

The Mundanity of Girlhood: Pleasure, Play, & the Everyday

Hosted by the Girlhood Studies Collective
in collaboration with the Department of Childhood Studies &
the Gender Studies Program at Rutgers University, Camden – USA

From Megan Thee Stallion coining “hot girl summer” in 2019, to the release of the internationally acclaimed film *Barbie* in 2023, the “girl” is trending across all social media platforms. From “girl walk,” “girl dinner,” and “girl economy,” to various “_____ girl” aesthetics (e.g., “soft girl,” “VSCO girl,” “clean girl”), “girl” has become a playful attachment to the mundanity of the everyday. In a moment where seemingly everything can be “girl’d,” to much internet delight, the category is opening capacious spaces for pleasure and play, in ways that are deeply entangled with—and potentially resistant to—capitalism. What do these playful and pleasurable engagements with “girl” make possible for critically interrogating the boundaries of girlhood? And with what repercussions?

In *The Black Girlhood Studies Collection*, Aria Halliday highlights the “slippage” surrounding age-based conceptions of girlhood, as seen not only in harmful stereotypes conflating Black women and girls, but also in Black women’s colloquial and affirming appeals to each other as “girl.” As the boundaries of girlhood are policed in anti-Black, transphobic, ableist, and xenophobic rhetoric and policy discourse, we build on Halliday’s provocation to consider how the playful use of “girl” in everyday vernacular gestures toward the category’s elusive nature and expansive potential. This symposium takes this cultural moment as an invitation to consider how playful, everyday articulations of “girl” push the field of girlhood studies to critically reexamine how the “girl” comes into being.

Some possible sites for engagement include:

- The politics of girls’ play and pleasure
- Playful encounters in and with girls in the archive
- Literary, cultural, and mediated representations of girls, girlhoods, play, and pleasure
- Girls in/on social media and digital spaces
- Ethnographies of girls’ culture
- Critical inquiries into “girl” as a category, label, or identity
- Practices of girls’ playful and pleasurable resistance
- Girlhood’s playful semiotics, affects, and aesthetics

This symposium is the second annual conference by the Girlhood Studies Collective, a new community of scholars, researchers, and practitioners who do critical work on the girl, girlhood, and girls’ culture.

Table of Contents

Day 1: Thursday, April 4	4
<i>Panel A: The Power and Possibilities of Black Girl Slippage</i>	4
9:00 am – 10:15 am, ET.....	4
<i>Panel B: Playful Moments in Histories of Institutional Control</i>	6
10:30 am – 11:45 pm, ET.....	6
<i>Panel C: The Politics of Doll Play</i>	8
12:15 pm – 1:30 pm, ET.....	8
<i>Panel D: Girl Talk, Girl Voices</i>	11
1:45 pm – 3:00 pm, ET.....	11
<i>Panel E: Girls’ Spaces for Pleasure-Seeking</i>	13
3:15 pm – 4:30 pm, ET.....	13
Keynote Address: Black Girl Autopoetics	15
<i>Dr. Ashleigh Greene Wade</i>	15
4:45 pm – 6 pm, ET.....	15
Day 2: Friday, April 5	16
<i>Panel A: The Meme-ification of “Girl”</i>	16
9:00 am – 10:15 am, ET.....	16
<i>Panel B: 10 Years of African Girlhood Rooted in Participatory Social Transformation: (Auto)ethnographies of the Everyday in Rural Malawi</i>	18
10:30 am – 11:45 pm, ET.....	18
<i>Panel C: Learning to Become the “American Girl”</i>	19
12:15 pm – 1:30 pm, ET.....	19
<i>Panel D: Play and Pleasure in Girls’ Social Worlds</i>	21
1:45 pm – 3:00 pm, ET.....	21
<i>Panel E: Girls on/in Digital Playscapes</i>	23
3:15 pm – 4:45 pm, ET.....	23
Day 3: Saturday, April 6	26
<i>Panel A: Playing Off Girl Protagonists in Pop Culture</i>	26
9:00 am – 10:15 am, ET.....	26
<i>Panel B: Complicating Textual Representations of Girls at Play</i>	28

10:30 am – 11:45 pm, ET	28
<i>Lunch and Collaboration with Girl Museum</i>	31
11:50 am – 12:10 pm, ET	31
<i>Panel C: Playing with the Boundaries of Girlhood</i>	31
12:15 pm – 1:30 pm, ET	31
<i>Panel D: Rethinking Everyday Girl Objects</i>	33
1:45 pm – 3:00 pm, ET	33
<i>Panel E: Retelling and Reconfiguring Girlhood</i>	36
3:15 pm – 4:30 pm, ET	36
Presenter List and Bios (by alpha)	39

Day 1: Thursday, April 4

Panel A: The Power and Possibilities of Black Girl Slippage

9:00 am – 10:15 am, ET

Moderator: Kenesma John, University of Florida

Black Girl Age and The Vernacular Tradition in African American Comedienne's Stand-Up Performances

Destiny Crockett, Rutgers University-Camden

When Black comediennes perform, age is the material. In particular, some performers vacillate between storytelling and performances of their girl selves and grown woman selves on stage to point to the precarity of being both girl and woman in social worlds that mark them as vulnerable to violation as both/either girl and woman. Additionally, they perform a non-sequential collection of stories that take place at different ages and that emphasize the non-linearity of age in the lives of Black people, or what Habiba Ibrahim calls “Black Age,” which acknowledges a sociogenic approach to age instead of the chronological age from which Black people have been estranged. These comediennes mock innocence and recognize themselves as non-innocent. This paper uses close readings of these comediennes’ performances in the context of the African American vernacular and performance traditions in which these women are situated.

Sommere has a bit from 2002 where she recalls the confidence boost of learning to hula-hoop, of learning rhythm and connects it to her sexual prowess as an adult. Ms. Pat is a comedienne who recently joked about how her mother had her baptized seven times as she trickster-troped the churches for financial assistance, Zainab Johnson tells us the story of barely escaping a man in her neighborhood who preyed upon her. Mo’Nique bounces between ages 11, 22, 13, and 56 in a way that is non-linear.

Black Girl, Hold the Magic: Understanding the Complexities of Black Girlhood

Brittany Davis, Florida International University

In 2013, CaShawn Thompson coined the phrase #BlackGirlMagic to celebrate and uplift Black girls and women. Since then, it has had significant traction on social media domestically and globally. What happens when we explore beyond the phrase? The cultural colloquialism that refers to the invincibility of black girls and Black women who have navigated unforeseen challenges and circumstances in their lives provides a one-dimensional narrative. The desirability to be seen as invincible is often at the expense of being invisible. The idea of Black Girl Magic provides a “feel good” analogy for Black girls and Black women who have often been met with gender/race-based policing and violence. The colorful phrase furthers the “strong black woman” trope which has been detrimental to Black women and girls. The research project contextualizes Black Girl Magic as a euphemism for Black girl trauma, Black girl pain, and Black girl harm.

Throughout the research project, we will explain how the phrase is used to acknowledge black girls and Black women and ask if it dismantles structural violence that continues to harm Black girls and Black women. Even though we understand that Black girl magic is

intergenerational, we contend that to define ourselves as Black women, we have to heal our inner Black girl. From young black girls being suspended at higher rates than their male counterparts to alarming Black maternal mortality rates, the state of Black girls and women is urgent.

The research project will utilize Collin's (1995) feminist theory and conceptualizations of power and identity politics. We will expand beyond #BlackGirlMagic to understand how black girls bloom. This alternative concept explores our historical roots, holistic wellness, and ability to define ourselves for ourselves.

'Big Ooman Ting': Adulthood, Public Discourse, and Black Girls' Bodies in Kingston Jamaica

Sadiyah Malcom, University of Michigan

According to "Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood" (Epstein, Blake and González, 2017) 2, Black girls are perceived as more adult-like, and less innocent than their white peers, beginning as early as five years old. This 'adulthood' bias is connected to a wide range of negative outcomes across public systems and social life.³ It is also intrinsically connected to particular legacies of historical and contemporary violence, namely colonization, enslavement and gender-based violence. Violence against black women and girls in Jamaica— including the denial of Black girls' childhoods— begins with forced removal, chattel slavery, and related racial violence. It has continued through colonialism and imperialism, forced sterilizations, hyper-sexualization of Black women and girls⁴ and the imposition of racist colonial legacies of and beliefs about morality, reproductive coercion, and social control. I argue that the lingering impacts of these legacies are still palpable, today, and we witness them in everyday Jamaican social life, through adulthood, and by extension, contemporary gender based violence. "Big Ooman Ting" troubles questions of gender and sexuality, childhood(s) in the Global South, the contested category of age, and adulthood bias to build empirical and theoretical knowledge about the dynamic life-worlds of Black girls in Kingston, Jamaica. Drawing on Black, transnational and Caribbean feminist traditions, the project primarily looks at how colonial ideas about race, gender and performance produce contemporary social tensions and "slippages"⁵ that mediate the transition to adulthood among girls coming of age in Kingston, Jamaica.

"Yuh a Girl One Minute, Den Yuh a Woman the Next": Transitions of Afro-Caribbean Girlhood

Ocqua Murrell, University of Florida

Mundanity of girlhood suggests that there are aspects of girlhood that lacks interests and excitement for girls and femmes. Though that may be true for some, my work with Afro-Caribbean girls in the island of Sint Maarten suggests the opposite: that there is much to gain in childhood and much to look forward to. I argue that girlhood is not a phase of the life course that we must move from or leave behind, but a phase that we carry with us and take with us as an essence of our being, well into adulthood. I present data on the transitional period between girlhood and womanhood/adulthood with 5 girls from a larger. I ask the following questions: 1) Is there a period the girls/women describe between girlhood and woman/adulthood that is different from girlhood and different from woman/adulthood? 2) If so, how do the girls define (narrate/navigate/negotiate) this

transitional period? If not, when do the girls recognize that they have entered adulthood? I use a transnational Black girlhood feminist framework I developed, to argue that this framework can be used to study the lives of Black girls globally by paying attention to socio-historical, contextual, and cultural boundaries. The findings show reveal that the girls agreed there is a transitional period between girlhood and womanhood/adulthood. There was one participant who did not feel like she had experienced a transition. How the girls defined this transitional period varied depending on how they perceived their personal experiences thus far. The findings from the interviews show that the girls' experiences of the transitional period consist of two overall themes: "it's complicated" and claiming their agency. The themes consist of the following subthemes: temporality, nonlinearity, support; "I can do what I want," and planning for their future with liminality.

Panel B: Playful Moments in Histories of Institutional Control

10:30 am – 11:45 pm, ET

Moderator: Monica Mercado, Colgate University

The Mundanity of Black Girlhood Religion: Building Routine, Building Mather Girls
Mélena Laudig, Princeton University

This presentation seeks to recover the pleasure of Black girls in the Jim Crow South by examining the prescriptive archives of a Baptist boarding school known as the Mather School. Founded in 1868 in Beaufort, South Carolina, the Mather School served elementary, high school, and even college-aged Black girls and boys at different points until its 1968 dissolution, but it was established for and primarily educated Black girls. Drawing on wide-ranging archival sources from the Mather School archive, including ephemera, extant copies of the student-produced Mather Star News, photographs, and oral histories, I consider various case studies that provide portals for analyzing the everyday play, social networks, intimacy, and religious perspectives of Black girls in an institutional setting. Despite the school's sometimes pathological renderings of Black girlhood and expectations that the girls uphold a particular racialized and gendered performance of girlhood, girls at Mather still found arenas in which to engage in self-expression and to build pleasure into their quotidian school routines. As I illuminates these moments in the archive, I seek to build new methodologies and theoretical frameworks for finding Black girls' pleasure in institutional records.

"Just a Bunch of Merry Maids": Girls' Play and Politics at Chicago Settlement Houses, 1890-1920

Fiona Maxwell, University of Chicago

This paper explores the ways in which everyday acts of play at Progressive Era Chicago settlement houses prepared working-class immigrant and Black girls to imagine and claim new political roles. Situated in Chicago's least resourced industrial districts, settlement houses facilitated reform advocacy and educational programming for community members of all ages. Girls took advantage of settlement offerings to form self-governed clubs, in which they developed expressive confidence and collective power through boisterous improvisational games, witty banter and conversation,

comedic storytelling, and productions of original and adapted scripts. While previous scholarship has primarily analyzed the motivations and achievements of the middle-class, college-educated women who founded and resided at settlements, I redirect attention to the little-examined club archive, which consists of girl-authored meeting minutes, newspapers, stories, poems, play programs, and joke sheets. In addition to facing gender discrimination and poverty, the compilers of this archive possessed problematic access to mainstream educational and political channels by virtue of their race, national origin, neurodiversity, physical disability, and refusal to conform to heteronormative expectations for courtship and marriage.

The paper begins by considering the ways in which settlement volunteers situated girls' exuberant speech and movement as subversive tools for expanding women's role in the public sphere. I then analyze moments when girls transformed club pedagogy by introducing their own play practices and media imitations. Club leaders and members theorized the resulting culture of playful girlhood as a model of democratic collaboration that could be used to challenge industrial capitalism and its intersecting forms of social inequality. The paper ends by interrogating participants' self-described maturation from "little girls" to "broad-spirited, self-reliant young women" and their corresponding leadership in local movements for labor justice and voting rights. The club archive reveals that what may have seemed to be "just a bunch of merry maids" pursuing play was in fact an apprenticeship for collective female-led political action.

The Schoolgirl Outside the School: Learning, Play, and Impropriety in the Everyday
Sudipa Topdar, Illinois State University

Visits to historical sites and museums were an integral part of experiential learning in schools in late colonial India. Fieldtrips exposed schoolchildren to different regions and histories of India. This paper examines the writings of schoolgirls in late colonial India to study their relationship to these non-domestic spaces, located outside familial control, where they moved, explored, learned, played, and had fun with school friends. I put a premium on the schoolgirls' authorship to, first, asset the everyday lives of schoolgirls in late colonial India as a site of history. Second, I study how the schoolgirls physically engaged with their surroundings, thought and acted in the outside world, and expressed their gender. Doing so, I challenge the notion of girlhoods in colonial India as one of seclusion alone. Third, I examine the intersections of religious education and gender in shaping the schoolgirls' subjectivities, belonging, and play. The predominant model for female students was the respectable, chaste, and morally upright woman whose strength came from self-control, self-denial, self-direction, and the fear and love of God. While many schoolgirls embodied these ideals, gendered tensions often surface in their writings over the sort of femininity that most schools wanted their female students to embody and what the schoolgirls themselves wanted. I demonstrate that even under strict adult surveillance and disciplinary institutional control, schoolgirls in colonial India found moments of play, fun, escape, and enacted the impropriety of "unladylike behavior."

Games and entertainments in everyday life of pupils in institutes of noble girls in sub-Russian Ukraine in the 19th and early 20th centuries
Ilona Zhovta, Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute

This paper explores the ways in which everyday acts of play at Progressive Era Chicago settlement houses prepared working-class immigrant and Black girls to imagine and claim new political roles. Situated in Chicago's least resourced industrial districts, settlement houses facilitated reform advocacy and educational programming for community members of all ages. Girls took advantage of settlement offerings to form self-governed clubs, in which they developed expressive confidence and collective power through boisterous improvisational games, witty banter and conversation, comedic storytelling, and productions of original and adapted scripts. While previous scholarship has primarily analyzed the motivations and achievements of the middle-class, college-educated women who founded and resided at settlements, I redirect attention to the little-examined club archive, which consists of girl-authored meeting minutes, newspapers, stories, poems, play programs, and joke sheets. In addition to facing gender discrimination and poverty, the compilers of this archive possessed problematic access to mainstream educational and political channels by virtue of their race, national origin, neurodiversity, physical disability, and refusal to conform to heteronormative expectations for courtship and marriage.

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Panel C: The Politics of Doll Play

12:15 pm – 1:30 pm, ET

Moderator: Lacey Bobier, University of Toronto, Scarborough

(Un)pleasant Company

Samantha English, Northwestern University

In 1987, Pleasant Rowland introduced the pleasure of playing with a doll "just like you" to white girls across America. Unlike baby dolls, which taught them about motherhood, or Barbies, which advertised future contours of womanhood, Pleasant Company's historical characters, later known as American Girl dolls, encouraged (certain) children to amuse themselves with themselves. By creating status items that were also storytelling devices, American Girl capitalized on an idea of girlhood that their commodities rendered impossibly idiosyncratic and generic. Though every doll and her story was structured around the same series of events, emotions, and even outfits, their individual embodiments of those redundant plots and products differed dramatically, as did the

girls who purchased and played with them. In practice, this contradiction could cause conflicts during child play, particularly between two subjects with dolls that were supposed to be, but in practice rarely were, “just like” them.

This conference paper examines two recent theatrical productions that conjure this drama of “doll play” in distinct settings. While Annie Baker’s “John” (2015) explores how the dramas of girlhood continue to haunt womanhood, Alexa Derman’s “Girlish” (2017) stages the end of a friendship on the edge of adolescence. Despite these temporal and thematic distinctions, both plays feature a interracial relationship and choose the same doll, Samantha, to problematize the intimacies this pairing invokes between doll and girl, or woman and world. I argue that each play explores a crisis of female subjectivity in relation to race, gender, and sexuality that undermines the individuality promised to girls in multiculturalist texts like *American Girl*. Further, I ask questions about what it means to, in Kathryn Bond Stockton’s words, “grow sideways” into a doll to avoid growing into someone else.

Barbie Girls in a Barbie World: Making a Transgressive Icon in Contemporary Art
Elizabeth Hamilton, Fort Valley State University

The Barbie doll is a cultural icon that has been both celebrated and criticized for its impact on girls’ development. This paper examines how Barbie is used as a medium and message in the art of black women artists. I argue that Barbie is not simply a toy, but rather a complex symbol that can be used to explore issues of race, gender, and beauty. The paper begins by discussing the role of dolls in American culture. I then turn to the work of three black women artists who have used Barbie in their art: Cee Scott, Sheila Pree Bright, and Lauren Kelley. These artists use Barbie to explore a variety of themes, including racism, sexism, and body image. The work of these artists is important because it challenges the traditional view of Barbie as a harmless toy for African American girls. Barbie art by contemporary black women artists is an extension of girlhood Barbie play. They show how Barbie can be used to raise awareness of important social issues and to empower young girls. Scott, Pre Bright, and Kelley use their art to expose the material and ideological conflicts of Barbie dolls. The artists use their works to articulate the things they may not have been able to articulate as girls. Their experiences provide intertextual depth to a ubiquitous symbol. Barbie is everywhere and her meanings seem to loom into our adult imaginations. Rather than project that onto their girlhood selves, the artists attend to the power Barbie continues to have now and how those meanings morphed into adult ideologies and values.

Girl Phenomenology: Theorizing from Girlhood Play in The Doll Games
Callie Ingram, University at Buffalo

What is “girl phenomenology”? Taking my cue from “girl dinner” and “girl math,” which aren’t expressions of bioessentialist behaviors so much as indexes of (feminine-coded) opposition to heteropatriarchal values—and specifically, for “dinner”/“math,” gendered expectations of unproductive labor—this presentation will explore feminist approaches to phenomenology that emerge through the lens of girlhood play.

While phenomenology has been a key method for feminist philosophers, valorizing lived experience as a foundation for knowledge, feminists writing after poststructuralism are

also wary of an uncritical reliance on experience, one that doesn't account for larger systems of power and discourse. To that end, critical phenomenology, which combines theorizing from first-person experience with an analysis of how that experience is formed through discursive and material power relations, helps us to understand what social structures determine our learned habits of thinking, sensing, and doing.

In this presentation, I examine the representation of girls' lived experience in *The Doll Games* (2001). Masquerading as an academic study of the authors' play with dolls—"a ground-breaking series of theatrical performances by Shelley and Pamela Jackson that took place in a private home in Berkeley, California in the first half of the 1970s"—the digital project is an experimental, metafictional reflection on girlhood. It seeks to "defrock" heteropatriarchal expectations of "cuteness," and to instead reveal the "violence, avidity, and curiosity" of doll games.

I argue that *The Doll Games* can be read as a critical phenomenology. As Pamela Jackson writes, "The games had [. . .] a capacity to both slavishly mimic what they borrowed from 'out there' and to transform it, make it 'nasty' or chop off its legs. . ." Ultimately, by marking the ideological conditions on experiences of girlhood play and showcasing oppositional girlhood affects and knowledges, *The Doll Games* participates in what we might call "girl phenomenology."

Dollzmania: an Exploration of a Digital Girlhood and Girls' Cyberculture from the Early Internet Era

Olivia Shepard, University of Virginia

This paper investigates "Dollzmania," a digital dress-up doll culture created and managed by girls from the late 1990s to the late 2000s. It originated on The Palace online chat platform in 1995, where female users began to create interactive doll makers and 16-bit avatars using Microsoft Paint, while also learning HTML to establish websites dedicated to the sharing and designing of these pixel dolls. Today, Dollzmania and its iconic low resolution, MS-paint, pixel aesthetic evoke a sense of nostalgia for original users and new fans alike. This study aims to explore the origins and evolution of Dollzmania culture by analyzing its motifs, values, and aesthetics. Through examining the historical context and cultural significance of this internet culture, this paper seeks to understand how girls built and facilitated Dollzmania, ultimately providing themselves a platform in the late 90s and early 00s to express their identities, creativity, and agency. Through employing archival research, close reading/textual analysis, and theoretical analysis, I explore the visual aesthetics, social dynamics, and community interactions amongst users and their doll sites. In conducting this research, my objective is to foster an understanding of this expression of digital girlhood and girls' cyberculture from the early internet era.

Ultimately, this study seeks to emphasize the creativity and agency demonstrated by the first girls who had access to the internet, showcasing how they shaped their own cultural practices and online spaces.

Panel D: Girl Talk, Girl Voices

1:45 pm – 3:00 pm, ET

Moderator: E Lev Feinman, Rutgers University

“Hey, Would You Like to Be Part of This?”: Digital Leisure Practices of Culturally Diverse Girls During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Emily Booth, University of Technology Sydney

Anita Harris, Deakin University

Mainstream coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on young people’s digital lives has concentrated on experiences of isolation and fatigue from the many hours spent on online schooling, but this bleak picture is an incomplete one. This paper presents findings from a project examining the everyday digital citizenship practices of culturally diverse youth, with a particular focus on girls’ digital leisure practices during lockdowns in Australia. Drawing on interviews with 7 participants aged 12-21, we argue that girls created joy, creativity and connectivity through activities like crafting, podcasting, and socialising online, which have had lasting positive impacts since the pandemic was declared officially over. Mediated by, but not restricted to, digital technologies, and navigating both private and public contexts, our participants were able to resist the daily pressures of the pandemic through fulfilling digital leisure practices. The findings of this paper also challenge common representations of culturally diverse girls, who have historically been excluded from more romantic or banal notions of girlhood and predominantly constructed as at risk online. In a time of great uncertainty, it was the very ordinariness of being a girl, connecting with other girls, and doing “girl things” online that gave our participants the strength to persevere.

Hard at Play and Levelling Up Dress-Up: Girls, their Books, and Living History Museums

Heather Fitzsimmons, MacEwan University

Tania Gigliotti, MacEwan University

Madison Francoeur, MacEwan University

Hauling water from the pump, gathering eggs, weeding the garden, scraping hide, carding wool, baking in the wood stove, drilling younger children on their letters and sums – these are examples of girls’ daily labour from Alberta’s past; they are also chores girls choose to do when they work (as staff or volunteers) at living history museums. Often inspired by popular novels like *Anne of Green Gables*, *Little House on the Prairie*, and stories in the *Dear Canada* series, girls don bonnets and pinafores, flex their muscles, and aim to embody the experiences of historically located girls as they animate museum spaces.

For the past five years, we have been interviewing girls ages 3 – 23 who work and volunteer at Fort Edmonton Park, Calgary’s Heritage Park, and the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village. A step beyond playing house, girls are taught how to use the tools, do the tasks, and have meaningful conversations about historical contexts and issues with visitors of all ages. Having fun working hard, many of the girls we have interviewed return to the museums summer after summer to represent girls’ mundane experiences, reminding visitors how girls have shaped and were shaped by the socioeconomic and

cultural conditions of the past. Girls enthusiastically foreground girls' joy and suffering, tedium and excitement, not to mention experiences of sexism, racism, and other challenges that girls face. At the same time, they explore their own contemporary relationships with and questions about the past, while getting work experience in the present. They get to play pretend, while building community, and providing meaningful experiences for others.

We will be drawing from what the girls told us in interviews, as well from the books that inspired their living history museum passions. We will explore the politics and racialization girl staff (paid and volunteer) experience now while playing at being girls of the past. We also ask how, through their interest in and interpretation of the everyday life of girls in the past, they push against boundaries of what it means to be a girl, to work hard, and to find pleasure in the present.

'Catch me if you can!' – Play, playfulness and pleasurable resistance in the everyday lives of girls in an inner London borough, UK.

Brenda Herbert, Goldsmiths, University of London

This paper explores the everyday play and playfulness of girls in an inner London borough UK, The girls all had experienced domestic abuse and social work intervention. There is significant literature about domestic abuse and children, but very few studies have been conducted with children themselves and there is little exploration beyond the remit of their domestic abuse experiences (Callaghan, Fellin and Alexander, 2017). This paper goes beyond the narrow lens of trauma and abuse to explore how girls use playfulness and pleasurable resistance to navigate their everyday lives.

This paper is based on an 18-month multimodal ethnography with ten children (six girls and four boys) who had experienced domestic abuse and social care interventions. The ethnography started in February 2020 and continuing throughout the physical restrictions of Covid-19. Methods used to explore the everyday included walking, playing, talking, writing, photography, participation observation, digital and in person methods.

Using multimodal methods the girls demonstrated how they used play, playfulness and pleasure to navigate racism, poverty and marginalisation in society to build liveable lives with their families, friends and communities. The children showed themselves in their full humanness and challenged predominant narratives about them being passive and damaged.

The paper demonstrates how in paying close attention to the play practices and pleasurable resistance in everyday life, we can experience how girls make sense of their lives and make liveable lives, resulting in girls creating knowledge about themselves that is beyond the constraints of domestic abuse, racism, and adversity.

"She's Everything": Little Girls' Perspectives on Being Like Barbie

Brilynn Janckila, Michigan Technological University

The "girl-method" (Mitchell, 2011) is highly valued in girlhood studies and focuses on adults working with girls to understand more about the girl experience and, hopefully, advocate for them. Typically, the focus is on teen or tween girls (McRobbie, 2007;

Ringrose & Harvey, 2013; Rossie, 2015; Willett, 2005), which has provided valuable insight into the girl perspective. However, little girls, or girls ages 5-9, have not yet been heavily included in the field. As part of my dissertation project, I am completing two focus groups with little girls to explore their perspective on the Barbie Vlogs on YouTube—where Barbie is now an influencer—and what they think about older girlhood in relation to media made for them. In this presentation, I will explore a content analysis of the Barbie Vlogs themselves, as well as themes from the focus groups. The emerging themes include maturity, being yourself, and lack of indication of wanting to look like Barbie. The presentation will also include reflections on the methods, working with girls this age, and recommendations for future research.

Speaking to girls this age can bring new insight into the figure of the girl. Even at ages 5-9, girls are forming their identity. Barbie represents a specific girlhood—a white, (upper) middle-class, can-do girl. In her vlogs, she demonstrates an interior life focused on self-empowerment and competency, engaging girls in a culture of competency rather than of leisure. Barbie’s modern role-model worthy makeover as a lifestyle influencer is an interesting dichotomy of social forces at play—the unapologetically feminine and capable character is using social media to speak directly to her viewers. My goal with this specific study is to explore how little girls are socialized to become older girls, particularly in relation to the performance of teenage girlhood.

Panel E: Girls’ Spaces for Pleasure-Seeking

3:15 pm – 4:30 pm, ET

Moderator: Nat Urban, The Girl Museum

On Generational Negotiations: How College-Going Latina Girls Teach their Mothers about Gender and Sexuality

Michelle Gomez Parra, The University of California, Santa Cruz

Research on generational negotiations among families tends to focus on the ways in which adult parents, usually the mother, teach their children about gender and sexuality. While this research is fruitful as it reveals that motherhood can be an analytical category through which subjects challenge poverty, racism, and xenophobia via the sexual politics they teach their children about gender and sexual norms, it has not analyzed how generational negotiations of these social forces are bi-directional processes. In other words, there is little research documenting how children teach their mothers about gender and sexuality. In this presentation, I draw on data from a larger qualitative project analyzing how mobility experiences shape gender and sexual negotiations among Latina mother-daughter dyads to describe how Latina daughters share new information about gender and sexuality they learn in college with their mothers. For example, girls encounter feminist and sex positivist discourses and new information about reproductive health—which they leverage to help their mothers seek sexual health resources and experience new pleasures like dating non-sexist men and playing with new modes of makeup and clothing. In addition, daughters encounter new information about queerness, including the concept of sexual fluidity and the definition of various sexual

orientation categories—information they share with their mothers in hopes of shaping their previous understandings of queerness. In sum, this paper contributes to scholarly debates in girlhood studies, Sexuality Studies, and Feminist Studies by shedding light on the ways in which daughterhood is an analytical category through which girls teach their mothers to challenge gender and sexual inequalities.

Romance and Sexual Desire in the Millennial Teen Film

Jade Jontef, La Trobe University

At the turn of the millennium, Hollywood teen films, particularly those marketed to teenage girls, were rife with stories of romance and courtship. Films such as *Clueless*, *10 Things I Hate About You*, *She's All That*, *The Twilight Saga*, and *Easy A* sought to target young female audiences by tweaking adult romance narratives to focus upon the amorous lives of teenage girls. However, while these tales are full of emotional sentiment and young women's yearning for intimacy, they fail to include any serious consideration of teenage girls' sexual desires. The seemingly natural connection between love and sex dominant in these teen films perpetuated the idea that girls' erotic desires are bound to romantic intimacy and commitment above sexual fulfilment. The glorification of true love in these millennial teen films assumed that girls' sexual pleasure cannot exist outside of romantic love, cementing long held gendered myths about female sexuality and desire. In constructing girls' sexual pleasure as inherently tied to romantic affection, these representations conversely implied that teenage girls who have sex outside of a romantic relationship are 'slutty' and sexually immoral, stigmatising teenage girls who fail or refuse to conform to traditional gender ideals. These films had a considerable influence on the sexual socialisation of millennial teenagers, especially teenage girls, and the construction of female sexuality in the late 90's and 00'. This paper will examine how representations of female pleasure, virginity and masturbation in millennial teen films shaped the millennial generation's ideas about girls and femininity, their sexual desires (or lack thereof), and sexual expectations.

Pleasure and Play as Safety: an exploration of fat girlhood in Lisa Fipps "Starfish"

Allegra Morgado, York University

My paper will explore the idea of pleasure and play as areas of "safety" or "safe spaces" for girls who hold marginalized identities. The specific focus will be a critique of Lisa Fipps' 2021 middle-grade book "Starfish" about a young fat girl who finds her "safe space" in her swimming pool "where she feels weightless in a fat-obsessed world" (Fipps, 2021). This textual analysis will explore how young girls cope with their "unfit" identities (Rice, 2007) and othering from their peers (and, often, their parents and other adults in their lives) through explorations of play and pleasure.

Fitting within my greater research area of fat and queer embodiments and community-building, a textual analysis of "Starfish" will look at how fat girls, often deemed unfit for normal ideas of girlhood (Rice, 2007), find acceptance, pleasure, and liberation through play. I will also reflect on my own personal experiences of fat girlhood and what pleasure-seeking within that period of my life looked like, as well as touch on how children's media has evolved to include more diverse representations of girlhood. These ideas disrupt typical ideas of girlhood that rely on white supremacist, capitalist, and

heteronormative notions and create space for different conceptualizations of what it means to be a girl.

Invitations Not To Be Denied: The Politics of Black Girl Pleasure

darlene scott, Virginia State University

This presentation discusses a manuscript under review that explores how Black girls experience and answer desire. *Invitations Not To Be Denied* is a collection of poetry that brings racialized and gendered history to Black girls' experiences of pleasure. Historically denied the agency to reject or oblige solicitation—sexual and otherwise—of their bodies Black girls here are more than victims of their bodies and the impositions placed on them. The text includes quotidian solicitations and the girls' participation in them as evidence of their agency.

It's informed by scholarship like Saidiya Hartman's *Wayward Lives Beautiful Experiments* (2019) in which she narrates the (mostly sexual) criminalization of young Black women in Philadelphia and New York at the turn of the century. The young women make their bodies sites of resistance especially in public spaces—an example of their agency.

It considers the *Girlhood Interrupted* study (2017) on public education and *Pushout* by Dr. Monique Morris (2015) that describe the over-policing of Black girls and their bodies like the policing of the uses of their bodies in Hartman's work and the appearance of their bodies such as their hair. The 2020 Crown Act finally decriminalized Black natural hair in the workplace, a style choice that many Black women exercise to express agency and make their bodies sites of resistance.

Ultimately *Invitations* is an invitation to my Black girl/self to honor desire and accept pleasure; that accepting it is a liberatory practice.

Keynote Address: Black Girl Autopoetics

Dr. Ashleigh Greene Wade

Assistant Professor of Digital Studies at University of Virginia

4:45 pm – 6 pm, ET

Moderator: Destiny Crockett, Rutgers University

Dr. Wade's bio:

Ashleigh Greene Wade is an Assistant Professor of Digital Studies, jointly appointed in Media Studies and African American Studies. Broadly speaking, her work traverses the fields of Black girlhood studies, digital and visual media studies, Black Feminist theory, and digital humanities. Wade has a Ph.D. in Women's and Gender Studies from Rutgers University and is an alumna of the Carter G. Woodson Institute for African American and African Studies Fellowship Program. Her work on digital Blackness appears in *The Black*

Scholar, National Political Science Review, Women, Gender, and Families of Color, Visual Arts Research, and Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies. Wade's new monograph, *Black Girl Autopoetics: Agency and Possibility in Everyday Digital Practice* (Duke University Press), explores the role of Black girls' digital practices in documenting and preserving everyday Black life.

Day 2: Friday, April 5

Panel A: The Meme-ification of "Girl"

9:00 am – 10:15 am, ET

Moderator: Kelly Curtis, Southern Connecticut State University

"Babygirl" and Making Violence Cute

Joanna McQuade, Wake Technical Community College

One of the most interesting and least explored "girl" trends is the phenomenon of the babygirl. Girls and young women online refer to masculine figures like Kendall Roy, ultra-rich scion of HBO's *Succession*, and Al Pacino, famous for his portrayals of violent machismo, as "babygirl." In this context, babygirl is a fantasy that takes a powerful man and renders him nonthreatening through the discourse of cuteness. The cute-girlification of powerful, often violent men may appear to be merely a regressive glorification of patriarchal values. But this reading of babygirl oversimplifies the inner lives and material realities of girls. According to a 2023 report by the CDC, "teen girls are confronting the highest levels of sexual violence, sadness, and hopelessness they have ever reported." By taking seriously the violence that girls face, this presentation suggests that "babygirl" is both a playful meme and an attempt to recover power.

As Sianne Ngai asserts, "cuteness is a way of aestheticizing powerlessness" that "hinges on a sentimental attitude toward the diminutive and/or weak" and is "deeply associated with the infantile, the feminine, and the unthreatening." Labeling an object or person "cute" is a way of wielding discursive power and asserting one's status as subject. Ngai writes, "The asymmetry of power that cuteness revolves around" is a reminder of "how aesthetic categories register social conflict." At the heart of cuteness is "the subject's sense of power over those who are less powerful." This presentation will investigate examples of babygirlified men to explore how this calculated cuteness, in the hands of girls and young women, turns the gendered threats of their lives into a joke, thereby asserting their own discursive power. How does this exercise of aesthetic disempowerment help or hurt women and girls? What can babygirl tell us about power and play?

Girlhood and the spectrum between irony and sincerity

Nivedita Nair, Birkbeck College, University of London

'Girlhood is a spectrum,' the internet meme tells us, between two extremes: a curled up baby deer on one side and a crusty raccoon on the other, Hello Kitty floating on cloud on one side and Gregor Samsa-as-cockroach on the other, waking up one day to appreciate your 'nice racks' and waking up with 'worms in your brain' on another (@Frickmackenzie, 2023). Even though arguably, femme-meme culture online is a testament to how being wry and self-deprecating is the most 'girl-coded' thing one can do, and despite the emergence of the commercially viable 'dissociative feminism' aesthetic in the 2020s (Havas and Sulimma, 2020), in popular imagination, 'irony' as rhetoric, affect, and aesthetic still belongs to the domain of the male (Jackson and Nicholson-Roberts, 2017). In this paper, I argue that the spectrum of girlhood, and its implicit assumptions of what counts as girlhood, harnesses irony and sincerity in a way that begins and borrows from the cis-het-male mode of New Sincerity, but adapts and evolves far beyond its original capacities, into a more critical understanding of the self as consumer of the self under neoliberalism today. Taking a cue from Jonsson and Warren-Crow's (2021) insightful reclamation of Tiquun's 'Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young Girl' (1999), I explicate how irony and sincerity today play a role in the ways we imagine what our girlhood was, or is. By seriously considering the use of playful irony to rationalize the traumatic, disorienting, or even Kafkaesque moments of girlhood as mundane and just part of a spectrum, I argue that this imagination tells us a story of the ways in which girlhood, mundanity, and the 'cruel optimisms' of our girlhoods play into consumption, self-valorisation, identity, and neoliberalism (Berlant 2011).

Playing the Sad Girl Online: Girl Feminism and Affect Theory in Digital Media

Suhana Simran, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India

If calling oneself a girl online is predominantly associated with pink, play and pleasure, the sad girl brings to the fore negative affects of rage, sadness, doom and gloom that momentarily indicate a break in the social media cult of wellness and happiness. The sad girl is no green-juice-drinking 'That Girl'; the sad girl exists in a state of limbo, in an impasse, where she revels in and plays with a sadness that destroys her. The affective resonance of sad girl content online helps create an aesthetic that collates disparate elements together that have no logical connection with each other: heroines of classic literature, Plath and Woolf, as well as angry women of popular cinema regularly feature in the sad girl's articulation of affect online. Given the affective turn in media studies, the present paper seeks to utilise feminist affect theory to see the contradictory political potentialities of the transpersonal flow of negative affects through the digital space, particularly in its ability to publicly display and play with overwhelming sad affects in young women and girls, affects that cannot be wished away or entirely cured by a capitalist therapeutic model. Taking a cue from Sara Ahmed's reclamation of the feminist killjoy, this paper seeks to interrogate whether the sad girl enacts an alternate kind of activism in the digital space, a deliberately flippant, deliberately unserious, amateur feminism, a girl feminism, that flows in and through bodies in a digital space, thus encouraging a rethinking of the role that a girlish display of angst and sadness can play in feminist politics within the digital mediascape.

"Girl" history: Contextualising the trend of discussing "girl" trends using critical discourse analysis

Isha Singh, FLAME University

The advancement of digital media has ushered in innovative forms of self-expression and creativity, positing the internet as an open, democratic space. Nevertheless, even a cursory glance over online spaces reveals how economic, political, and social inequalities seem to followed users into the digital world where new, context-contingent forms of discrimination and resistances to it have emerged. A 'new' phenomenon that can be observed in the online space, is for trends to take the form of "girl [noun]", where girl acts as an adjective, attempting to put across a unified experience of womanhood. Against this background, the "girl" trends have garnered a lot of traction and attention across social media platforms. They have been read as a repackaging of womanhood, a marketing campaign, a meaningless viral fad, playful resistance to the pressures of capitalism, poorly disguised misogyny, and as gender essentialism wrapped in a pretty, adorable coquette aesthetic coded bow. The novelty of the "girl" trends can be put into question by examining how "girl" trends were observable in the publishing world and on screen. This research study looks is looking at the transformative potential of social media as a third space, simultaneously constructing and promulgating normative understandings, and holding the potential to playfully challenge hegemonic constructions. Tumblr as a platform offers space for long-form text posts to be complimented by stage-whispering within the tags, catering to the constructivist approach underscoring this study. Using a critical discourse analysis of Tumblr text posts containing the phrase 'girl math', this research aims to analyse how Tumblr users have read into the "girl" trends. The findings of this study would help in historicising the "girl" trends and offer critical insight into the relations of power surrounding gender being reproduced and challenged through the systemic cycle of trends.

Panel B: 10 Years of African Girlhood Rooted in Participatory Social Transformation: (Auto)ethnographies of the Everyday in Rural Malawi

10:30 am – 11:45 pm, ET

Pempho Chinkondenji, University of North Dakota
Sunga Kufeyani, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
Livinia Kaunda, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
Fortune Matondo, Loving Arms Malawi

As a collective consisting of three co-founders of a Southern African-based nonprofit and two girls who are beneficiaries and collaborators, we unpack the mundanity of the everyday experience of African girlhood in our rural community in Nambuma, Malawi. The co-founders started Loving Arms Malawi (LAM) in July 2014 as a female-led and girl-centered nonprofit. LAM's primary goal is to advance girls' education in rural Malawi by leveraging and frontline community participation and addressing gender/sexual violence. Our goal for this roundtable is to amplify how the mundanity of African girlhood in Nambuma is intentionally and strategically suspending damage (Tuck, 2009) to oppressive structures, locally and globally.

Our roundtable discussion draws from 10 years of experience supporting and collaborating with girls in educational development. More importantly, we present this discussion with two girls who have been in the LAM scholarship program for over four years to share what the everyday looks like from their unique positionality and intersecting identities. Methodologically, the girls share autoethnographic narratives centered on the sub-theme “Girl Voice Amplified: Counterstorying.” The girls highlight the counternarratives of girlhood in rural communities such as Nambuma, most of which resist dominant narratives that (re)present African girlhood through damage-centered perspectives (Tuck, 2009) whose every day is rooted in struggle, homogeneity, and pain (Mohanty, 1984).

From the co-founders’ perspectives, our second theme, “Girl Power in Social Capital,” emphasizes LAM’s deliberate strategy of involving schoolgirls in frontline community engagement. The third theme, “Girl Economy,” focuses on Afro-communitarian initiatives investing in girlhood futures while emphasizing our scholarship fund and entrepreneurship with mother groups. Lastly, the fourth theme, “Girl Representations and Resistance,” showcases LAM’s collaborative advocacy and resistance to various forms of oppression. Here, we highlight organizational learning and how to walk alongside the girls and support their resistance as they continue to resist oppression.

Panel C: Learning to Become the “American Girl”

12:15 pm – 1:30 pm, ET

Moderator: Samantha English, Northwestern University

Feminist “Rookie” Revisiting the site of my first internet community: Tavi Gevinson’s Rookie Mag and the formation of teenage girlhood online

Kelly Curtis, Southern Connecticut State University

Tavi Gevinson shot to fame at the tender age of eleven when her fashion blog Style Rookie gained over thirty thousand readers she was invited to sit in at New York Fashion Week and subsequently went on to found Rookie magazine at the age of fifteen. Rookie was intended to embrace the complexities that come with the experience of being a teenage girl, it was one the few places I found online that centered the teenage girl experience in a way that was not strictly about consumerism the way many magazines directed at girls and women were (ex. Lucky, Seventeen, Teen Vogue, Marie Claire), while also having notoriety and was a platform adults took relatively seriously. Gevinson carved out a space for teenage girls with such creativity and success that adults had to take notice, a unique power that Rookie and Rookie readers were very aware of. However, Gevinson’s form of feminism was integral to Rookie, and was very white and middle class, despite its relative success at diversifying its content. Many popular culture articles have explored Gevinson’s success as a person, and the ‘it’ factor of Rookie magazine, as well as a few academic articles discussing Rookie’s particular brand of feminism. Little has been written in the years after Rookie folded about the magazine’s impact on teenage girls as we have exited the 2010s and as young girls swarm to new media platforms. Using an autoethnographic narrative I return to Rookie’s journey and its

impact on carving a space for teen girlhood, my Rookie adolescence, and my journey beyond Rookie's feminism. The website remains a living time capsule of the many limitations of 2010s white feminism, an interactive reminder of where my feminism started, and how it has grown beyond Rookie.

Age Segmentation in 20th-Century US Girls' Organizations: Unraveling the Dynamics of Girlhood, Gender, and Happiness

Jennifer Helgren, University of the Pacific

This paper contends that studying age segmentation in 20th-century girls' organizations can help scholars understand the convergence of age, gender, and happiness in U.S. definitions of girlhood. After establishing Camp Fire and the Girl Scouts in the 1910s to address the challenges of modern industrial life (processes described elsewhere in my work as well as by Susan Mitchell and Kristine Alexander), youth leaders expanded their clientele to include pre-teen siblings in Blue Birds and Rosebuds (soon renamed Brownies). Researchers Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh note that the "preteen" girl emerged in 20th-century consumer culture as a result of a "downward shift in age." Still, little scholarly attention has been directed to the littlest Scouts. Youth organizations provide an early case study of this segmentation. My paper compares these girl groups to the Wolf Cubs (eventually Cub Scouts), established by Boy Scouts, to tease out the distinctive meanings of play, happiness, and cheer for girls and boys. It provides a critical inquiry into how girlhood functioned as a category in the early 20th century and how that category changed over time. (Youth organizations targeted younger and younger children over the course of the 20th century.) It offers insight into the gendered politics of play and joy as youth organizations identified good cheer in childhood as important for future citizens. In addition, though not the main membership targets, Black girls, girls with disabilities, and Indigenous girls joined national girls' organizations. Although girls' organizations framed girlhood as a universal concept, race and ability shaped the way girls' organizations articulated understandings of childhood happiness.

Girlhood and Menstruation

Kathleen Murphey, Community College of Philadelphia

In considering the mundanity of girlhood, getting one's period is both extraordinary and completely ordinary. It is a transition between girlhood and young womanhood. Even though it has been fifty years since Judy Blum's *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, getting one's period is still stigmatized in our culture as shameful and dirty. Tampons and pads are taxed as luxury items and not essential goods in at least twenty-one states—unlike toilet paper and even condoms which are seen as essential goods. However, three recent books, *Code Red* (2023) by Joy McCullough, *Revenge of the Red Club* (2019) by Kim Harrington, and *Blood Moon* (2020) by Lucy Cuthew, tackle middle school, getting periods, body image anxieties, navigating friendships, family, and attractions, extra-curricular activities, activism, and the social media world that is now an inescapable part of the adolescent and young adult experience. Further, they raise additional issues like that of period poverty (the lack of access to tampons and pads can particularly affect low-income kids and keep them out of school and/or work), and that since our ideas about gender have expanded, menstruators (or people who menstruate) can be more than just those who identify as girls, young women, and women, and include transgender

folks. These texts show, in the words of Jessica Taft, a childhood studies scholar at the University of California, Santa Cruz, a “more nuanced and textured picture of girls’ multiple identities and their varied relationships to social, political, cultural and economic power and empowerment.” These texts explore serious issues facing American girls and yet leave rooms for playfulness and laughter.

Panel D: Play and Pleasure in Girls’ Social Worlds

1:45 pm – 3:00 pm, ET

Moderator: E Lev Feinman, Rutgers University

Breaking the Dress Code: Girls Prioritizing Self-Expression, Activism, and Comfort

Lacey Bobier, University of Toronto, Scarborough

Within what Pomerantz (2008) refers to as the Ophelia genre, girls’ style is pathologized. Portrayed as mindless fashion victims in a market that demands conformity while setting unachievable expectations, girls inevitably become depressed by the demands of style. Meanwhile, girls who defy mainstream looks are actually signaling distress. Such pathologizing discourse places girls in a no-win situation and neglects their agency and the pleasure they get from fashion. Examining middle school dress codes, I show how educators’ implementation of dress policies reproduces this discourse, positioning girls who violate rules as either oblivious dupes or willful troublemakers (but whose troublemaking serves no larger purpose). Girls, however, demonstrate that they do not thoughtlessly participate in fashion, but critically consider their appearance-related decisions. They frame rule-breaking as an intentional activity justified by values of self-expression, activism, and comfort. In caring about their right to self-expression, girls demand access to pleasurable aspects of their embodiment, like the right to wear what they want and thereby shape their identities (though this is still a negotiation of available subjectivities and the potential judgments of others). Girls also use their clothing to make statements about gender and racial biases present in schools’ dress codes. This form of activism is a satisfying way they assert their opinions and take up space. Finally, girls argue that comfort- physical and emotional- shapes their ability to focus in class. To them, prioritizing fashion and comfort easily translates into prioritizing their educations. When educators write off girls’ dress violations as trivial and pointlessly disruptive, they overlook the work girls put into weighing and navigating multiple factors (such as ability to focus, comfort, self-expression, political values, and risk of censure) just to get dressed every morning. Educators’ assessments undermine girls’ agency and deny them the pleasures of inhabiting the social skins they choose.

Gossip, the value of Girl Talk

Kate Molyneaux, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow

Gossip associated with women and girls, bitching, scandal, infamously a negative affective connection. The development and etymology of gossip situates women and gossip as intertwined in a negative relationship (Rysman, 1977), hushed tones and scathing comments besmirching others. I propose the vilification and undermining of gossip, undercutting its power to share collectively with the potential to disrupt.

Drawing on interview data collected as part of my PhD research on Experiences of Menstruation in Scotland, this paper explores everyday menstrual learning, focusing on girls' knowledge creation and sharing. My research unpacks 27 in-depth qualitative interviews, analysed in line with a feminist methodology, to gain insight into the everyday experiences of menstruation. Through participant stories of early menstrual learning, it is evident that girls collectively create and share knowledge.

Participants' accounts of early menstrual learning allow the positioning of gossip as counter communication to menstrual norms of concealment and individualised experience. In place of speculative, immoral sharing, I argue the potential of gossip as strategic and collectively productive through understanding of girls as agentic, which resists paternalism and neoliberal individualisation. Gossip is a form of information gathering, detail checking (Code, 1995) allowing girls to critically draw conclusions and construct knowledge. Sharing, sourcing and critically exploring information, learning through gossip not only facilitates information to be spread but further creates an early understanding of collective spaces. Positioning girls as collective resourceful agents, practising feminist ways of knowing – as we embrace the identity and category of 'girl', I argue in place of devaluing 'girl talk', we explore the value of gossip.

Dark Sociality: Sleepovers, Sexuality, and Playing with Time

Halle Singh, Rutgers University-Camden

The sleepover, or slumber party, holds iconic status in popular depictions of girls' culture and sociality. Given its cultural significance as a gendered rite of passage, the ubiquity of girls' sleepovers in movies, TV, and literature is unsurprising. But while sleepovers abound in popular representations of girlhood, there has been little to no discussion of sleepovers in academic discourse. Besides a few pieces in folklore studies, there has been no scholarly work on the sleepover, with only passing mention in dated encyclopedias on girls' culture and brief discussions in scholarship on horror films. Why has such a central facet of girls' culture received so little academic scrutiny?

In this paper, I argue that the moral panic surrounding girlhood sexuality renders the sleepover off limits to academic investigation: what I call the sleepover taboo. This moral panic is animated by a fear of (early) sexualization, either on the part of adult onlookers or on the part of the girl herself. While the sleepover is a hallmark girlhood experience, it is a private, girls-only event. The fact that the sleepover has been deemed unavailable for analysis reveals the implicit (adult) coding of the bedroom and nighttime as the space and time of sexuality. The fear of girlhood sexuality is the utmost concern, making the sleepover a scary event for the adult researcher to contend with.

By attending to the timespace of the sleepover—in the bedroom and at night—I show how this iconic girlhood leisure event complicates cultural narratives about sexualization and the academic work aiming to critique it. I end with a rereading of the sleepover for its potential in providing moments for girls to reclaim the night for their own use and their own pleasure.

Panel E: Girls on/in Digital Playscapes

3:15 pm – 4:45 pm, ET

Moderator: Kate Cairns, Rutgers University

The Dollhouse: Fanfiction as the Modern Girl's Playscape

Shoshannah Diehl, Marshall University

With the growing availability of online spaces for fandom interaction in the past two decades, young girls flock with growing intensity to the media they love. Fan videos, art, discourse, and fiction make up a network of lively fandom communities that offer solace, acceptance, and agency in a world that continually devalues “girl” media. Transformative works like fanfiction are a celebration of joy and provide an outlet for play that often continues long after traditional “girlhood” has passed.

According to Flow, an online journal of media studies, statistics taken from the fanfiction-hosting platform Archive of Our Own (Ao3) show that 53.77% of the Ao3 population are cisgender women (followed by nonbinary and transgender identities). Most of these users are young adults in their 20s or early 30s, though current data does not include statistics for users under the age of 18 (Rouse & Stanfill, 2023). Despite this data gap, fanfiction writers often pinpoint origin stories of fandom interaction to their early adolescence.

This presentation will explore the importance of fanfiction to girlhood and showcase how girls transform beloved works into fictional spaces that embrace their identities and values. Using popular tropes and trends in fanfiction over the years like the soulmate bond, alternate universes, self-inserts, and queering stories, the presentation will delve into how girls “play” with existing narratives and create spaces for themselves in the media they love.

Ecological gorgeousness on TikTok: girls connecting joy to environmental justice

Susan Driver, York University

My paper will explore playful and political enactments nature loving girls on social media. While girls leading climate activism have emerged across networked movements, they are not only rational and science loving but often mobilize poetic expressions of their connection and passion for nature. The creative and often stylistic ways in which girls include images and words that articulate their pleasurable immersion within diverse ecologies that include trees, plants, moss, mushrooms, animals, birds, mountains, fields and bodies of water add a layer of complexity and whimsical joy to their environmental focus. I want to focus on a case study of Dominique Palmer’s TikTok feed as a luscious example of how her sensuous engagement with nature grounds her political work as a climate activist and reveals the entanglements of multiple aspects of her life that are often overlooked within mainstream media accounts of youth activism. I also want to consider how her beautiful and playful posts that center upon sustainable fashion offer interesting glimpses of alternative femme embodiments that defy neoliberal binary gender norms. I will use posthuman feminist theory to bridge activist, artistic and

ecological dimensions of girls' nature loving experiences and expressions that are assembled across social media networks.

Always There: Girls' Gaming Cultures

Stephanie Harkin, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

Feminine videogame cultures have been vastly overlooked in gaming histories. Early accounts of DIY hacking and modding spaces note that girls' public participation was significantly marginalised. While girls' were indeed present in these spaces, I rather turn my attention to feminine gaming community practices that were distinct from mainstream boyhood-dominated sites. This approach is inspired by Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber's (1978/1991) influential essay on youth subcultures, where they found girls were underrepresented in studies privileging public spaces. McRobbie and Garber looked towards the private sanctuary of girls' bedrooms to better account for their subcultural participation. Following this, I likewise note that girls were indeed active, enthusiastic participants and creative, technical cultural producers in and around gaming culture, though not necessarily in the gamemaking and modding communities overrepresented in gaming histories.

Instead, I identify spaces that characterised girls' bedroom cultures but have not been typically aligned with gaming culture. Web design in the 1990s and 2000s, for instance, was immensely popular among teen girls, though its attachments to gaming culture have gone relatively unnoticed. Web design communities, however, were crucial sites of play, where games-adjacent networks thrived, from complex Neopets and Club Penguin web rings, to Animal Crossing blogs and Final Fantasy fan "shrines." Another major area of girls' DIY gaming cultures is the phenomenon of dollz. Dollz or dollmaking was a popular creative online trend where users could customise and share avatars on websites like Dollz Mania. 'Dolling' communities were vast, technologically literate, creative, and self-expressive, though rarely tied to informal games and play culture despite dressing up dolls being a cornerstone of feminine leisure and play and has had a meaningful impact on digital game design (i.e. Maxis' massively successful The Sims was originally titled "Doll House"). Accounting for the feminine reimagines what gaming culture looks like and helps produce a better account for girls' perspectives and experiences of play and games.

Water-Tok Girls: The Politics of the Stanley Cup Craze, Capitalism, and Girls' Consumption Practices in Everyday Day Life

Caroline Kaltefleiter, State University of New York College at Cortland

Modern girlhood can be understood with attention to the influence of commodities and practices of consumption over modern constructions of self. Participating in the consumer realm is a defining feature of life as a girl (McRobbie, Kearney, Best). Consumption practices among girls have changed with internet culture, specifically with the explosion of social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok. The recent phenomenon of "Water-Tok Girls" offers possibilities to explore how the mundane everyday practice of (water) consumption becomes commoditized and, at the same time, offers performance spaces for girls. This paper charts the history of Water-Tok and focuses on girls' media production on TikTok videos created and shared by girls featuring Stanley water cups, focusing on design practices, customization options, and

functionality. Attention is given to the emergence of segmented marketing as an alternative to mass marketing, illustrated by the famous collaboration between the brands of Stanley and Target, a well-known retail chain that offers a wide range of products, including clothing, electronics, and household essentials.

The work of philosopher Henri Lefebvre situates this analysis, wherein the notion of the everyday day becomes a critical arena where power structures and capitalist systems operate, shaping the experiences and identities of individuals who argue that capitalism not only dominates the economic sphere but also infiltrates all aspects of daily life, including leisure, consumption, and social interactions. This essay incorporates semi-structured interviews and concludes with a critical examination of Water-Tok videos and girls' performative actions, whose agency interrogates capitalist influence, and reclaims control of everyday life, promoting individual autonomy, and creating alternative spaces of advertising and marketing.

Brown Skin Girl: Mapping Negotiations of Colorism, Digital Resistance, and Black Girlhood

Kenesma John, University of Florida

Taryrn Brown, University of Florida

Ebonie Bennett, University of Florida

This study delves into the intricate relationship between the symbolic representation of skin color in virtual avatars and its profound impact on people's self-value within American society. Over time, white skin has been bestowed with societal significance, often associated with power and privilege. This research addresses the profound implications of these avatar choices on individuals' self-identity and the reinforcement of prevailing cultural norms. It highlights the subtle yet impactful ways in which modern technology intertwines with and reinforces societal attitudes toward race and appearance. By shedding light on this phenomenon, this paper aims to encourage further discussions on the potential consequences of associating skin color with value and self-worth in virtual spaces.

Day 3: Saturday, April 6

Panel A: Playing Off Girl Protagonists in Pop Culture

9:00 am – 10:15 am, ET

Moderator: Callie Ingram, University of Buffalo

'This Girl Won't Change': The Predictable and Pleasurable on Pakistani Television

Irum Iqbal Hussain, Institute of Business Administration

Television dramas remain the most enduring and effective form of 'popular culture' in Pakistan. They are watched by a predominantly female audience, a fact directly correlated with the predominantly female star cast of the dramas. Revolving mainly around the themes of marital felicity and family honour, with demure women and hyper-masculine men leading the cast, the dramas both perpetuate and subtly critique certain misogynist norms of the society. In recent years, however, there has been a shift in who rebels against the norms in these family sagas. It is the younger sister, portrayed as a 'girl' (with connotations of inexperience, childishness, and indulgence) relative to the (submissive, obedient, marriageable) older sister, who is now a 'woman'.

My paper seeks to understand the voice of this young girl in Pakistani soap operas. In dramas such as *Kuch Ankahi* (2023) and *Jaisay Apki Marzi* (2023), the younger sister is not only rebellious (therefore constantly berated by patriarchal-minded parents), but, arguably, also the voice of sympathetic female viewers who want to save the older sister from entrapment in an abusive partnership. She leverages her reputation as the immature one to bluntly lay out the facts of the situation, foretelling the end and setting into motion an exercise of reflection that catalyzes the action.

Through an analysis of three drama serials, I aim to identify and assert the devices of fun and freedom utilized by the 'girl' of the family to float and flaunt her critical voice despite dismissal and pressure to conform. Some of these devices include banter, distancing from psychological enmeshment, and closeness with a 'soft' male friend (often a foil to the toxic male fated for the elder sister). The research will shed light on the culture of girlhood in Pakistan, which contains paradoxes that ultimately liberate her (from the) everyday.

No More 'Girls' Please: Japanese Women Overcoming Male Gaze

Maiko Nakamura, Tokyo Metropolitan University

Young women and their motifs have long been at the centre of representation in Japanese popular culture, but since the 1990s they have also become its major protagonists. With the flourishing of the high school girl styles and gyaru culture, kawaii culture, these women have become aware of their own ability to communicate and their creativity, and have become extremely powerful. As they establish their identity and gain power as representatives of their own subculture, coined terms with suffix of '---joshi or --jo(girls)' became ubiquitous in the media, such as *Carp-joshi*(female fans of Hiroshima Carp Baseball team), *Rike-jo*(girls of science major), and *Reki-jo*(female fan of history), etc.

Although the term was originally used in marketing, it was a label that was often applied to women who entered what was generally regarded as male domain. On the one hand, this can be seen as a positive sign of diversity in women's interests, but on the other hand, in a gendered society such as Japan, it is also a label that is attached to women as a rare presence from the male side. Therefore, the expression of --joshi has been used less and less. The popular culture that girls embody is still there as a powerful and creative, while deviating from the gender 'character' of girls via the male gaze. This paper examines what are the effects of not using the term ---joshi, in Japan, in contrast to actively used term 'girls' which shows solidarity in the English-speaking culture. It examines how young women no longer refer to themselves as girls and thus reconstruct their own image without the male gaze.

The (Im)Perfect Girlfriend: Origins, Politics, and Limitations of the Manic Pixie Dream Girl Trope in Early 2000s American Cinema

Julia Płaczekiewicz, University of Warsaw

This paper aims to analyze the image of the Manic Pixie Dream Girl in early 2000s American cinema and examine the origins, politics, and limitations of the trope. As the discourse of "girl power" rose to prominence in the 1990s and early 2000s popular culture, so did the figure of the (im)perfect girlfriend, namely the Manic Pixie Dream Girl (MPDG for short). The trope was coined in 2007 by an A.V. Club film critic Nathan Rabin to describe a type of female character present in romantic comedies. A young, child-like woman – almost always white, heterosexual, and cisgender – who presents as whimsical, bubbly, adventurous, and slightly irrational. Her main function in the film is to aid the helpless man/boy on his journey of personal development and alleviate his anxieties about the changing neoliberal world (Gonick 2006, 5). Through an examination of two indie films of the early 2000s, *Sweet November* (2001) and *Garden State* (2004), this paper will establish the defining characteristics of the MPDG trope. It will further explore how the MPDG embodies neoliberal values, specifically a postfeminist model of self-surveillance that propels the MPDG's preoccupation with beauty, youth, and a quirky sense of style (Gill 2007, 147). Additionally, the paper will examine how the MPDG aligns with "girl power" conventions, projecting sexual agency and power within the framework of a desirable "neoliberal feminine subject" (Zaslow 2009, 62). The paper will also apply Catherine Driscoll's (2002) understanding of girlhood as an in-between state to reflect the MPDG's ambivalent nature: a balance between maturity and childishness, a profound life philosophy and playful personality, a sense of sexual liberty and virginal modesty. Consequently, the duality of the MPDG functions to return the female character to more conventional gender roles, thus, mitigating the threat to masculinity and reinstating patriarchal order.

Play as unmasking: representations of neurodivergent girlhood in the fiction of LM Montgomery

Chelsea Wallis, University of Oxford

For neurodivergent girls, play often looks quite different from the neurotypical experience. Oriented around shared hyper-fixations and special interests, play is the liminal space in which the mask of socially-enforced behavioural expectations is allowed to slip. For play to develop, neurodivergent girls first need a foundation of safety and trust within friendship; a sense of having found a 'kindred spirit'. This is especially so due

to the social alienation and ostracisation which neurodivergent girls disproportionately experience amongst their peers and from society more broadly. The girl heroines of Montgomery's novels are anchored to their kindred spirits, who represent a rare refuge of safety and belonging with whom the experience of 'play' can occur, even if unconventional in form. Many of these protagonists are coded as neurodivergent: for instance, in the Emily trilogy the heroine's deeply felt sensory needs, her intense compulsion to write, and her sense of displacement amid bewildering social norms are indicative of Autism. Likewise, the eponymous Anne of Green Gables is immediately singled out by her adoptive community as 'different' due to her intense emotional responses and unique perspective on the world, as well as her contempt for doing things in the way 'they have always been done'. Together with Anne's propensity for misadventure, her spontaneity, and her lack of risk aversion, these characteristics are typical of AuDHD (Autism + ADHD). For both of these protagonists, play is central to the experience of girlhood, orbiting around their 'kindred spirit' friendships. It is these formative relationships that enable the neurodivergent girl to 'unmask' through play, in the space of deep trust and acceptance that is their shared connection. In this way, representations of neurodivergent girlhood can help deconstruct ableist understandings of what 'play' looks like, broadening our appreciation of ways of being beyond the patriarchal and neurotypical paradigms.

Panel B: Complicating Textual Representations of Girls at Play

10:30 am – 11:45 pm, ET

Moderator: Nivedita Nair, Birkbeck College, University of London

"Why Aren't You Crying?": Girlhood Refusals and the Play of Grief in Summer 1993 (2017)

Amanda Greer, University of Toronto, Cinema Studies Institute

"Why aren't you crying?" a boy asks six-year-old Frida in the opening of Carla Simón's *Summer 1993* (2017). Frida, we learn, has lost both parents to AIDS, and is sent to live on her aunt and uncle's farm. Rather than retreat into a legible form of grief (namely, crying), Frida chooses to play, imagining worlds. The boy's question permeates the film as the adults around Frida wonder: Why would she undercut grief's sacred quietude with flippant play? They pathologize Frida's playfulness, conflating it with worrisome detachment.

I argue that *Summer 1993*'s aesthetics, including observational cinematography and improvisatory performances, position Frida's girlhood play as a technology of grief; as Giorgio Agamben writes, play "frees and distracts humanity from the sphere of the sacred" (76). Frida's play transports grief from the sacredness of (adult) reflection to the mundanity of childhood routine. We see Frida collapse grief and play together by, for instance, pretending to be her late mother while playing "house" with her cousin. I theorize the film's play of grief as feminist-girlhood refusal, echoing Agamben's description of play as "a political task" (77).

Judged by adults for her playful grief, Frida imagines worlds that can better sustain her. Thus, she deploys Bonnie Honig's feminist refusals, wherein refusal does not abandon the world, but "betrays a deep attachment to it, if not to the world as it is, then surely to a more just world that is not yet" (3). A small child, Frida cannot remake the world; instead, she can use play to imagine a "more just world," to disrupt the painful mundanity of childhood (and) grief. Drawing from feminist theory, film studies, and philosophies of play, this paper theorizes girlhood as linking playfulness, the ordinary/mundane, and negative emotions in contemporary global cinema, foregrounding Frida's implicit counter-question: "Why *must* I cry?"

Girl-Space, Girl-Toy, Girl-Speak: Persephone's Crocus and Interrupted Girlhood in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter

Cianna Jackson, University of Pennsylvania

"This paper explores the treatment of Persephone's abduction experience in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter (HH2D), an ancient Greek poem (late seventh/early sixth century b.c.e.) which recounts the famous tale of a girl's abduction by Hades, the god of the underworld, and her mother's journey to find her. I suggest that therein girl-play and girl-pleasure are circumscribed by constructions of adult-male authority which interrupt girlhood(s) for adult males' own gratification, but girls themselves also recognize play as a mode of their own autonomy and fulfillment. The Hymn begins with an idyllic scene in the aesthetically-pleasing locale of a flower-filled meadow, a space for girls. The narration then focuses on Persephone, a young goddess-princess who has discovered an unusually beautiful flower: a narcissus disguised as a crocus (a girl-puberty-rite-associated flower in ancient Greece). The flower, however, is a trick manufactured by her father Zeus and uncle Hades, yet the girl joyfully recognizes the 'natural' thing as something that she can objectify for pleasure; the narrator says that she sees the flower as a "pretty toy" (καλὸν ἄθυρμα, v. 16) and exerts her manipular power by plucking it up (λαβεῖν). Persephone unknowingly unleashes Hades' trick; the ground opens, and she is forcibly snatched from girl-space into womanhood to be Hades' queen.

In the HH2D playthings or toys mark the separation of the realms of girlhood and of adulthood. Play, an act of fun discovery and of a girl's self-exertion, is what moves the girl-figure from one zone to the next. The cosmic enterprise— the adult (male-dominated) sphere— both generates the playthings and through them forces a girl into the adult statuses of wife and mother. Using play theories and girlhood studies approaches, I show that Persephone's play represents how girl-space is both constructed and interrupted for the sexualization of girls by abruptly pulling them into bond-forming marriage; by examining the speeches of both the overarching adult narrator and of Persephone herself, I note narratological instances both of accusatory adult speech toward girl figures and of girl autonomy."

"Panga na le/ Don't challenge me": Play and resistance in Vishal Bhardwaj's Makdee (2002)

Ayantika Nath, University of Bristol

Claudia Mitchell, Angela McRobbie, Anita Harris and Catherine Driscoll have often raised questions about what it means to be a girl, and how girls have been represented or

understood through the lens of societal structures and popular culture. However, the methodology of girlhood studies has predominantly been developed by the Global North, and the Global South has often been mentioned only in passing, to comment on what has been left unaccommodated within the discourse. This paper will attempt to address this lacuna by reading Vishal Bhardwaj's 2002 film, *Makdee* promoted as *The Web Of The Witch*, as a site of play and resistance of girls. The film tells the story of two twin sisters in a village in North India and their encounter with a witch figure who apparently haunts a mansion in their locality. What does it mean to use the trope of a witch, drawn from European folklore and predominantly a Western children's literature figure within the Indian context? How does locating the film in a village in north India, infamous for its deep-rooted patriarchal customs, child marriage and female infanticide inform our readings of resistance? When Munni, her docile sister is allegedly abducted by the evil witch, Chunni shows how resourcefulness, bravery, and spirit of adventure fuel the rescue of her sister. Chunni's characteristics in the film draw heavily from the Victorian adventure narratives such as *The Coral Island*, but instead of her being a model citizen to further imperial supremacy, Chunni's confrontation with the witch signals a possible space for agency and freedom for the contemporary Indian girl. A close reading of *Makdee* also sheds light on the specificities of girlhood in India, and how certain methodologies and assumptions of girlhood studies could benefit from a wider consideration of the definition of being a girl.

Girlhoods of War: Assemblages of Survival, Affect, & Play

Shauna Pomerantz, Brock University

My talk brings together a network of ostensible incompatibilities by asking, "How do girls living in war narrate their experiences of survival through play?" This question spans and punctuates three texts that depict girlhood "witnessing" (Farley & Tarc, 2014): *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2000/2003), a graphic novel based on the author's experience growing up during the Islamic Revolution; *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947/1952), a memoir written in a Dutch attic during the Holocaust, and *The Swimmers* (2022), a film based on a memoir set during the Syrian war, spawning the largest refugee crisis in modern history.

I plumb these texts for examples of play, such as dancing, singing, listening to music, partying, daydreaming, joking, and participating in sports. These playful events suggest 'normalcy', acting as a form of embodied joy, where the mundane still matters and happiness is attainable. Yet, play during war is also the performance of embodied resistances. Play is a refusal to participate in or validate war's seriousness, its disruption to the rhythms of everyday life, and its totalizing destruction.

In my analysis, I focus on the "ordinary affects" of play that create "resonance that lingers" (Stewart, 2007, p. 6) during extraordinary circumstances. Drawing on affect as an intangible web of "surging capacities" (p. 2) that lies beneath the surface of consciousness and social interactions, I explore the transformative assemblages of war, age, and gender in the texts to showcase the entangled urgencies of survival and play. How does play affect girls' experiences of war and how does war affect girls' experiences of play? I conclude by arguing that girlhoods of war are generated not

despite tragedy and trauma, but in relation to them and the playful distractions that produce serious possibilities for survival.

Lunch and Collaboration with Girl Museum

11:50 am – 12:10 pm, ET

Come to a lunch session to hear about Girl Museum, the first museum dedicated to girlhood, and opportunities to collaborate and produce projects about your research and areas of interest!

Panel C: Playing with the Boundaries of Girlhood

12:15 pm – 1:30 pm, ET

Moderator: Ocqua Murrell, University of Florida

Redefining Girlhood: Semiotics and Aesthetics in Just Another Girl on the I.R.T. and the Intersection with Demigirl Identity

Fallen Matthews, Dalhousie University

My presentation/paper offers a critical exploration of the concept of girlhood, inspired by personal reflections and a reexamination of Leslie Harris' *Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.* (1992). It delves into the complexities of "girl" as a category, label, and identity, while intertwining these ideas with my lived experience in identifying as a demigirl. The film, emblematic of the New Black Realism movement of the early 1990s, serves as a focal point for investigating girlhood's semiotics, affects, and aesthetics, particularly in the context of hood films of that era.

Central to my qualitative analysis is an inquiry into the film's portrayal of girlhood, which defies conventional stereotypes and resonates with my personal gender identity as a demigirl. The androgynous wardrobe styles depicted in the film, and characteristic of the time, provide a significant point of connection. These sartorial choices not only reflect the era's cultural ethos but also speak to contemporary non-binary and gender-fluid identities, offering a unique perspective on the intersection of fashion and gender expression through girlhood.

I also further examine how New Black Realism contributed to a broader understanding of girlhood, especially within marginalized communities. I argue that the aesthetic choices and narrative structures of these films challenge traditional representations of girlhood and offer alternative narratives that are more inclusive of diverse gender identities. In analyzing the playful yet poignant semiotics of girlhood in New Black Realism, I speak to how cultural productions from past decades continue to influence and resonate with current discussions about gender identity.

Through a blend of film analysis, cultural studies, and gender theory, I expand the discourse on girlhood and its representation in media, providing insights into how these portrayals intersect with and reflect the lived experiences of individuals with non-conforming gender identities like "demigirl."

The Girl with the Medusa Tattoo

Kourtney Payne, Spelman College

"The Girl with the Medusa Tattoo" studies how Black queer girls view their sexual identity in relation to concepts of social justice and Black Liberation. This research aims to conceptualize how Black queer female identities act as a site of resistance to heteronormative Afrocentric/Black respectable femininity. Within my research I explore how historical Black female figures, such as Josephine Baker and Ma Rainey, exemplify how the intimate connection between scholarship, social justice, and sexuality is demonstrated by Black queer girls, as they utilize epistemology to create a sub-sector of Black queer scholarship. Using Spelman College as a case study, this project draws upon interdisciplinary research methods to articulate how Black queer girls at Spelman College define their sexual identities as it relates to social justice and in relation to other identities, such as college major.

This research questions how comprehensive definitions of queerness, femininity, and femme-ness are situated as radical resistance to respectable femininity. Thus, the project addresses how the queerness of Black girlhood disrupts expectations of traditional narratives of Black women. The southern respectability politics that inform many of Spelman College's material culture display a unique story when navigating learning spaces in the south as a Black queer girl. Outside of forming a resistance to misogynoir through their sexual identities, Black queer girls are also tasked with navigating how to gain identity and agency within their learning experiences and institutions. With institutional politics changing rapidly in today's social climate, this study intends to expand on examples of the sexual experiences of Black queer girls, being that their narratives are frequently missing within academic discussions of Black scholarship.

Fat Girl Futures: Disrupting Normative Discontent in Mother/Daughter Relationships

Katherine Phelps, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Fatness and girlhood are undertheorized in imagining liberated futures. A critical focus in disrupting thin idealism in processes of girlhood is mother/daughter relationships; in particular, how body size is policed, surveilled, contested, and affirmed intergenerationally in complex, often cyclical, and hyper-gendered ways. Mothers' body narratives and performances of anti-fatness influence processes of girlhood. Examining girlhood embodiments and mother/daughter relationships through a fat studies and specifically fat liberationist lens, this paper asks how we might fatten girlhood studies by disrupting the intergenerational feminist struggle of the reproduced thin imperative.

As Blackness is revealed to be concomitant with fatness, whiteness becomes concomitant with thinness. Thus, as whiteness has been theorized as associated with "ideal" girlhoods, so too has thinness (Banet-Weiser 2017; Cox 2020). What is possible in enjoining fat studies and girlhood studies to disrupt anti-fatness as it manifests within girlhoods across identities and embodiments? How might processes of girlhoods be

understood through a fat liberationist framework? Much of the existing literature on girlhood and body size centers on thin idealism, normative discontent, the role of family (mothers in particular) in influencing experiences of negative body image, and the fear of fat (Borello 2006; Maor 2012; Rice 2007; Warnqvist and Osterlund 2022). This paper engages the question of fat as a feminist issue in a new way; exploring girlhoods, fat embodiment, how resistance to a thin imperative may be enacted within mother/daughter relationships, and possibilities of fat liberated futures for girls.

Playing with Dead Things: Ethnographies of Queer Girlhood

Nat Urban, The Girl Museum

As we breakdown understandings of gender, the way we stand in relationship to the identities we inhabit or have inhabited shifts. Pushing beyond Marnina Gonick's question "are queer girls, girls?" I leaned into the trans understanding of how we may inhabit an identity regardless of any sense of "realness". Girlhood is no longer confined to an age group or genital configuration, it is a state of being anyone can access which leaves us to wonder, what is 'true' about queer girlhood? Across six ethnographic interviews, I interrogated what girlhood meant to queer people across the spectrum of identity, chasing moments of joy and discovery. I argue that in queering our definition of girlhood, it allows us to fling open doors locked by shame and secrecy and enter a liminal space of play unintelligible to cisgendered heterosexist understanding of gender. Despite general understanding of gender as a dying construct amongst my interview subjects, there is something sticky about their experiences of girlhood that keep it close to all their hearts. These complex emotions emerge in stories about sex and desire, anger, and deep relationships amongst girls. In this paper, I start to locate what about the intersection of queerness and girlhood is sacred and meaningful, the ways in which it liberates us, and how queer love permeates the space.

Panel D: Rethinking Everyday Girl Objects

1:45 pm – 3:00 pm, ET

Moderator: Shauna Pomerantz, Brock University

Domestic Objects and The Girl Consumer: Play as Resistance in Poly Styrene's Punk Art
Daun Fields, University of Florida

British punk singer and artist Poly Styrene (aka Marianne Elliott) created a lasting aesthetic of punk girlhood in her performances and visual art during her band's X-Ray Spex's Germfree Adolescents period (1976-1979). Playing with her band in the first wave of British punk that deemed all British culture boring, Elliott incorporated mundane household products into her lyrical and visual works in order to criticize what she considered to be a consumer culture whose obsession with cleanliness and newness would eventually lead to an environmental crisis. Two figures were at the center of her work from this period: the girl, and the ultimate consumer: the housewife. Her playful methods of punk girlhood—cutting, collaging, and scribbling crayon over images of everyday household products—disrupts capitalist and patriarchal narratives of young women as merely consumer housewives in training.

In this paper, I will analyze Elliott's promo poster *Germ Free* alongside 1970s British adverts for two products that appear in the poster: Airfix polystyrene adhesive and Savlon antiseptic cream. *Germ Free* is a collage of comic strips, cut up Xeroxed images, and scribbled, brightly colored crayon in which the artist takes everyday products out of the everyday and places them in a disordered, chopped up, dayglo ad, or "promo," for her punk band's anti-consumerist album. Elliott, a young, mixed-race British woman, juxtaposes images of distressed Black women and White women with the products in order to push against advertisers' narratives of the happiness that comes from sterility and order. Using a visual rhetoric approach, I will analyze *Germ Free* by considering it in the context of the contemporary Airfix glue and Savlon cream ads, which place the happy, sterilizing housewife at their centers. Elliott resisted societal expectations of becoming the homogenous housewife, offering a new alternative—and subversive—identity to young British women.

Girls and their Doll-friends: Play Theories & New Materialism

Soomin Hong, The University of Sydney

In the traditional conceptual framework, toys have typically been perceived as a condition of children's play, leading to an exhausting theoretical confrontation between subject and object; structure and agency. This conflict has hindered the comprehensive understanding of the sociocultural relationship between children and toys, leaving the role of toys in play unclear and largely unexplored in theoretical studies of play. This project seeks to find a new theoretical approach to the study of toys by investigating what differences toys make in girls' play and what enables them to make such differences. The methodology involves an examination of classic play theories, developing them with new materialist perspectives, and showcasing these concepts through the example of girls playing with manufactured dolls. The exploration of toys as social objects will be a focal point, employing a new materialist lens to investigate their roles in play. I expect to introduce methodologies of 'following the things' and Actor-network theory as new or alternative ways to research toys. The social lives of toys and other theorists in various contexts will be examined, where all authors follow the biographical approach to toys initiated by Appadurai and Kopytoff. Also, the project will introduce Actor-network theory as a theoretical framework capable of transcending dichotomies in social theory, such as subject and object; structure and agency. This attempt aims to pave the way for further discourse on 'toys' as a subject within both play theory and studies of girls' culture, shedding light on previously obscured dimensions of their significance and influence in the realm of girlhood play.

A feminist new materialist meandering with girls and high heels

Toni Ingram, Auckland University of Technology

Drawing on feminist new materialisms and Karen Barad's framework of agential realism, this presentation elaborates the becoming of the school ball-girl through entangled bodies, things, spaces, practices and imaginings. The discussion draws on insights from a study conducted in Aotearoa New Zealand which explored girls' engagements with the school ball (prom). Utilising agential realist concepts of intra-action and entanglement, the ball-girl is conceptualised as an intra-active becoming rather than a fixed identity, entity or body. Becoming ball-girl is a material-discursive mattering involving an array of

human and more-than-human forces, including clothing, beauty-body practices, bodies and affective atmospheres. Drawing on visual and verbal fragments, this presentation teases out some entanglements involving high-heeled shoes, bodily sensations, school ball photos, dates and expectations. High-heeled shoes have long been a point of consternation for feminist scholarship amid enduring questions of whether they are a source of oppression or empowerment. I consider how a new materialist ontology disrupts the subject/object, human/nonhuman, material/discursive divide, to think about the wearing of high heels (or not) as a material-discursive practice or mattering, where capacities and constraints shift depending on the entangled relations. Of particular interest are the ripples of pleasure, playfulness and resistance that emerge, inviting nuanced understandings of girls and high heels beyond an oppression/empowerment dichotomy.

This Barbie's Pregnant: Revisiting the Discursive Landscape of Pregnant Doll Controversies

Hannah Maitland, York University

Mattel's 2002 "Happy Family" doll collection is often remembered for the infamous pregnant Midge, who stirred controversy with her detachable magnetic womb. Until she returned to the spotlight with an appearance in Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* (2023), Midge was memorialized through sensational clickbait articles with headlines like "27 Shocking Things That Have Been Done to Barbie" (Le Vine 2016) or "Too gay, too weird, too pregnant: The most controversial Barbie dolls in history" (Muir 2023). Though she is remembered as a novel failure, Midge was actually a late addition to a long series of pregnant dolls, including Hasbro's "Mommy's Secret Surprise" (1993), Tyco Toy's "Mommy's Having a Baby" (1992), Judith Corporation's "Mommy-To-Be Doll" (1991), and Mattel's own "New Arrival Mom and Baby" (1985). I argue that the repeated efforts to sell pregnant dolls are indicative of a deeper tension between trying to render pregnancy normal (even aspirational) for girls and adult anxiety about what happens when children are exposed to the sexual suggestiveness of pregnancy. Though Midge and her peers intentionally depict the hegemonic heteronormative ideals of the procreative consumer nuclear family, even the most idealized and sanitized depiction of the pregnant body that can be cast in plastic is still haunted by sexuality. Though they have received little serious attention, pregnant dolls bring the mundanity of dolls and pregnancy together with spectacular effects. These curious toys are galvanizing objects that reveal the intense contradictions around gender and sexuality in the social construction of girlhood. In this paper, I explore how these various pregnant dolls were marketed with highly cautious and education-focused materials that idealized the nuclear family. I then look to how these dolls are enduringly (mis)remembered online as objects of intense controversy around the virtues and volatility of sexuality and sex education for girls.

Panel E: Retelling and Reconfiguring Girlhood

3:15 pm – 4:30 pm, ET

Moderator: Halle Singh, Rutgers University

Feminist storytelling piercing through the hypermodern fold

Sofia Chaudhry Schlichting, York University

Why do stories of girlhood hold low cultural value in the present moment? In other words, why is girlhood understood as mundane? This question arises from conversations arising from my current creative project. Though surrounded by companions who enthusiastically encourage my experiment in adapting Stephanie Meyers' Twilight novels for television, there is generally a consensus that the mass-appeal of the franchise to young women in the 2010s denigrates the quality of its artistic practice. An affinity towards the novels, then, must be alluded to with the acceptance of their lowbrow status. Given the anxious mind's proclivity for anticipating criticism, I naturally puzzle over the potential reception of my creative project. The prospect of criticism, however, shall not deter me from the practice of creation. Art is not made for the spectator, nor is its product determinant of art's cultural value. It is the process of creating from which art derives its value. The act of telling and retelling stories of girlhood has immense cultural value for women, girls, families, feminist collectives, and communities. In the present moment, I argue, retellings of "girl-lore" hold transformative potential when gazed at through the metafeminist lens. Borrowing from scholars of feminist aesthetics, affect, feminist and decolonial pedagogy, industrial civilization, I use the idea of a "hypermodern fold" as a visual metaphor for describing a feminist metapolitics, operating on a place as aesthetic practice and critique simultaneously. I suggest we may think of 2020s hypermodernity as folding us back into an age prior to rapid consumption. In the hypermodern fold, an unrelenting stream of information becomes illegible through its constant frequency. The metafeminist sees through this warping of the timeline a different mode of understanding stories of girlhood. In telling and re-telling, girl-lore adds new layers of meaning and understanding.

FindingBlackGirlhood: A Digital Archive

Courtney Cook, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Black Girlhood Studies is growing, and so is the archive of material on Black Girlhood. However, scholars insist that the field, "demands innovative approaches, documentation, and analysis...and varied ways of documenting and understanding the lived experiences of Black girls", a failure to do so can result in restricting Black girls to "an archive of hurt and death and destruction" maintaining the pervasive adultification and dismal statistics that govern their existences (Brown, 2013; Crenshaw, 2015; Morris, 2015; Owens et. al., 2017; Sharpe, 2016).

Film is an abundant site to begin exhuming innovative archival material. Cinematic representations of Black girlhood give distinctive insight into Black girls lived experiences. The Color Purple (Spielberg, 1985) became iconic representation of Black girlhood. Bande de filles (Girlhood) (Sciamma, 2014), featuring four black girls from the banlieues of Paris was applauded as the best film about girlhood, forever changing the

face of French femininity. I propose that Black girls in film are visualized representatives who, by simply existing on screen, create spaces for an innovative and expansive approach to archival research. These cinematic representations find Black girls in locations of mundanity, pleasure, and play that could possibly contribute to the de-adultification of Black girls.

The proposed presentation is based on my research to create a digital archive of Black Girlhood called, FindingBlackGirlhood: A Digital Archive. In collaboration with the UMBC's Interdisciplinary CoLab Program, the preliminary site will be the result of a guided four-week student collaboration. Students will design, launch, and present a public-facing beta site archiving Black girls' representation in film. The symposium presentation will be an overview of the project's goals, methods, and the cinematic patterns students will be critically investigating during the project.

Who Wants to be a Girl? Generational Reconfigurations of Girlhood
Aleksandra Kamińska, University of Warsaw

This paper outlines the generational perspective on the girl as an identity category and examines how girl has functioned in American popular culture, focusing on the differences between Millennials and Gen Z.

Since the last decade of the 20th century, girl was no longer a degrading term; everyone wanted to be a girl, a position that supposedly offered power or at least playful youthfulness and a promise of a better future. While the 1960s and 1970s were defined by feminists' rejection of the girl as a category that infantilized women, the 1990s offered a reclamation of the girl (or rather: the grrrl). For the past 30 years, young women eagerly claimed the girl category even if, especially in the Gen Z generation, not without a dose of self-irony.

From Sad Girl Theory to Soft Girl, the girl began to function as an inhabitable identity on the internet. Alex Quicho's viral article suggests that "Everyone Is a Girl Online" - or can be. Moreover, the phenomenon of girlhood as available to everyone goes beyond digital self-representation. Cartoonist Sarah Andersen discusses the term "girl" in one of her comics: talking with a woman whose age is hard to determine, she asks: "Do you identify as a girl? Are you a figment of my imagination? CONGRATULATIONS! You have met the criteria for being a REAL girl!" While being a girl is now often portrayed as a playful option available to anyone who claims it, this paper offers a more ambiguous perspective, problematizing the trap of girlhood that comes with the inability to be perceived or perceive oneself as an adult. Using the category of relatability and analyzing selected memoirs and digital autobiographical acts, this paper examines how the girl functions in American culture as both a desirable and limiting identity category.

Practices, projects, and personas: honouring and understanding girls' video-based storytelling

Tatyana Terzopoulos, Toronto Metropolitan University

In our contemporary media ecology, girl-identifying tweens and teens are increasingly creating in addition to consuming visual forms of social media content (Kennedy, 2020; Lenhart et al., 2015; Media Technology Monitor, 2021). Within the burgeoning arena of

girls' media studies, research that explores how girls learn about and make video-based media remains limited. Further, while media literacy is woven into numerous curriculum strands in Canada, insights into how many young people are introduced to video-making in the classroom are negligible. This paper focuses on a feminist-informed (Chakravarty et al.; 2012; Kelly et al., 1994; Pillow & Mayo, 2012) qualitative research project with a small group of marginalized tween/teen girls who participated in a virtual, extracurricular digital storytelling program during the pandemic in Toronto, Canada. It discusses the researcher's efforts to better understand girls' experiences learning about and making video-based media and capture the wide-ranging video-making interests, approaches and skills within this group via a holistic and iterative process of data analysis. This process was inspired by Lange's (2015) notion of technical identities or mediated dispositions and Ito et al.'s (2013) genres of participation in relation to how youth engage with digital media; the researcher immersed herself in each participant's data in an effort to get closer to her experiences. This iterative process involved considering the "social, creative, and embodied" aspects of each girl's video-making (Blum-Ross, 2013) while acknowledging the researcher's unique lens as a professional media storyteller-turned-media-educator. Each participant's story was captured through a unique "video-making persona" comprising two or three descriptive categories. This approach and larger study represent an initial effort to honour girls' media-making experiences, to call attention to how girls are informally learning about and engaging in media content creation, and to consider how media educators might better support girls' media-making endeavours through extracurricular and girl-centered programming.

Presenter List and Bios (by alpha)

Ebonie Bennett	Ebonie S. Bennett is a 4th year Ph.D. Candidate studying Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Florida. Ebonie's research highlights anti-blackness in Education through narrative work. Ebonie aims to uplift Black educational futures through her scholarship and work with Black youth.
Lacey Bobier	A Postdoctoral Research Fellow (Department of Health & Society, University of Toronto Scarborough), Lacey received her PhD in sociology from the University of Michigan. Lacey's work uncovers how cultural discourses and formal policies shape everyday embodied experiences (such as menstruation or getting dressed), producing gender and sexual subjectivity in adolescence.
Emily Booth	Emily Booth is a researcher at the University of Technology in Sydney, and Research Fellow at Deakin University, Australia. Her PhD research explored how teenagers respond to adult influence on their reading practices in the contexts of leisure reading, school reading, and industry engagement.
Taryrn Brown	Dr. Taryrn T. C. Brown is an Assistant Professor at the University of Florida. Her research interests include Black girls and identity construction, popular culture as an educative site, Black mothering in and beyond academia, and amplifying equity-centered pedagogies in teaching and learning.
Sofia Chaudhry Schlichting	I am a PhD year 1 student at York University in Gender, feminist, and women's studies. I have an MA from Carleton University in Political Science, where I studied queer theory and everyday feminist political economy. My present work considers everyday sexual politics and feminist aesthetic practice.
Pempho Chinkondenji	Pempho Chinkondenji, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor in Educational Foundations and Research at the University of North Dakota. She is a comparative and international education scholar who utilizes participatory visual research methodologies to conduct educational research. Pempho is also a co-founder at Loving Arms Malawi.
Courtney Cook	Courtney Cook is a Visiting Lecture in the Department of Gender, Women, + Sexuality Studies at University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Cook's expertise is focused

on the intersections of gender, race and media with a focus on Black Girlhood, film, archival methods, and de-adultification.

Destiny Crockett	Destiny Crockett (she/her) is a scholar-artist who is curious about African American girlhood in the 20th and 21st centuries, Black feminisms, 20th and 21st century African American women's literature and visual culture, Black archive theories, and Black queer studies. She is a postdoctoral fellow in Childhood Studies At Rutgers University-Camden.
Kelly Curtis	Kelly Curtis is currently an M.A. candidate at Southern Connecticut State University where she serves as co-vice president of SCSU's Triota and a graduate assistant in the Women's & Gender Studies department. Curtis is passionate about how pop culture and violence form our understanding of women's and girl's gendered performances.
Brittany Davis	Brittany Davis is the Program Manager for the Women's Center in the Centers for Student Engagement at Florida International University. She is a graduate of Florida International University with a Master of Science in International Intercultural Education and a graduate certificate in African and African Diaspora Studies. She is an advocate for gender equity, accessibility, and representation in higher education to support students' transition and achievement. Ms. Davis is a doctoral candidate in the Ph.D. in Higher Education at Florida International University with a research focus on institutional non-performativity in response to national racialized incidences and practices of anti-blackness within higher education.
Shoshannah Diehl	Shoshannah is an English instructor at Marshall University in Huntington, WV. She teaches composition and literature, and her scholarly and creative interests include sci-fi/fantasy, fandom, and popular culture.
Susan Driver	I'm an associate professor in communication and media studies. I have a couple books on queer youth and queer girls and popular culture. I have co-edited collections on affect theory and youth. I'm currently working on youth climate activist media
Samantha English	Samantha English is a PhD candidate in English at Northwestern University. Her dissertation project troubles normative methods for reading subjectivity by exploring how contemporary authors process different 19th century

genres of Anglo-American girlhood without rebirthing the structures, sentiments, and failed promises of the white woman's bildungsroman.

Daun Fields	I am a punk singer and a doctoral student at the University of Florida focusing on 20th century women's cultural studies. I am currently writing on girlhood and resistance in the visual art of Poly Styrene, aka Marianne Elliott (1957-2011), of the British new wave punk band X-Ray Spex.
Heather Fitzsimmons Frey	Heather is Associate Professor of Arts and Cultural Management and Principal Investigator for the Young People are the Future Project. Her work on re-enactment has been published in <i>Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal</i> , <i>Journal of Childhood Studies</i> , <i>Theatre Research in Canada</i> , and as chapters in <i>The Cambridge Handbook of Material Culture</i> , and <i>A Girl Can Do: Recognizing and Representing Girlhood</i> .
Madison Francoeur	Madison Francoeur is a research assistant for the Young People are the Future project. She is also an Education and Indigenous Peoples Interpreter at Fort Edmonton Park. She has a diploma in Arts and Cultural Management from MacEwan University and is now completing the degree programme.
Tania Gigliotti	Tania Gigliotti is the Project Manager on the Young People are the Future project and Communications Manager for YouthWrite Society Canada. She has her diploma in Arts & Cultural Management from MacEwan University and is now in the degree programme.
Michelle Gomez Parra	Michelle is a PhD candidate in the Sociology Department at UC Santa Cruz. She is a qualitative researcher who uses feminist theories of color to examine how gender and sexuality are key sites through which institutions and subjects reproduce and challenge racism, poverty, and nation-making projects.
Amanda Greer	Amanda Greer is a PhD Candidate at the University of Toronto's Cinema Studies Institute. Her dissertation work on pedagogy and adolescent genders in mid-century educational films has been supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Bombardier Fellowship, the Vivienne Poy Chancellor's Fellowship, and a Doctoral Excellence Award. Her work can be found in <i>Film Criticism</i> , <i>New Review of Film and Television</i> , and <i>Sound Studies</i> .
Elizabeth Hamilton	Elizabeth Hamilton, Ph.D. is a professor at Fort Valley State University and art historian whose research focuses

on art of the African diaspora. Her first book, *Charting the Afrofuturist Imaginary in African American Art: The Black Female Fantastic*, is the winner of the Wyeth Foundation for American Art Publication Grant.

Stephanie Harkin	Stephanie Harkin is a Lecturer at RMIT in the School of Design, Games Program. Her research is interested in girls' digital cultures and feminine gaming histories. She has previously published on gender and games culture in the journals <i>Game Studies</i> (2020), <i>Girlhood Studies</i> (2022), and <i>Games and Culture</i> (2020).
Anita Harris	Anita Harris is a Research Professor in the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University. She is a youth sociologist specialising in citizenship, mobilities and new forms of participation in a globalised world. She is an internationally recognised scholar in the field of girls' studies.
Jennifer Helgren	Dr. Jennifer Helgren is Professor of History at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, where she teaches U.S. history, women's history, and digital history. She is the author and editor of three books and numerous articles on US girlhood.
Brenda Herbert	Dr Brenda Herbert holds a PhD in Sociology from Goldsmiths, University of London, UK. Brenda completed her PhD part time whilst working as a counsellor with children who had experienced domestic abuse. Brenda's research focuses on the everyday lives of children who are marginalised in society.
Soomin Hong	Soomin Hong is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney. Her M.A. thesis was about a 50-year history of interrelations and mutual interdependency between Japanese girl consumers and Magical Girl franchise. A book based on this research has been published in Korea in 2022 and later translated into Japanese in 2023. Currently, Soomin is working on her second book project in Korea and her Ph.D. dissertation about the theorization of toys.
Callie Ingram	Callie Ingram is a PhD candidate in English at the University at Buffalo. Her research interests include contemporary fiction, experimental women writers, narrative ethics, and critical phenomenologies of reading. Her work has been published in <i>Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction</i> , <i>American Book Review</i> , <i>Horror Homeroom</i> , and elsewhere.

Toni Ingram	Toni Ingram is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education, Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Aotearoa New Zealand. Toni's research is situated in the areas of girlhood, gender, sexualities and schooling. Her work critically examines the relationship between schooling practices and the production and regulation of young people's gender and sexualities. Toni's current work is informed by feminist new materialisms, affect theory, and posthumanist methodological approaches.
Irum Iqbal Hussain	Irum is a lecturer at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi, Pakistan. She teaches core and elective courses on global anglophone literatures, focusing on the themes of gender and feminism. She holds a master's degree in Comparative Literature from SOAS, University of London and a diploma in Islamic Studies from the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. She can be reached at irum@iba.edu.pk.
Cianna Jackson	Cianna Z. Jackson is a doctoral candidate in Classical Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses are on the interplay of gender, childhood, and ritual in Greek art and poetry with a particular interest in girlhood narratives and comparative studies to modern girl novels and film.
Brilynn Janckila	Brilynn Janckila is a PhD candidate at Michigan Technological University in the Rhetoric, Theory, Culture program. Her research interests include girlhood studies, feminist methods, fan culture, and dollhouses. Previously, she earned her master's degree in rhetoric and writing at St. Cloud State University and her bachelor's degree in writing studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth.
Kenesma John	Kenesma D. John is a 4th year Ph.D. Candidate studying Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Florida. Her research focuses on Black girls and Black women's experiences in educational spaces.
Jade Jontef	Jade is an Adjunct Research Fellow and Tutor in the Department of Social Inquiry at La Trobe University. Her research focuses on the censorship and regulation of sex, gender and sexuality in film.
Caroline Kaltefleiter	Caroline K. Kaltefleiter is Professor of Communication and Media Studies at the State University of New York at Cortland. A member of Riot Grrrl D.C., she has written numerous papers on anarcha-feminism, girls' media production, and activism. She is finishing a monograph on the Riot Grrrl Movement.

Aleksandra Kamińska	Aleksandra Kamińska holds a Ph.D. from the University of Warsaw and was advancing her doctoral research on Fulbright scholarship at Columbia University. Her interests include life narratives, queer temporalities, and girlhood studies. She's a founding editor of Girls and Queers to the Front zine, published in Poland since 2015.
Livinia Kaunda	Livinia Kaunda is a Ph.D. student in Educational Policy and Leadership at the University of Minnesota. She is also a scholar-activist and Co-founder of Loving Arms Malawi.
Sunga Kufeyani	Sunga Kufeyani, is a community-centered design scholar-practitioner and activist. She is a Co-founder of Loving Arms Malawi, studying for a PhD in Comparative International Development Education at the University of Minnesota.
Mélena Laudig	Mélena Laudig is a PhD Candidate in Religion and African American Studies at Princeton University. She earned a Master of Arts in Religion from Princeton University and a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies from Yale College.
Hannah Maitland	Hannah Maitland (she/her) lives and works on Treaty 13 territory in Tkaronto. She is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Gender, Feminist, and Women's Studies Program at York University. Hannah is a feminist researcher who studies girl activists, their politics, and their relationships with their mothers and mother figures.
Sadiyah Malcolm	Sadiyah Malcolm is a PhD Candidate in Sociology at the University of Michigan. and the founder of SELaH (Sistas Elevating Learning and Healing), which was founded in 2010 with a foremost commitment to empowering girls through community building, literacy, and the arts both nationally and globally.
Fortune Matondo	Fortune Matondo just recently completed her high school education at Chimbalu Community Data Secondary School in Malawi. During her secondary education, Fortune was a beneficiary of the Loving Arms Malawi's Scholarship Fund. Her aspiration is to become a secondary school teacher.
Fallen Matthews	Fallen Matthews (She/Her) is an Afro-L'nu demigirl pursuing an interdisciplinary doctorate at Dalhousie University. Her thesis blends Cinema and Media Studies with Africana, AI, English, History, Indigenous, and Gender Studies, focusing on African American film history, Black Power, Blaxploitation, and New Black Realism within a Deleuzian framework.

Fiona Maxwell

Fiona Maxwell is a PhD Candidate in History at the University of Chicago. Her dissertation explores the ways in which volunteers and participants at Chicago settlement houses used the spoken arts to develop a collaborative approach to democracy. She has contributed to public history projects at the Hull-House Museum, Center for Women's History and Leadership, and Newberry Library, and she provides coaching in improv, storytelling, and public speaking. She received her BA in History and Theatre from Northwestern University.

Joanna McQuade

Joanna McQuade holds a PhD in English from Tufts University and teaches at Wake Technical Community College. Her work explores the crucial political stakes of supposedly frivolous feminine aesthetics and activities. She is interested in how imaginative work constructs, resists, and transcends material reality.

Kate Molyneaux

Kate Molyneaux is a PhD researcher at the Institute of Education, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. Her research explores the (re)construction of gender and class through the lens of period products, the social ordering of women and girls and their navigation of political, and environmental menstrual pressures.

Allegra Morgado

Allegra (she/her pronouns) is a fat, white settler, bisexual femme living in Treaty 13 territory (Toronto, ON). She is currently attending York University for her MA in GFWS, focusing on queer and fat embodiments. In her non-school time, she makes fun things out of clay, wanders the neighbourhood, and plays tabletop role-playing games with her partner and friends.

Kathleen Murphey

Kathleen Murphey is an associate professor of English and Humanities at Community College of Philadelphia. She writes academic papers and fiction. *Rainbow Tales* is a collection of twelve retellings of fairy tales featuring LGBTQ+ characters and published by JMS Books, a small queer press.

Ocqua Murrell

Dr. OG (she/they) is a sociologist, Black/Caribbean feminist, and curator. She received her Ph.D. in Sociology from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Her work is inspired by her own transnational girlhood between the States, La Republica Dominicana, and the island of Sint Maarten. She co-creates knowledge with Afro-Caribbean girls in the Dutch West Indies to explore how the girls narrate, navigate, and negotiate their girlhood experiences. She also explores the transitional period between girlhood and woman/adulthood. Her work

aims to give volume and visibility to the stories of Black women and girls and LGBTQ+ folx in the west and from the global south.

Nivedita Nair	Nivedita Nair is a PhD researcher at Birkbeck College, University of London. Her research looks at irony and sincerity in contemporary film cultures. Having completed a masters degree in film studies and in critical theory, she is interested in low theory, genre, late-neo-post-whatever-capitalism, and is currently attempting to develop a theory of cringe.
Maiko Nakamura	I work as Associate Professor at Tokyo Metropolitan University. My research interests are twentieth-century literature and culture, including literature and nationalism, gender and sexuality, film, and popular culture. My recent publication is about queer representations in poetic works of Eva Gore-Booth.
Ayantika Nath	Ayantika Nath is a PhD student in English Literature at the University of Bristol. She completed her B.A. and M.A. in English at Jadavpur University. Her research interests include cultural memory studies, marginalised histories, feminist theory, childhood studies, the child reader and the postcolonial bildungsroman focusing on South Asia. She looks forward to a career in childhood studies as a researcher and educator. She hopes to combine her academic interests with her creative pursuits like making mixed media art, paintings, and comic narratives.
Kourtney Payne	Kourtney Payne is a senior majoring in Sociology and Anthropology with a Public Health Minor from Atlanta, Georgia. Her research focuses include Black queer theory, womanist theory, Black sexuality, and critical epistemology. Dedicated to scholar-activism, she honors past Black Womanist and Queer Theorists, carrying their legacy for Black Liberation.
Katherine Phelps	Kate Phelps has a doctorate in Sociology from the University of Massachusetts-Boston. She is teaching faculty in the Gender and Women's Studies department at UW-Madison. She teaches body politics, fat studies, food politics, and feminist theory. Her central research interests include body politics, girlhood studies, fat studies, and digital sociology.
Julia Płaczkiewicz	Julia Płaczkiewicz is a first-year PhD student at the American Studies Center of the University of Warsaw. Her dissertation project focuses on the influence of postfeminism and the #MeToo movement on the image of

female rage in contemporary American popular culture. She is the author of a chapter contribution to the volume *Grief, Identity, and the Arts: A Multidisciplinary Perspective on Expressions of Grief* (Brill, 2023). She is also a member of the Gender/Sexuality Research Group at the University of Warsaw. Her research interests include postfeminism, girlhood studies, affect theory, gender and sexuality studies, and popular culture.

Shauna Pomerantz Shauna Pomerantz is Professor in the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Brock University, Canada. Her research has explored cultures of childhood and girlhood, gender and education, and youth culture. She is currently researching how children understand and learn about war.

darlene scott darlene anita scott is a writer and visual artist who explores corporeal presentations of trauma and the violence of silence, especially in Black girls. Her debut poetry collection, *Marrow* reimagines people lost in a mass murder-suicide at the Guyanese settlement of the Peoples Temple founded by James "Jim" Jones and popularly known as Jonestown. She also co-edited the creative/critical volume *Revisiting the Elegy in the Black Lives Matter Era*. Scott's writing appears in numerous literary journals and she has exhibited her artwork on the "good girl" widely. It can be viewed in *The Journal*, *The West Review*, and *The Journal of Compressed Arts*, and her photography in *Barren Magazine*, *Auburn Avenue*, and *Persephone's Daughters*.

Olivia Shepard Olivia Shepard is a 2nd year Media, Culture, and Technology Master's candidate at the University of Virginia. Her research explores black women's internet communities and digital media, feminist game studies, nostalgic media, and play.

Suhana Simran Suhana Simran is currently pursuing her Master's degree in English from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India. Her research interests include feminist theory and girlhood in literature and popular culture.

Halle Singh Halle Singh (she/her) is a PhD candidate in the Department of Childhood Studies at Rutgers University. Her dissertation, "Girlhood After Dark: Nighttime, Leisure, and the Temporality of Gender" theorizes how capitalism regulates gender through one of its central mechanisms of control: time. She is the co-founder of the Girlhood Studies Collective and a program fellow for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Center for the Humanities. In Fall 2024, she will be an assistant professor in Bridgewater State

University's brand-new Department of Childhood Studies.

Isha Singh	Isha Singh is a MSc Psychology Graduate from Northumbria University, currently working as a Teaching Assistant, whose research interests lie at the intersection of gender, psychology and technology.
Tatyana Terzopoulos	Dr. Tatyana Terzopoulos is an Assistant Professor in the RTA School of Media/The Creative School at Toronto Metropolitan University. Her research and teaching focus on children's/youth media and media cultures; digital media (production) education; youth-centered research methods; and feminist-informed media research and practice. She holds a PhD from the Language, Culture, and Teaching program at York University and is also an award-winning media creator, screenwriter, director and producer with a career that spans close to two decades and has focused on children's and youth media. Her scholarship intersects youth cultures, media, and education.
Sudipa Topdar	Sudipa Topdar is an Associate Professor of Modern South Asian history. Her research interests include the histories of childhood, schooling, embodiment, colonialism in South Asia.
Nat Urban	Nat Urban (they/them) is a queer studies researcher located in Los Angeles, CA with a focus on trans studies, histories of sexuality, and queer culture.
Chelsea Wallis	Chelsea is a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Sydney and in Law at the University of Oxford. Her scholarly and creative writing has been published in Brontë Studies, Womankind, Cultivate, The Turl, and Frontiers. Chelsea is late-diagnosed Autistic and is an advocate for neurodivergent inclusivity in academia.
Iлона Zhovta	I am PhD student and lecture of Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, Faculty of Sociology and Law, Department of History. My research interests are gender studies, history of women's everyday life and education. My papers are about the role of collective in girls' daily routine of Kyiv Institute of Noble Girls in 19th – early 20th centuries.