalities and social hierarchies in girls’ material culture in a multicultural Toronto.”

Katherine Clonan-Roy, in “Latina Girls’ Sexual Education in the (New) Latinx Diaspora,” considers the implications “for Latina girls in one (New) Latinx Diaspora town” of the “durability and pliability” of the “damaging patriarchal discourses about sexuality” first explored by Michelle Fine in 1988 that hinder “development of sexual desire, subjectivities, and responsibility” in adolescent girls. She considers how these enduring discourses “shift depending on context and the intersections of girls’ race, class, and gender identities.”

Elaine Arnall’s focus in “Being a Girl Who Gets into Trouble: Narratives of Girlhood” is on the “narratives of girls who describe the events that shape their lives and get them into trouble.” She considers the adequacy of “Darrell Steffensmeier and Emilie Allan’s (1996) ... Gender Theory” as an “explanatory framework” and concludes that “it is the disjuncture with normative concepts that leads [these girls] into conflict with institutions of social control.”

Deevia Bhana and Emmanuel Mayeza focus on “sixty South African primary schoolgirls’ experiences of male violence and bullying” in “Primary Schoolgirls Addressing Bullying and Negotiating Femininity.” Their interest lies in how these non-normative femininities “in their advancing of violence to stop violence ... are also imbued with culturally relevant meanings about care, forgiveness, and humanity based on the African principle of *ubuntu*.” They conclude with “a call to address interventions contextually, from schoolgirls’ own perspectives.”

The final article is Catherine Vanner's "Toward a Definition of Transnational Girlhood," in which she "join[s] a conversation about the definition and value of the term transnational girlhood." She reflects on girls who are seen to be "transnational figures," analyzes "movements that connect girls across borders," and argues for the necessity of "cross-border connections ... ; [an] intersectional analysis ... ; [the] recognition of girls' agency and the structural constraints... in which they operate; and a global agenda for change."

We bring this issue to a close with two books reviews: "A History of the Resilience of Black Girls" on Nazera Sadiq Wright's *Black Girlhood in the Nineteenth Century* (2016) by Courtney Cook; and "Molding Girls into Respectable Christian Women: The Construction of Childhood and Race in the Cape Colony" on S. E. Duff's *Changing Childhoods in the Cape Colony: Dutch Reformed Church Evangelicalism and Colonial Childhoods, 1860–1895* (2015) by Elizabeth Dillenburg.

