

WITHIN THE POLAROID ASSEMBLAGE: THE IMMANENT POSSIBILITIES OF GIRLHOOD

KEYNOTE by Shauna Pomerantz

09:30 – 10:15, FRIDAY NOV 15

ABSTRACT

This talk will unfold in a non-linear fashion, materializing rhizomatically around encounters with girlhood through a set of Polaroid images taken of me and my bedroom when I was 10-years-old. The Polaroids are part of a network of contingently bound relations, or what French philosophers, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, call an 'assemblage'. The shifting bodies that inhabit the Polaroid assemblage are co-constituting – creating and shaping each other in unexpected ways. When these elements make contact through the nodal point of the Polaroids, possibilities for understanding girlhood differently emerge. As a result, 'the girl' is not theorized as a "who" or "what" or "when," which assumes a fixed temporal and representational construct, as well as binary opposition to "womanhood" and "adulthood." Instead, the question I pose in this talk is: How do we encounter girlhood as affect through material and temporal relations? And what might these immanent encounters have to offer Girlhood Studies?

BIO

Shauna is an Associate Professor at Brock University in Ontario, Canada. She teaches sociology of childhood, social theory, qualitative research methodologies, and popular culture in the Department of Child and Youth Studies. Her research interests focus on girlhood studies, youth cultural studies, feminist theory, post-structural theory, new materialism, qualitative studies of youth in school, and sociology of education.

RESISTANCE

PANEL, 10:30 – 12:15, FRIDAY NOV 15

Serious, Smart, Angry Girls: Thinking/Feeling/Doing Climate Change Activism

SUSAN DRIVER

While there is nothing new about girls' environmental consciousness and their local struggles for social change, the degree of publicity and the scale of influence and recognition has expanded in remarkable ways. What is also striking is the style of address along with the affective articulations of political will and desire that defy gendered expectations of girls as narcissistic, compliant, passive and irrational. The substantive work done by girls on the front lines as climate leaders disrupts these limited preconceptions and compels us to reimagine their status as networked subjects through the embodied material conditions of their lived differences and struggles that drive their connectivity and shape their disparate and shared knowledges. In this talk I want to pay attention to the complex communicative engagements of girls as they speak about their commitments to climate activism across discursive boundaries of ecological, personal, socio-economic, policy and cultural issues as well as across virtual boundaries marking networked publics of nation-states as well as smaller activist and community hubs.

Girlies, Tomboys, and Fashion Girls: Tactics of Resistance in Post Girl-Power Times

FILOMENA GAIA FARINA

This paper expose the results of a qualitative research with young girls (11-13y.o.) living in a multicultural working class suburb of a Northern Italian city. We analyse the way in which they "do gender" facing normative gender roles. The aim is to investigate how gender relations and gender roles are constructed and reproduced or broken down in an multicultural context and how girls achieve forms of resistance in everyday *discourses*, practices and visual self-representations. The positions of the girls regarding the prevailing discourses on femininity and gender-related differences in daily life prompt the creation of three distinct groups, albeit with unstable and permeable boundaries: Tomboys, Fashion Girls and Girlies. In contrast with their apparent conformity to normative gender models the girls are vital social actors, who put personal strategies and tactics into practice to respond individually to male domination and constraints in the neighbourhood and to gain space and freedom.

The Queer Sonics of Girlhood: Listening to Capital, Labour and "Asymmetries of Innocence"

CASEY MECIJA

In 2015 a video of a child in an Internet café in the Philippines began to trend on social media sites. Titled, *Kanta ng isang Anak para sa kanyang inang OFW "Blank Space"* (Song of a child for her overseas foreign worker mother), the video shows a girl singing via skype to her mother who is an OFW. "Ma kakantahan ulit kita ha?" (I'll sing for you again mom), she says, and starts singing Taylor Swift's *Blank Space*, soon beginning to cry in longing for a mother she has not seen in a long time. The video provides evidence of what Hannah Dyer (2018) terms the 'asymmetries of childhood innocence', reminding its audience of the ways transnational labour and global capital impact how

girls experience development, kinship and geographies of care. Drawing on literature from child studies, girlhood studies, sound studies, Filipinx studies, and queer theory, I suggest that this performance creatively re-routes the presumed directionalities of care (from mother to child) which globalization has fundamentally altered. I also locate epistemic significance in the agentic capacities of sound to produce new and creative relations in the world.

The Invisibility of Religious Girlhoods

REBECCA STARKMAN

My research brings the lens of poststructural girlhood studies (Driscoll, 2002; Harris, 2004) to explore the experiences of religious girls of various faiths in public secondary schools in Toronto. This paper shares qualitative data from 29 self-identified religious girls in Toronto, who reported that gender was not a salient aspect of their conceptualization and negotiation of their religious identities during their time in high school. When gender does register as a notable aspect of their religious experience, their stories often map onto well-known discourses painting religious girls as oppressed and the *other* (Duits & van Zoonen, 2006; Rootham, 2014; Siddiqui, 2008). I argue that postfeminist discourses circulating in public school spaces (Pomerantz, Raby & Harris, 2017; Ringrose, 2012), and patriarchal discourses prevalent in religious spaces (Daly, 1973; Mahmood, 2005; Woodhead, 2007), contribute to shaping my participants experiences religious girlhood as less visible in both spheres.

Malala Yousafzai and the Implications of the Girl Effect

ROOPALI ROKADE

The Girl Effect is the neoliberal logic that investing in adolescent girls' education is the most effective solution toward eradicating poverty in the global South. My analysis a case-study of Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani activist and youngest Nobel laureate's story of victimization, resilience, co-optation and resistance. I argue, the Girl Effect is logic of insane utilitarianism (Narayan in Hickel, 2014) that relies on artificially constructed binaries of oppositional girlhoods. It undermines the relationality of girls' experiences worldwide, depicting girls in the North as empowered individuals as against the essentially victimized, waiting-to-be-rescued girls of the South (Bent and Switzer, 2016). The western media narratives of Malala subtly reproduce the stereotypical Muslim girl, the "object object" (Thobani, 2017), rescued and honored by the white man. Although, Malala's discourses dent these stereotypes, the question is whether she is heard.

PERFORMING AND PLAYING

PANEL, 01:00 – 02:30, FRIDAY NOV 15

Re-Girling the Girl: A Feminist Dance/Performance Ethnography

LISA SANDLOS

In 1993 Judith Butler proposed that gender is socially and historically inscribed on bodies so girls are often "girled" by societal forces even before they are born. In this presentation, I reflect on feminist dance/performance ethnography as a process that can amplify the voices of adolescent girls who have much to say about their experiences of being girled. *Re-Girling the Girl* is a piece I facilitated for fifteen pre-adolescent girls with the aim of exploring some of the powerful, pervasive,

problematic or contradictory signals girls tend to receive as they embark upon their journey towards womanhood. Culminating performances of the piece in Guelph and Toronto opened up rich dialogue with the dancers, their families, and their communities about issues of imposed femininity and sexualization. Continuing development of this choreography generated further conversation about the value of embodied performance as empowering for girls as they begin to forge a path for "re-girling" themselves.

More than Just (Doll) Play: How Caribbean Girls Challenge the Hypersexualization of Black Bodies in Canada

JANET SEOW

This paper presents findings from a study of 10 girls and young women between the ages of 7 and 18 from Caribbean immigrant communities in Toronto, Canada. Using a rights-based framework and child-centred participatory research methods and methodologies that value the individual experiences of participants, the study seeks to fill a gap in understanding the doll play experiences of racialized children and youth, and how playing with dolls might help young people understand and contest what it means to "be Black" in Toronto. The study's findings suggest that in a multicultural and multiracial Toronto, doll play is an important site for African Caribbean children and youth, through which they negotiate new social rules and shifting identities, including rules and ideas about gender, race and sexuality. The paper specifically explores how Black girls and young women understand and experience play with Black Barbie dolls, and demonstrate leadership and agency in managing and contesting racialized identities through doll culture.

Black Girls, White Dolls: Implications for the Construction of Motherhood

GIANNINA ONG

The infamous "doll test" displayed young Black girl's conception of human beauty as correlated to whiteness, but the implications outside of self-confidence and racial constructs have not been undertaken. In particular, dolls are used to socialize motherly behavior in girls who play with them. Therefore, the girl of color's preference for a white doll might lend itself to narratives furthering normalizing the "mammy" stereotype or, with recent technologies, surrogacy services by women of color. Foregrounded by girls' preference for white dolls, the construction of contemporary motherhood through doll play is explored through an analysis of current market trends and the visual rhetoric of advertisements.

BEAUTY QUEENS: BLACK GIRLHOOD AND PAGEANTS IN THE 1930s

KEYNOTE by Sam White

09:30 – 10:00, SATURDAY NOV 16

ABSTRACT

The arrival of beauty pageants in North America during the early twentieth century provided a local and national stage for young beauty queens. And yet, the whiteness of these pageants reveals the types of girls are made visible. My keynote examines young girls' participation in African-American beauty pageants during the 1930s through tracing the ways in which girlhood is represented and circulated as a political project during the Jim Crow Era.

BIO

Samantha White is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Childhood Studies at Rutgers University-Camden. She is a historian of girlhood, with a focus on black girlhood, health, the body, and the built/natural environment.

CONSTRUCTING THE DIGITAL GIRL: PROMISES, TENSIONS, AND POSSIBILITIES

KEYNOTE by Rebekah Willett

10:00 – 10:30, SATURDAY NOV 16

ABSTRACT

As digital creators and consumers, girls are variously positioned as, amongst other things, at risk from numerous societal ills, free to be whomever they wish, and future change-makers in the male-dominated tech industry. This paper uses news coverage of coding initiatives aimed at girls as a case study to explore ways that discourses position girls as computer scientists. The paper analyzes the promises made by coding initiatives, who is included and excluded in those promises, ways parents and technology are constructed in this discourse, and implications for understanding STEM initiatives aimed at disempowered populations more broadly.

BIO

Dr Rebekah Willett is an Associate Professor in the Information School at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States. She has conducted research on children's media cultures, focusing on issues of play, literacy, identity, and learning. Her publications include work on makerspaces, playground games, amateur camcorder cultures, families' screen media practices, and children's story writing.

FRAMING AND MEANING-MAKING

PANEL, 10:45 – 12:00, SATURDAY NOV 16

Girls Do(n't) Play Games: Re-visiting H.G. Wells Little Wars 106 Years Later

TANYA POBUDA

In 1913, H.G. Wells wrote a book about miniature wargames. Or rather the book of its era about waging tabletop warfare. Its full title is: Little Wars; a game for boys from twelve years of age to one hundred and fifty and for that more intelligent sort of girls who likes boys' games and books. As a shy 12-year-old, I mustered up the courage to ask a boy if I could join their Dungeons and Dragons club. The answer came back, "Girls don't play games." Today, doing research on gender representation in tabletop gaming, I find the response is unchanged: "Girls don't play games." The messages in Little Wars still echo through the halls, rec rooms and board game cafes of our modern gaming culture 106 years later. I'll discuss how a gendered understanding of gaming deprives young girls of critical media and systems literacies enabled by game play

Reimagining Girlhood in Early Learning Spaces through a Reconceptualist Framework

ZUHRA ABAWI

Reconceptualist approaches to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) began in the late 1980s, by scholars who sought to interrogate dominant discourses of developmentalist-based paradigms of early childhood, such as gender, dis/ability, social-economic status and race (Bloch, 2014; Curry & Cannella, 2013). Dominant developmentalist views mandate conformity to rigid norms of gender identity; there is the female identity on one end of the spectrum and the male on the other end in which there is and cannot be an in between (Grieshaber, 2007; Hogan, 2012; MacNaughton, 2005). Gender, much like race, is often considered to be obsolete to early childhood learning, as early childhood learning spaces are poised as gender-less, race-less, neutral sites (Berman & Abawi, 2019; Hogan, 2012). This reconceptualist research aims to destabilize hegemonic discourses of gender in order to challenge norms and assumptions that frame how young girls and girlhood are imagined and socialized in early learning spaces.

Quebec-based Refugee Adolescent Girls' Conceptualization of Resettlement Experiences

NESA BANDARCHIAN

In the last three years Canada, as one of the top refugee destination countries, has hosted 129,000 refugees, and among them 58,250 are females under the age of 17 (Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), 2019). Despite Canada's international reputation for being safe and welcoming for refugees, research has shown that experiences of racism and discrimination prevents or limits refugee adolescent girls from accessing available services such as mental health support (Williams, Cassar, Sigers, & Taylor, 2016). The aims of this study are threefold: 1) To investigate the struggles and challenges that affect refugee adolescent girls' daily lives after resettlement in Quebec, 2) To investigate the solutions that refugee adolescent girls themselves identify through participatory visual approaches to help to address their struggles 3) To inform the possibility of interventions and programs that could be provided by NGOs and governmental organizations.

Understanding (Invisible) Girlhoods: What's Disability Studies Got to Do With It?

XUAN THUY NGUYEN

This paper examines the ways in which critical disability studies can engage with the conversation on girlhood studies. Drawing on the relatively silence of disability within the contemporary discourses of childhood and girlhood, as exemplified within this symposium's Call for Paper, I critique how the disciplines of girlhood and childhood studies, as well as critical disability studies itself, have sidelined the interdisciplinary engagement between disability and girlhood. I will first trace the ways in which scholarships in girlhood studies have engaged with invisible girlhood (Griffin, 2004) while remaining unquestioned of taken-for-granted assumptions on disability as a problem. Second, drawing on disability studies and critical childhood studies, I explore how normalcy is constructed by the concept of the "normal child," which excludes the difference. Finally, I offer a possibility for theoretical and empirical interventions by reframing the discourse of disabled girlhood, drawing on a transnational perspective on girlhood and disability (Erevelles & Nguyen, 2016; Nguyen, 2016). I suggest that critical disability studies can offer a valid standpoint for interrogating the normative assumptions on white, cis-gendered, and able-bodied girlhood by questioning its sustained practices that exclude and marginalize disabled girls.

LOCATING GIRLS' VOICES

PANEL, 01:30 – 02:15, SATURDAY NOV 16

"I Will Be Glad to See Some of the Girls as It Is Lonesome Here": Friendships and Relationships between Girls in Ontario's School for the Blind, 1902 – 1912

JOANNA L. PEARCE

Historians of disability have struggled to locate the voices of blind women and girls in North America. While a handful of blind women wrote autobiographies for a sighted audience, these do not necessarily provide accurate information about blind girlhood in the nineteenth century, but instead how it was packaged for consumption. However, the Ontario Institution for the Education of the Blind (OIEB) kept a collection of letters written to and by students at the school. These letters are some of the best evidence we have of the experiences of blind girlhood – written by girls at the time of their experiences, whether to parents, teachers, or to other girls. In this paper, I will examine a collection of letters from to highlight and examine the relationships formed between girls at the school. By analysing these letters, this paper explores the relationships between blind girls, as well as giving further insight into the experience of blind girlhood.

Girls' Learning and Negotiating the Socially Constructed Category of Girl Through Girls Conferences

CASSANDRA MCDONALD & SUSAN BRIGHAM

In this presentation, we examine the questions: What does it mean to be a girl and how do girls negotiate this socially constructed category? We report on a study that examines informal girl-centered learning. Specifically, we explore a unique learning site, Girls Conferences, held annually over the past 8 years hosted by the Alexa McDonough Institute in NS. The conferences are 1-2 days of workshops and activities designed for girls aged 11 to 18 years, to challenge girls to think deeply

and critically about societal gendered norms, to take a feminist perspective on gendered roles, and to question, recognize, and counter hegemony and unmask power as it affects girls. Research data include transcripts of three focus group interviews with 15 girls (past delegates) and over 800 anonymous evaluations submitted by girl attendees. Preliminary findings include: girls are critically aware of, frustrated, and fearful of the sexism they experience on a daily basis and the perceived violence directed toward them; they are looking for ways to challenge sexism; they challenge, value, and negotiate aspects of cultural frames of girlhood; they are looking for opportunities that inspire, build confidence and develop appreciation of self, and understand girls' rights in girl identified-only spaces.

Out of Sight, Out of Mind—to Whom?: Space/Place-Making Black African Girlhoods in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

JEN KATSHUNGA

No matter where in the Global South they reside, narratives and policies focused on Black African (read: African and Afro-Diasporic) adolescent girls routinely herald the same story: sexual violence, poverty, lack of education, and a steadfast belief that they are victims of their uncivilized environments. Utilizing the Black African Girl Approach (BAGA) I have developed, I argue that this socio-spatial exclusion of girls disappears the lived experiences and voices of Black African girls in wider discourses on Black girlhood(s). Building on my research with adolescent girls in street situations in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), this paper centers a series of photographs I took in 2016 & 2017 in Kinshasa, DRC. These photos explore the social and spatial exclusion and erasure of girls within the city and beyond. This paper addresses the interstices of gender, race, class and age on the continent and throughout the diasporas, the invisibilization of girls in Kinshasa, as well as the politics of knowledge production and consumption in the Global North.

LANGUAGE AND THE GIRL IN THE WORLD

PANEL, 02:30 – 04:15, SATURDAY NOV 16

Contemporary Girls and their Ancient Counterparts: How Girlhoods of the Distant Past are Imagined in Children's Literature as a Means of Envisioning Girlhoods of the Present

ELIZABETH GALWAY & KEVIN MCGEOUGH

Representations of the ancient world are a powerful means of constructing and normalizing gender roles. Presenting categories of personhood as present in past "other" places reifies these and makes them seem natural. In archaeology, girlhood has been especially subject to such treatment as there is significant evidentiary ambiguity about the lived realities of girls, and this ambiguity is often exploited by authors of children's literature (both fictional and non-fictional). Readers in the present "learn" much about past lives through the presentation of ancient girls, and this paper will explore some of the means through which authors present girlhoods of both the past and the present, either through imaginative time travel stories or through the figure of the child archaeologist. Some of these works of literature reflect attempts to inscribe gender roles from the present onto the past, while others offer girl readers a means of imagining lives for themselves that challenge expected notions of girlhood.

Harriet the Spy, Narrative Ethics, and the Role of the Girl Writer

KATHERINE BELL

While I have long been interested in the positioning of female writers in literature and popular culture (from Jo in *Little Women* to Hannah Horvath in HBO's series *Girls*), this presentation will focus specifically on Harriet Welsh: a feisty protagonist with a spy journal, who has been met with both praise and derision since the publication of Fitzhugh's novel in 1964. How is Harriet's writing instrumental to her growth? How might her gender affect the way others – both in Fitzhugh's world and the world beyond – respond to the nature and scope of her writing? This is a work in progress; though it is literary and text-based, I hope it will open up conversations about the ways in which non-fiction writing and 'truth telling' continue to be elaborated along gender lines and the ways female writers have been positioned then and now, before and after the age of social media and digital participatory culture.

The Use of Language in Gender Based Policies for Nation Building in Afghanistan

ROHINA KABIR

The choice of language on gender-based policies has a strong influence on the social determinants. This article will explore ways to diminish the language used for gender to destroy the negative gender stereotypes. This would enable girls to advance young girls socially, politically, economically and physically. There is a significant correlation between attaching the word "girl" or "women" on to a person and the invisible social barriers that one would face that would limit them to explore their true selves and their true potential. This article will discuss a case study of how parents, especially the father call his daughters as "my children" or "my child" instead of "my daughter" or "my girl" because the parents think this will entrap them into believing they are born in a role therefore have to obey the boundaries. This method they believe would let his children reach their full potential. More importantly, have fluidity of actions instead of sticking to femininity and defining delineate boundary of girlhood.

"Girl Thoughts," "Girl Dreams," and "Becoming a Beauuuutiful Lady":

Discursive Archetypes of Girlhood in Children's Picture Books on Gender Non-Conformity

AMEERA ALI

This presentation will provide an exploration of the ways in which girlhood and femininity are discursively depicted within 30 children's picture books focused on gender non-conformity. The ways in which characters (both gender conforming and non-conforming) navigate and constitute their subjectivities as girls in line with their understanding of girlhood, femininity, and what it fundamentally means to 'be a girl' will be comprehensively explored. The findings that will be discussed have been evoked from a broader Critical Discourse Analysis of these books and suggest that girlhood often exists on its own (i.e. to be a girl, is to be a girl by virtue of particular traits), whereas boyhood is often conceptualized *in opposition* to girlhood (i.e. to be a boy is principally *not* to be a girl). As such, this presentation discusses the ways that girlhood and boyhood are often juxtaposed against each another in these books and are, subsequently, discursively constructed in opposition to one other.

LOOKING THROUGH ALICE-THE-CHILD-FIGURE: ALICE IN WONDERLAND AND *CHILD STUDIES MULTIPLE*

KEYNOTE by Anna Sparrman

04:15 – 05:15, SATURDAY NOV 16

ABSTRACT

This is NOT an paper about Alice in Wonderland. It is about the figure of Alice-the-child and an exploration of the contemporary theoretical research field of Child Studies. What if, I ask, Lewis Carroll's Alice-the-child had been one of the sources drawn upon when forming child research theories? The idea is to use the looking-glass, the magnifier, to explore how the fictive child character Alice in the two books "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking-Glass" enacts key concepts in Child Studies such as: the child, growth, agency, and innocence; how Alice reproduces and challenges these concepts, and finally how Alice-the-child-figure opens up space for possible new theoretical ways of thinking about the child in child research today. Out of this exploration grows the idea of making multiplicity a core concept of Child Studies, talking about *Child Studies Multiple*.

ANNA'S BIO

Anna is a professor and researcher at Linköping University in Sweden. Her research combines theories of visual culture with children, consumption, child culture and sexuality. Her research addresses how norms and values are enacted between children, adults, and the material world in children's everyday life practices. She researches visual culture in combination with the topics of child culture, consumption, sexuality, materiality, children and childhood and visual research methods. I am especially interested in the ways in which these topics intertwine, entangle and cut against one another.