

# Breaking Boundaries in Girlhood Studies

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This issue of *Girlhood Studies* begins with a Special Section on Indigenous Girls as a critical area of scholarship and activism in girlhood studies.<sup>1</sup> Recognizing the need for decolonizing perspectives and approaches, the guest editors, Kirstsen Lindquist, Kari-dawn Wuttunee, and Sarah Flicker offer a boundary-breaking collection. Apart from its being the first assemblage on Indigenous girls as far as we know, the Special Section is unique in several other ways. First, it is guest edited by an editorial team that includes two young Indigenous women, Kirsten and Kari-dawn, who are both members of the National Indigenous Young Women's Council (NIYWC) and, as such, it draws on the strength of an organization of young Indigenous women. Second, it highlights the significance of community alliances as evidenced in the contributions of Sarah who has been working with Indigenous young people in Canada for over a decade. Third, acknowledging global solidarity amongst Indigenous peoples, as recognized, for example, in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,<sup>2</sup> the collection includes submissions on Indigenous girls and girlhoods in Canada, South Africa, and Mexico. Finally, it is boundary-breaking in that it brings together different genres of writing and creative productions including articles, poetry, a personal essay, reviews (including one based on the contributor's own familial oppression), an account of how and why a contributor set up a sexual health initiative, and a piece of Indigenous visual art, all of which support the endeavor of decolonizing knowledge in both theory and practice.

Following the Special Section we have two general articles. In "Loving and Cruel, All at the Same Time": Girlhood Identity in *The Craft*," Emily Chandler breaks boundaries by countering the notion commonly articulated by scholars of film that the focus of this 1996 movie is on "its negative representation of girls' friendships, sexuality, and desire for power." She argues



that “*The Craft*’s relevance to girls arises from its subversion of teen film tropes” in its exploration of “girls’ fear of isolation.”

Bernice Loh, in “Beyond the Discourse of Sexualization: An Inquiry into the Adulthood of Tween Girls’ Dressing in Singapore,” in refusing the boundaries of Western discourse as explanation, argues that “although the adulthood of tween girls’ dressing forms a large part of the debate in the discourse of sexualization, tween girls’ fashioning of themselves after adults should not be assumed to be an exclusive outcome and process of improper and premature sexualization in culturally-specific contexts like Singapore.”

Erin Newcomb reviews Sarah Rothschild’s *The Princess Story: Modeling the Feminine in Twentieth-Century American Fiction and Film* (2013) that offers “a sweeping overview of one hundred years’ worth of acculturation to princess stories” along with Amy S. Pattee’s *Reading the Adolescent Romance: Sweet Valley High and the Popular Young Adult* (2011). Newcomb points out that the latter “highlights many of the same principles about the ways in which popular fiction educates its readers in gendered behavioral expectations.”

By happy coincidence, this issue of *Girlhood Studies* begins and ends with an investigation into the significance of historical literary analysis in girlhood studies, given that the Special Section opens with an article that explores public discourse about girls and girlhood from the sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth century, and ends with Riena Green’s review of Jennifer Higginbotham’s *The Girlhood of Shakespeare’s Sisters: Gender, Transgression, Adolescence* (2013) in which the author “investigates the apparent absence of girls in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drama and not only clearly demonstrates their presence, but also makes an important contribution to our understanding of girlhood and girls, and how they were defined during the period.” In this issue as a whole, then, we see activism in girlhood studies breaking through the boundaries of specific disciplinary areas and specific time-frames.

## Notes

1. The impetus for this Special Section comes out of “Networks for Change and Well-being: Girl-led ‘from the ground up’ policy making to address sexual violence in Canada and South Africa” (co Principal Investigators, Claudia Mitchell and Relebohile Moletsane), supported by International Partnerships for Sustainable Societies (IPaSS) and funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and the International Research Development Centre (IDRC).
2. UN General Assembly, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/471355a82.html> (accessed 22 May 2016).