

Facilitator's Guide for Teachers and Service Providers

Using *girlSpoken: from pen, brush & tongue*
to explore girlhood in classroom or group settings

Guide prepared by Jessica Hein, Heather Holland, Carol Kauppi, and Leyna Lowe



edited by Jessica Hein, Heather Holland, and Carol Kauppi

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about the book *girlSpoken: from pen, brush & tongue*

The first book of its kind to be produced in Canada, *girlSpoken: from pen, brush & tongue*, is an anthology of artwork and writing by girls and young women from across Canada. The pieces in the book are nonfictional works in the form of poetry, prose, diary entries or self-portraits. They convey girls' personal stories, their thoughts and their perceptions of themselves and the world they live in. The *girlSpoken* book also includes statistics from our survey of 556 girls and young women. The survey results provide some context for the material in the works of the individual contributors by giving information about broader trends or patterns in girls' experiences.

The book grew out of a three-year project, *GirlSpoken: Creative Voices for Change*. Through our work with girls and young women between the ages of 13 to 19, we became acutely aware of the gaps in resources available to girls. We learned that girls are eager to hear from other girls and young women about their experiences of girlhood. We have also repeatedly heard from teachers and program providers that the *girlSpoken* book is the kind of resource they need in order to understand the perspectives of girls. They have also told us they want a book like *girlSpoken* to share with the girls and young women in their programs and classrooms. Similarly, parents have told us that they are eager both to read about girls' experiences and to be able to offer a resource to their daughters and other girls in their lives. More recently, we have also heard from men and women who want the *girlSpoken* book to be read by teenage boys so that boys can gain a better understanding of the issues raised by our contributors. Based on communications with service/program providers, parents and girls, *girlSpoken: from pen, brush & tongue* and the companion facilitator's guide will help to fill a gap.

Our book is unique in both Canada and the United States in two key respects: first and foremost, it is a book by and for girls from across Canada that focuses not only on the struggles, but also on the strengths of girls. Many of the books that have been published about girls focus on their lack of self-esteem. While this approach may inform policy makers, educators, and parents of the necessity to become sensitive to girls' issues, it paints girls as being disempowered while overlooking their talents and strengths. The pieces in the *girlSpoken* book speak to the ways in which girls are combating the constricting and contradictory messages they receive about what it is to be a girl. Second, most existing books that feature creative works by girls focus solely on their written works, whereas *girlSpoken: from pen, brush & tongue* combines girls' wit and wisdom with artwork created by teenage girls.

The vision for the book was to emulate the spirit of a zine in certain respects. Because it has been designed to be readable and accessible, a reader can pick up the book, browse through and begin reading anywhere. However, it can also be read cover-to-cover. The content is compelling so individuals may read the entire book, or parts of it, more than once so that they gain new understandings of the content. We have developed this facilitator's guide to support the use of the book in educational and service settings.

about this *Facilitator's Guide*

This guide draws on 64 pieces of writing and art from *girlSpoken*. We have created it to assist teachers and service providers in using the *girlSpoken* book in classroom and service settings to

facilitate group discussions or individual assignments on 12 key topics. The guide has three main sections. The first section lists important dates in Canadian women's history during the 20th century. This list is included to provide a context for understanding key issues raised by the contributors to the *girlSpoken* book. The second section contains a set of six pre-reading activities that can be used to begin a discussion about the book within a classroom or group setting. The third, twelve-part section of this guide offers educators and service providers information to support learning and discussion about key topics raised by the contributors to the *girlSpoken* book.

The same structure is used for each topic. Four to seven pieces of writing and artwork are identified as being relevant for a discussion of the topic and a relevant statistic from the GirlSpoken survey of 556 girls in Ontario is presented¹. A synopsis of each piece is provided and a short summary of literature on the topic is provided. Sets of questions and learning activities are suggested for individual essays or assignments, classroom/group discussion and school/community development. In each topic section, one learning activity draws on the first section of this guide—important dates in Canadian women's history in the 20th century—to link the issues identified by the book's contributors with historical facts. Integrated into this guide are six collages by teenage girls that complement the artwork in the book and provide additional illustrations of how girls' see the issues discussed in this guide.

Copies of this guide can be downloaded from the resources section of the Second Story Press website at www.secondstorypress.ca or from www.girlspoken.com in the section entitled "Our Book".

about the authors of this guide

Jessica Hein has a BA in women's studies from the University of Guelph and is pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the NSCAD University in Halifax. With Heather Holland, Jessica was Co-coordinator of *GirlSpoken: Creative Voices for Change*, a three-year project on girlhood. She is a co-editor of *girlSpoken: from pen, brush and tongue*.

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Carol Kauppi is a professor in the School of Social Work at Laurentian University. She has been engaged in research involving young people for more than 20 years. She lives in Sudbury, Ontario. She was the Research Director of *GirlSpoken: Creative Voices for Change* and is a co-editor of *girlSpoken: from pen, brush and tongue*.

Leyna Lowe is a fourth year student in Women's Studies and English Literature at Laurentian University. She became involved with *GirlSpoken* in the Fall of 2007 when she began to work as a research assistant with the project. Leyna is from Sudbury, Ontario.

1 An overview of the GirlSpoken survey is included on pages 197-198 of the book.

important dates in Canadian women's history, 20th century ²

This section provides some key dates in the history of Canadian women during the 20th Century, including important moments in politics, the arts, sports and selected occupations. This list should not be regarded as exhaustive or comprehensive. It is meant to provide a starting point for understanding and researching these issues.

- 1907 In Quebec, Marie Gérin-Lajoie and Caroline Béïque found the Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste, the first association of francophone women promoting women's civil and political rights.
- 1908 Lucy Maud Montgomery of Prince Edward Island publishes *Anne of Green Gables*. More than a million copies of her bestseller were sold throughout the 20th century.
- 1916 Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are the first provinces to grant women the right to vote in provincial elections (BC and ON—1917; NS—1918; NB—1919; PEI—1922; NFLD—1925; QC—1940)
- 1918 With the exception of Aboriginal women, women over the age of 21 who are Canadian citizens are granted the right to vote in federal elections.
- 1921 Agnes Campbell Macphail becomes the first woman elected to the House of Commons.
- 1924 Fifteen year old figure skater, Cecile Smith becomes the first Canadian female athlete to compete at the winter Olympic Games (held in Chamonix, France).
- 1927 Emily Carr becomes the first Canadian woman artist to achieve national recognition when her work is included in an exhibition at the National Gallery.
- 1928 Eileen Vollick is the first Canadian woman to receive a pilot's license. Anna Dexter becomes the first Canadian woman radio broadcaster.
- 1929 Following a long political and legal battle led by Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Henrietta Muir Edwards, Louise McKinney and Irene Parlby—also known as the "Famous five"—the British Privy Council renders a decision declaring that the term "qualified persons" in article 24 of the British North America Act includes members of the female gender.
- 1931 The Edmonton Museum of Fine Arts organizes an exhibition of women artists.
- 1932 Dr. Elizabeth Catherine Bagshaw opens the first family planning clinic in Canada (which was then illegal).
- 1934 Elzire Dionne gives birth to quintuplets (Annette, Émilie, Yvonne, Cécile and Marie) in Corbeil, Ontario. The girls became known as the Dionne quintuplets.
- 1936 Reverend Lydia Emelie Gruchy is the first ordained woman minister in the United Church.
- 1939 The very first female aeronautical engineer in the world, Elizabeth "Elsie" Gregory MacGill is the first Canadian woman to design and witness the construction of an airplane (the Maple Leaf II Trainer) based on her own design.
- 1947 Canadian women who marry non-Canadians no longer lose their citizenship.

² This list was adapted from Status of Women Canada, *Women's History Month 2000* http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/cgi-bin/printview.pl?file=/dates/whm/2000/dates_e.html and from Belton, R. (2005). *Important Moments in Canadian Art History* at <http://web.ubc.ca/okanagan/creative/links/timeline/1800.html>

- 1948 United Nations General Assembly adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaiming that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". Canada signs on to it.
- 1951 Charlotte Whitton is the first woman to be elected mayor of a large Canadian city (Ottawa).
- 1952 Ontario becomes the first province to put equal pay legislation into effect.
Elsie Knott, a member of the Ojibway band, is elected Chief.
- 1955 Restrictions on the employment of married women in the federal public service are removed.
- 1956 Legislation is enacted guaranteeing equal pay for equal work within federal jurisdiction.
- 1960 Native men and women living on reserve are allowed to vote in federal elections without losing their registered Indian status.
- 1966 Jean Sutherland Boggs is named Director of Canada's National Gallery and becomes the first woman in the world to head a national art gallery.
- 1968 Hilda May Torok Binns becomes Canada's first ever disabled Olympic gold medallist winning two gold medals (and a silver medal) in Tel Aviv at the Paralympic Games, then called the "International Stokes Mandeville Games for the paralyzed".
The Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (now NSCAD University) in Halifax establishes the Anna Leonowens Gallery to honour the woman who founded the art school in 1887.
- 1969 The Criminal Code is amended so that prescribing contraceptives and handing out information on birth control methods as well as sexual acts between consenting adults of the same sex are no longer considered crimes.
Margaret Atwood publishes her first novel, *Edible Woman*. She began her writing career as a poet at age sixteen.
- 1970 The report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada is tabled and reveals disturbing facts about discrimination against women and women in poverty.
- 1971 Canadian Frances Phipps becomes the first woman to explore the North Pole.
- 1972 Rosemary Brown becomes the first Black woman politician elected in Canada (BC legislature).
- 1973 The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women is created.
Several women artists in Montreal organize an exhibition that evolves into an influential feminist alternative, the Powerhouse Gallery. It would be re-named La Centrale in 1990.
- 1974 Studio D of the National Film Board is created and becomes the first women's English film studio in the world producing films from a woman's perspective.
- 1975 A major exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada features seven contemporary women artists. Curated by Mayo Graham and entitled *Some Canadian Women Artists*, the exhibit was held to celebrate International Women's Year.
- 1977 Parliament adopts the Canadian Human Rights Act. It prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex in employment and services in federal jurisdiction. It also strongly reinforces the principle of equal pay for equal work. The Canada Labour Code is amended to provide a 17 week maternity leave.
- 1978 The Canadian Human Rights Commission begins operation based on the principle that every individual should have an equal opportunity to live without discrimination.

- The Canada Labour Code is amended to prohibit dismissal or lay-off because of pregnancy.
- 1982 A controversial and provocative exhibition on art and feminism, *Art et féminisme* is shown at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts/Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.
Bertha Wilson becomes the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada.
- 1983 The Canadian Human Rights Act is amended to prohibit sexual harassment and to ban discrimination on the basis of pregnancy and family or marital status.
The federal government adopts Bill C-127 which acknowledges the notion of "spousal rape".
- 1984 Jeanne Sauvé becomes the first woman Governor General of Canada.
Daurene Lewis of Annapolis Royal, NS, is the first Black woman elected as mayor in Canada.
- 1985 Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms comes into effect guaranteeing equality for all Canadians before/under the law and equal protection/benefit of the law.
After a long legal battle lead by the Aboriginal activist Jeannette Vivian Corbière Lavell, the Indian Act is amended restoring status and right to band membership for native women who had lost their status through marriage to a non-Aboriginal.
- 1986 The Employment Equity Act is introduced, applicable to Crown corporations and federally regulated businesses, to correct historic and systemic discrimination against women, Aboriginal peoples, people with disabilities and members of visible minorities.
- 1987 After a lengthy debate on the role of women in the Canadian Armed Forces, the Minister of National Defense announces that all air force combat roles are now open to women, including flying fighter aircraft (such as CF-18) and tactical helicopters.
- 1988 The Supreme Court of Canada strikes down the provisions of the Criminal Code on abortion.
- 1989 Audrey McLaughlin of Yukon becomes the first woman to lead a federal political party, the New Democratic Party.
Fourteen women are tragically killed at École Polytechnique in Montréal, QC, due to their gender.
- 1991 Manon Rhéaume of Quebec is the first woman to play in the National Hockey League (NHL).
- 1992 The concept of consent is legally defined for the first time in amendments to the Criminal Code provisions on sexual assault.
Roberta Lynn Bondar of Ontario becomes the first Canadian female astronaut to travel into space aboard the space shuttle Discovery.
- 1993 Kim Campbell of BC becomes the first woman to hold the job of Prime Minister of Canada.
Jean Augustine becomes the first Black woman elected to the House of Commons.
- 1995 Bill C-72 changes the Criminal Code so that intoxication is no longer accepted as a defense in cases of sexual assault and battery.
Part of an unprecedented touring exhibition, works by women artists on the topic of breast cancer are shown at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.

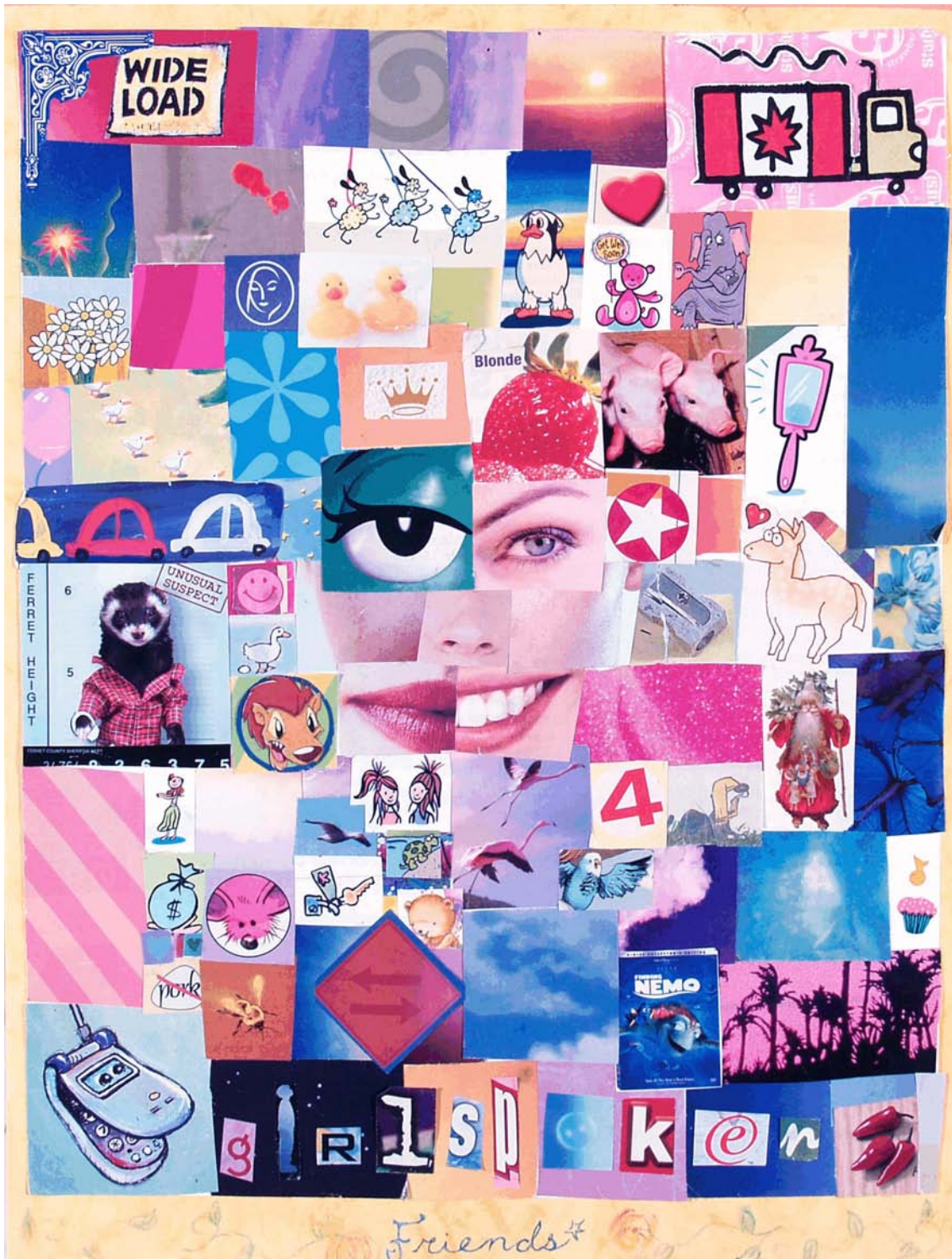
- 1996 The Canadian Human Rights Act is amended to include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination.
- 1998 Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers release the Iqaluit Declaration reaffirming their commitment to ending violence against women.
- 1999 Beverley McLachlin of Alberta becomes the first female Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court of Canada unanimously affirms that “no means no” (R. v. Ewanchuck). The Court held that the idea of “implied consent” to sexual assault does not exist in Canadian law. The decision sent a strong message that consent to sexual activity must be voluntary and communicated. It cannot be given by a third party or motivated by fear or abuse of authority.

pre-reading activities

1. Look at the cover of the book. What does it suggest about the content?
2. Consider the title *girlSpoken: from pen, brush and tongue*. What do you think the book will be about?
3. The major chapters and themes in this anthology are Voice, Beauty, Strength and Becoming. At a glance, what do you think these themes have to do with girlhood?
4. Jessica Hein, Heather Holland and Carol Kauppi, the editors of the book, note that this anthology is grounded in a feminist perspective. How would you define feminism? Look up the definition of feminism on a trusted website or in a library and, as a class or group, discuss your findings. What are some common misconceptions or myths about feminism? Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why or why not?
5. Make a list of the books, movies and television shows that have recently become popular. Whose view of the world do they represent? Do you think girls' points of view are obscured? What would popular media look like if it represented girls' views of the world?
6. This anthology was compiled to explore what it means to be a teenage girl in Canada. Do you think there is one quintessential Canadian girl? In what ways are Canadian girls diverse?

scrap book

Emily Vrooman, 15



Topic 1: Using Girls' Writing and Art to Explore Childhood, Girlhood and Adolescence

Topic: Childhood, girlhood and adolescence

Resources: Prose, poetry and art

Grade Level: Grade 7 through to post-secondary

Subjects: Social Studies, English, Ethics, Politics, Art, Social Justice, Women's Studies

Summary: This section of the guide outlines how to use four pieces of writing and three pieces of art by adolescent girls to explore issues surrounding childhood, girlhood and adolescence. In all of these authors' written pieces, childhood is described as an important and influential part of girlhood. The pieces speak to experiences of girls' growth and feelings of nostalgia surrounding these different stages of their lives.

Relevant statistics from the *GirlSpoken* survey: When asked what they want to tell the world about what it is like to be a teenage girl, 50% say that it is difficult. They use words such as stressful, hard, tough, scary and "it sucks" to describe their general experience. Only 15% described adolescence in positive terms, while 35% were ambivalent and mentioned both positive and negative aspects.

Synopsis of Written Pieces

In ***when you're yourself***, Hannah Schultz-Durkacz (age 13) articulates her feelings of hurt and betrayal at her friend's rejection of their friendship. Hannah's letter documents how girls sometimes attempt to suppress their true selves as they grow older. However, this piece also shows the resilience and maturation of one girl who does not succumb to these pressures. (page 123)

In ***Blue***, Terri Prokopiw (age 19) expresses her feelings of longing to be with her mom. She conjures powerful images of safety and warmth to convey the feelings of happiness she experienced as a child in her mother's care. (page 168)

Old Days is about Heather Robbins's (age 14) memories of her childhood friend. She describes childhood as a time when girls can engage in gender play and freely explore the world. At the end of the poem, Heather wonders if her friend has changed as she has. (page 152)

My Stages Have Holes by Kiley Crossby (age 16) relates her experiences of and resistance toward growing up. She mourns the fact that girls lose themselves by obsessing about their physical appearance and focusing all their attentions on boys. (page 148)

The painting ***Sapling*** by Emily Harris (age 17) depicts a sapling in the midst of a tall, sturdy, mature tree. Emily says of her painting about growth and strength, "If we could have the emotional strength equivalent to the physical strength of a tree. Where would the human race be? Would there be lies, cheating and murder? Grow, little sapling grow!" (page 165).

Emily Vrooman's collage **scrap book** shows many images that span the developmental years between childhood and girlhood/adolescence. (page 7, Facilitator's Guide)

The collage ***From Seed to Apple*** by Caylee Raber uses the metaphor of an apple tree and its fruit to emphasize the challenges of growing up, as well as the inherent strengths at the inner core of each individual which need to be recognized and nurtured. In describing her collage, Caylee stated, "It's not easy being an individual, surrounded by social cliques and gossip. We need adults to recognize and support our struggles instead of dismissing them as petty." (page 11, Facilitator's Guide)

Literature Summary on Childhood and Girlhood

Collectively, the contributors to the *girlSpoken* book express ambivalence about the transition from childhood to girlhood and adolescence. This perspective is also reflected in discourses surrounding girls' experiences of childhood and adolescence in Canada which present them as varied, complex, and even contradictory. Childhood is often conceptualized as a time in which girls are creative, feisty, inquisitive and active individuals (Pipher 1994) who are given space to be "tomboys" and engage in gender play (Lamb & Brown 2006). In the transition to adolescence however, girlhood, is thought to bring about a drop in self-esteem, motivation and optimism, as girls are subjected to tighter gender constrictions and curbed by the culturally-imposed gender limitations of patriarchy (Pipher 1994; Lamb & Brown 2006). Put more simply, key struggles in childhood and girlhood centre on the challenges associated with discovering themselves (Pipher 1994).

Childhood and girlhood are socially constructed categories that are highly gendered (Moletsane). In Canada, the normative categories of child, tween and teen are falsely treated as reflections of girls' physiological maturation. This view is overly simplified and a fuller understanding requires recognition that these categories are laden with social values that seek to regulate girls' behaviour and bodies within socially-accepted parameters (Seaton 2005). Seaton (2005) observes how very young girls are considered asexual, pure and innocent. Yet, as they age, they are sexualized and labelled precocious while boys more often may retain gender neutral identities (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2005). Furthermore, girls' experiences of childhood and maturation vary according to their social location, social class, race and sexual orientation.

Girls' development is also marked in geographical space. Merton (2005) observes how the family—the nucleus of childhood—may diminish in importance as girls engage in the process of

individuation at school and privilege their peer relationships. Others reject this view. As Pipher (1994) argues, whether children or adolescents, girls require the love, support and guidance that is provided by the family in order to resist the negative cultural messages that are associated with girlhood and womanhood. Many of the *girlSpoken* contributors articulate the critical importance of support from both family and friends as they traverse the often challenging pathways through childhood, girlhood and adolescence.

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Essay or Individual Assignment

1. Hannah Schultz-Durkacz describes how popularity becomes a concern for girls as they mature. Do you agree? Can you think of a time when this issue affected you in some way? How do/did you feel?
2. At what point in your life did you sense you were exiting childhood? Write a short response about the changes you experienced.
3. Look carefully at Emily Harris's painting entitled *Sapling*. In what ways do you think it is important for girls to have a sturdy support system while growing up? How do you think Caylee's message about growth relates to the idea behind Emily's painting?
4. According to Kiley Crossby, as girls grow up they are pressured into wearing lots of make-up, dressing provocatively and seeking the approval of boys. Why do you think this is?

Classroom/Group Discussion Questions**Activity Length: approximately 45 minutes**

Ask students to read the pieces aloud. Then ask the following questions.

1. In ***Old Days***, Heather Robbins views childhood as a time when girls can play with different gendered roles—they can be heroes, rock stars and pirates—roles traditionally assigned to boys—or, alternatively, they can play the female roles of damsels in distress and groupies. Do you think girls are free to take on “masculine” roles in their teen and adult years? Why or why not? Why do you think Heather finishes the poem with an image of herself in a prom dress?
2. Based on these written and illustrated pieces, how would you describe the transition from childhood to girlhood and adolescence? What kinds of changes do girls go through? What kinds of challenges do they face? How are the transitions, challenges and changes of adolescence reflected in the artworks of Emily Harris, Emily Vrooman and Caylee Raber?
3. Caylee Raber says that growing up is a painful struggle and that it requires endurance, but that those experiences can be points of learning. In what ways do you think girls can support one another during the trying times in their lives?
4. The year 1924 has been noted as a key date in Canadian women's history because, in that year, 15-year-old Cecile Smith became the first Canadian female athlete to compete in the Winter Olympic Games. Do you agree that this is a significant event in the history of Canadian women? Do you think that aspects of girlhood and adolescence described by Heather, Hannah, Terri and Kiley have changed much since 1924? Have some aspects changed while others have remained the same?

School/Community Development Activity**Activity Length: 20 minutes (1st class/group session), 1 hour (2nd class/group session), 20 minutes (3rd class/group session)**

1. Ask students: When you were little, what kinds of healthy messages did you receive (or wish you had received) about what it means to be a girl? Discuss as a class/group.
2. For the next class or group session, arrange to have your students visit a class of young children in an elementary school (from kindergarten to grade 4) and share a session of class time. Pair older students with younger students in temporary mentoring dyads. If possible, have the older students tutor the younger students in a particular subject or have the older students join the younger students in an art or physical education activity. Encourage your students to find ways to share the healthy messages about what it means to be a girl based on those that they identified as being important in the previous class or group discussion.
3. During the 3rd class or group meeting, have a short debriefing session and ask your students what they learned from the activity and how it felt to be a role model.

Untitled

Caylee Raber, 18



Years pass. From seed to apple grows. Envisioned are perfect, plump, shiny, juicy apples. But this is ignorant, for growth takes pain, struggle and endurance. To grow up and be perfect is not to grow up at all. Spontaneous actions, risks, mistakes to a critical eye these are bruises; to an apple these are flavors of a long momentous life. Reach beyond the skin, through the deep, resonant flesh, to the seeds; this is where life sprouts, where true happiness grows. Follow the seeds and grow, into an apple tattooed with memories of life's tender moments.

Topic 2: Using Girls' Writing and Art to Explore the Emotions of Girlhood

Topic: Emotions

Resources: Prose, poetry and art

Grade Level: Grade 7 through to post-secondary

Subjects: Social Studies, English, Ethics, Politics, Art, Social Justice, Women's Studies

Summary: This section of the guide outlines how to use five pieces of writing and two pieces of art by adolescent girls to explore the topic of emotions in girlhood.

Relevant statistic from the *girlSpoken* survey: 23% of girls and young women say that experiences of harassment affect their daily lives by making them feel angry and frustrated often.

Synopsis of Creative Works

Spin, spin stories by Olia Kuposova (age 17) relies upon sensory images to articulate the diversity of emotions that girls experience, such as fear and excitement. Olia celebrates her uniqueness in all its forms by embracing all of her emotions, both positive and not so positive, and learning from them. (page 31)

Written by Kat Salmon (age 16), ***dancing naked*** is a mindful examination of the emotions of discovery that a girl experiences. Kat describes how she experiences happiness, solitude, peace, euphoria, anger and power through people, activities and the natural environment. (page 72)

After Band Camp written by Julia C. Rees (age 16) is a playful examination of the types of emotional bonds girls form with each other. The girls view band camp as a brief period in which they escape into a private world of their own, where they can explore their attraction to each other and the range of feelings they are experiencing. (page 87)

In ***Orangeinfinity***, Erin Lorenz (age 16) uses stream of consciousness to describe the conflicting emotions that she is experiencing as a growing young woman discovering her sexuality. She is struggling with her desire to discover her changing self and the competing desire to seek a boy's approval. (page 83)

The beauty of it by Nikayla McIver (age 17) describes how her parents' separation and divorce elicited feelings of loneliness, depression and pain. Nikayla writes that she copes by finding strength in her faith and in her ability to accept change. (page 161)

Shannon May's artwork, **Mask**, (page 104) shows how art is a good way for girls to express their emotions.

Charlene Whiskeyjack's collage depicts the intense emotions of a girl contemplating suicide. (page 15, Facilitator's Guide)

Literature Summary on the Emotions of Girlhood

Because girls are situated within a space in which they are developing intellectually, mentally and physically, they experience a wide range of emotions that are unstable and changing (Pipher 1994). Understanding girls' emotions requires a multi-dimensional analysis that considers how their emotive experiences are shaped by race, class, sexual orientation, ability, age and appearance.

In Canada, the construction of the "ideal" white, middle class, heterosexual Canadian girl pressures all girls to conform to this unobtainable and unrealistic category. This racist and heterosexist construction pushes girls of different races and sexualities to internalize negative feelings about themselves and their communities, inciting feelings of pain, displacement and inferiority (Jiwani 2006; Gonick 2006). Furthermore, while girls of colour who attempt to fit in may be rewarded with certain privileges, they may also be punished with violence and rejection for having "sold out" (Jiwani 2006); this is also applicable to girls of diverse abilities, sexual orientations and appearances.

Love and nurturance as well as the cultivation of strengths and talents are important in girls' lives to foster self-esteem, positive self-concepts and overall healthy development (Pipher 1994). While love ideally originates from family and friends, it is also sought through romantic relationships where girls explore their sexuality, sexual agency and capacities for romantic love.

Girls' experiences of family difficulties, sexual, physical and emotional abuse, trauma or loss may instigate a wide range of feelings from pain, hopelessness and depression to anger, frustration and rebelliousness. Their methods of coping with these emotions also vary, as some girls might feel compelled to engage in self-destructive behaviours (Pipher 1994) while others may resist or work to challenge social inequality and injustice by engaging in activism (Gonick 2006). As Pipher notes, it is particularly important for girls to communicate their feelings and connect with the important people in their lives who can provide them with the help, support, validation and guidance needed for their journey through adolescence to womanhood. The art and writing of the *girlSpoken* contributors offer insights into the nature of girls' emotions and some of the ways they have discovered to deal with them.

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Essay or Individual Assignment

1. By embracing rather than rejecting her diverse emotions, Olia invites personal growth and change. In what ways do you embrace your emotions? In what ways do you reject them?
2. Kat's piece describes many different events in her life and categorizes them according to the emotions they elicited, such as "I'm happy," "I'm at peace," "I'm alive." Using these as a starting point, make a list of events you have experienced in your own life, along with the emotions that you remember feeling when these events occurred.
3. In what ways do girls benefit from close bonds with other girls? How do you think this affects their emotional growth?
4. Nikayla McIver (age 17) and Shannon May (age 16) discuss depression as being common to girlhood in their pieces *the beauty of it* (page 161) and *Mask* (page 104). Do you think that girls are free to express feelings of depression? How were you taught to work through feelings of sadness and depression? Examine Shannon's artwork: what do you see? Examine Charlene's collage: do you see some common themes that relate to *the beauty of it* and *Mask*?
5. In 1970, the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada showed that discrimination against women was widespread. How do you think societal patterns such as discrimination affect the emotional responses of girls during adolescence? Do you think there is a connection?

Classroom/Group Discussion Questions

Activity Length: 45 minutes

Ask students to read the pieces aloud. Then ask the following questions.

1. In *Orangeinfinity*, Erin describes how she begins to transfer her focus onto a boy. What does Erin say about this? What do you think about this? How might girls benefit from focusing more on themselves?
2. What are positive ways in which girls can deal with their emotions?

3. How do the media play on girls' emotions as a way to sell products? As a class/group, brainstorm examples.

School/Community Development Activity

Activity Length: 1 hour (1st class/group), 2 hours (2nd class/group)

1. Provide your students with clay (or other materials, such as those for paper mache) and ask them to create a mask representing one emotion of their choice.
2. When the masks are dry (this may take a few days), provide students with paints, cloth, glitter, etc. to decorate their masks. Ask your students to talk about how they expressed emotions in their art. Ask them to compare their work with other students and identify the different types of emotions. This activity can help students to learn more about themselves and their classmates.
3. Locate a space, such as a local bookstore, library, art gallery or school wall where your students can display their art. Ask each one to write an artist's statement (approximately one paragraph long) to accompany their work.

Untitled

Charlene Whiskeyjack, 16



Topic 3: Using Girls' Writing and Art to Explore Difference and Discrimination

Topic: Difference and discrimination (based on ability, sexual orientation, culture or ethnicity)

Resources: Prose, poetry and art

Grade Level: Grade 7 through to post-secondary

Subjects: Social Studies, English, Ethics, Politics, Art, Social Justice, Women's Studies

Summary: This section of the guide outlines how to use four pieces of writing and two pieces of art by adolescent girls to explore issues of difference and the negative impacts of discrimination.

Relevant statistic from the *GirlSpoken* survey: 66% of girls and young women say they are interested in learning more about racism.

Synopsis of Creative Works:

In ***My Dance*** Jessie Denise Huggett (age 17) writes about the prejudice she faces as a young woman with Down syndrome. She wants to be seen for *all* of who she is and she calls on youth to include people with disabilities in social activities and community life. (page 29)

Kyra Shaughnessy (age 18), author of ***Forget me not***, discusses how the assertion of her individuality as a young woman of mixed heritage has elicited discriminatory and racist labels such as "different" and "weird" from friends and strangers. Kyra expresses how she is hurt by these messages, yet she finds strength in pointing out the fallacies of others' perceptions of her. (page 23)

In ***Snapshots***, Roshaya Rodness (age 17) implicitly explores the ways in which difference in sexual orientation presents new possibilities in viewing the world. By criticizing *Cosmo* and writing about her longing for romance with another girl, Roshaya demonstrates how the concept of normality can be frustrating for young women who are perceived as "different." (page 57)

Although she observes that there are different, stereotypical categories of teenagers, ***Burn a Little Brighter*** by Vanessa Fernando (age 15) argues that teens are connected in a special way because they share similar experiences and emotions. (page 11)

In their self-portraits, 13 year-old Sherri Macdonald (page 40) and 17 year-old Christine Kim (page 113) reveal experiences of racism and discrimination.

Literature Summary on Difference and Discrimination in Girlhood

In Canada's dominant discourse, the terms "girl" and "girlhood" are often used to refer to an able-bodied, middle-class, white, heterosexual Canadian girl. This hegemonic image is problematic because it is not representative of the reality and diversity of girls in Canada (Gonick 2006). Just as feminists recognize that the essential and universal category "woman" does not exist, so too must we refer to girls in plural form, as there are differences between young women and these differences may or may not be centered around their shared identities as "female" (Lee 2006).

The constructions of race in Canada establish a very peculiar relationship between young women of colour, notions of citizenship and the state. While it is assumed that white girls are Canadian, many girls and young Canadian women of colour are treated as if they are "other than Canadian,"; this is a racist assumption that constantly reminds them of the marginal or "border" status which arises from discriminatory attitudes and practices that persist within our society (Lee 2006). Poverty, homelessness, poor health and displacement are some of the consequences for Aboriginal girls and young women of colour who are exposed to racism, and a history of colonialism and discriminatory legislation in Canada (Downe 2006).

Furthermore, girls do not all possess the same kinds of abilities. In Canada, girls who have disabilities or special needs are marked as asexual, passive and without agency, and as Ervelles et al. (2005) observe, they must work hard to establish themselves as sexualized and gendered beings. On the other hand, girls who defy heteronormativity and identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or questioning (LGBTQ) are often considered overly sexual, "pathological" and "deviant." As a result, LGBTQ girls are frequent victims of homophobia and physical and sexual violence (Gonick 2006).

Girls' access to power also varies, a grim reality for homeless girls and girls of poor and working class families who often face the multiple intersecting oppressions of poverty and racism, among others. In Canada, girls' differences in race, sexual orientation, ability and class are not only subject to erasure; they are often denied in order to mask the power differentials that perpetuate their multiple oppressions (Lee 2006; Gonick 2006). Addressing girls' differences is thus essential to establishing and defining a more comprehensive and truer understanding of Canadian girlhood.

References

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Essay or Individual Assignment

1. Jessie describes how she feels judged and excluded because she has a disability. This prejudice is what we call "ableism". Think about the various disabilities that people have, including those that are visible and those that are invisible. What challenges do people with disabilities face? In what ways do you think we live in an "ableist" society?
2. Kyra and Jessie both describe feeling socially excluded because of their differences. How are they treated by other people? Do you consider the discrimination they face to be a form of aggressive behaviour? In what ways do you think discrimination is linked to violence?
3. What does "normal" mean? To whom do you think it refers? Why do you think this concept exists? Who or what groups do you think is/are responsible for creating and sustaining the idea of normalcy?
4. In describing her drawing, ***New Life***, Christine Hyun A Kim writes that she faced racism when she came to Canada. Sherri Macdonald shows us that discrimination on the basis of cultural background can become a part of one's identity. Have you ever experienced racism, sexism or discrimination? If not, imagine yourself in Christine's and Sherri's shoes. What kind of obstacles and attitudes do you think you would encounter?
5. The drawing entitled ***My Identity*** by Sherri MacDonald and its accompanying excerpt explores discrimination as a form of abuse. How are cultural identities linked to forms of discrimination?

Classroom/Group Discussion Questions

Activity Length: 45 minutes

Ask students to read the pieces aloud. Then ask the following questions:

1. Do you think it is better to ignore or examine difference? What do you think would be the pros and cons of each?
2. Vanessa lists common labels that are attributed to girls: sluts, Goths, punks, freaks, tomboys, emo kids and stoners. What does it mean to place labels on people? Are these labels positive or negative? In what ways do you think they affect girls?
3. What are the things we can do to eliminate discrimination and celebrate difference?

School/Community Development Activity

Activity Length: 1.5 hours (1st class/group), 30 minutes (2nd class/group)

1. As a class or group, make a list of community agencies that address the different types of discrimination. Ask students to search the internet to determine what services are offered by each agency and report back to the class/group.
2. Research the meaning of Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1985). Discuss how the provisions of this section of the Charter are meant to offer protection against discrimination. Consider the aspects of the works of Jessie, Kyra, Sherri and Christine that discuss discrimination and compare them with the intent of Section 15 of the Charter. What needs to be done to ensure that Section 15 applies to all Canadians and protects against discrimination?
3. Discuss the concept of hate crimes as a form of discrimination with your students. Invite a speaker from a relevant community organization into the classroom or group setting to give a talk on discrimination and hate crimes.
4. For the next class or group meeting, ask students to identify and discuss instances of hate crimes in their community or in our society (i.e. as reported in newspaper articles, television or radio programs or news reports, or first person accounts of discrimination).

Topic 4: Using Girls' Writing and Art to Explore Sexuality

Topic: Sexuality and sexual orientation

Resources: Prose, poetry and art

Grade Level: Grade 7 through to post-secondary

Subjects: Social Studies, English, Ethics, Politics, Art, Social Justice, Women's Studies

Summary: This section of the guide outlines how to use five pieces of writing and one piece of art by adolescent girls to discuss issues of sexuality with students.

Relevant statistics from the *GirlSpoken* survey: 50% of girls and young women want to learn more about boy-girl sex and 12% want to learn more about girl-girl sex.

Synopsis of Creative Works

Womanhood, a short poem by Bertha Wong (age 19), describes how she stumbled upon womanhood and was both confused and delighted by it. Bertha expresses how she feels power and freedom in her sexual identity as a young woman. (page 88)

Jenn Cole's (age 19) poem, **The Baths**, is about her experience of taking a bath with her friend. By communicating this experience, Jenn reminds us that the boundaries between intimacy and sensuality can be fluid, but appreciation of another's physical makeup does not always involve sexual attraction. (page 49)

In **Lost**, Amy Murphy (age 17) conveys her feelings of melancholy for having lost her virginity to an unsatisfactory partner. Her experience speaks of the importance of girls' first sexual encounters with their partners and the ways in which they are affected emotionally by these experiences. (page 75)

A Glimpse, written by Roshaya Rodness (age 17), explores the diversity and complexity of girls' and women's sexual desires. She writes that, as girls and women, we must choose our sexual practices based on what feels right. (page 136)

In **Boy**, a 15 year-old girl describes a positive experience with physical contact. (page 85)

In a short essay about her painting entitled **Empowered**, Shawna Londry (age 16) poignantly observes how it is difficult for girls to feel comfortable in their own bodies. (page 99)

Literature Summary of Sexuality in Girlhood

Many feminist scholars emphasize how sexuality, which includes sexual behaviour and sexual desire, is socially constructed. Sexuality is highly scripted; girls are constrained by the culturally-defined rules of sex and gender that limit the behaviours in which they can and cannot engage (Schwartz and Rutter 2004). In the West, girls receive messages from their families, schools, communities and mass media about what is considered appropriate feminine sexuality (West and Zimmerman 1987).

The discourses surrounding girls' sexuality are narrow yet conflicting. On one hand, girls in their childhood are conceptualized as asexual and innocent, yet they are also eroticized in media representations. Girls' hypersexualization in media—a strategy used to generate profit—also discursively positions them as objects of male desire (Wertheimer 2006). The emphasis on heteronormativity makes heterosexuality compulsory for girls, which marginalizes the experiences and desires of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning (LGBTQ) girls (Petrovic et al). In order to contain and control women's and girls' sexuality within acceptable patriarchal parameters, their sexual desires are silenced and punished with violence and verbal abuse (Linston et al 2005).

Carla Rice (2005) emphasizes how messages about the female body vary from one context to another, so a girl's experience of her body and sexuality will depend upon her particular circumstances. Therefore sexuality is intertwined with processes of ethnicity, race, social class and other cultural factors that create divisions between girls. Accordingly, girls' experiences of their sexuality may involve feelings of shame, fear, confusion, embarrassment, or alternately, pride, power and pleasure. Girls' experimentation with clothing, sexual identities and sexual practices, all of which are aspects of their sexual identities, demonstrates how they are active in seeking ways to empower themselves and redefine prescriptive categories of sexuality. The creative writing included in this section of the guide illustrates the range of girls' experiences surrounding sexuality.

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Essay or Individual Assignment

1. Amy's poem focuses on the loss of her virginity. Do you think that virginity among young people is important in our society? If yes, why do you think that is? Do expectations differ for girls and boys? Is virginity something that is important to you?
2. In ***A Glimpse***, Roshaya communicates same-sex desire. How is homosexuality perceived in our society? Why?
3. The quote by Sigmund Freud at the beginning of Roshaya's poem asks "What does a woman want?" Do you think that all women desire the same things? How does Roshaya respond to Freud's question? Do you think many women's desires are different from what the media portrays as women's desires?
4. What are ways in which girls *can* feel good about their changing bodies and developing sexuality? What social structures or practices are in place that might make girls feel bad about themselves?

Classroom/Group Discussion Questions

Activity Length: 45 minutes

Ask students to read the pieces aloud. Then ask the following questions:

1. Jenn Cole describes the simple pleasure of taking a bath with her friend and their mutual appreciation of their developing bodies during adolescence. Do you think this poem is about close friendship, sexual curiosity or sexual attraction? What do you think is the writer's perspective? Do you think it is harder for a boy to write a poem about taking a bath with another boy and about sculpting their hair with "delicious shampoos"? If so, why do you think that is?
2. In what ways do you think sexuality and the expression of sexuality are looked upon in our society? Are some expressions of sexuality more accepted than others?

3. What are the stereotypes about sex surrounding masculinity and femininity? (ask students to think about their favourite music videos if they are unsure how to answer). How are they different? Is one viewed as more important than the other? If you answered yes, why do you think that is?
4. In 1996, an amendment to the Canadian Human Rights Act was made to prohibit discrimination against people of the basis of their sexual orientation. Do you think this legislation has been effective in preventing such discrimination?

School/Community Development Activity

Activity Length: variable

1. Prepare a box that will be accessible to students for a set period of time (e.g. several classes or group sessions). Place the box in a location that is available to students.
2. Invite students to write down questions they have about sexuality. Inform them that they can do this anonymously. If they are concerned about remaining anonymous, tell them that they can submit typewritten questions. Allow the students several days to place their questions in the box.
3. Invite a service provider or a panel of speakers from local agencies that offer information about girls' sexualities to come in and answer the students' questions. Provide the questions to the speakers in advance.
4. Invite someone from a sexual assault crisis centre to speak about sexual consent, someone from a GLBTQQ organization to speak about sexual orientation, and/or a public health nurse from a health unit to speak about sexual health.

Topic 5: Using Girls' Writing and Art to Explore Abuse and Sexual Assault

Topic: Abuse and sexual assault

Resources: Prose, poetry and art

Grade Level: Grade 7 through to post-secondary

Subjects: Social Studies, English, Ethics, Politics, Art, Social Justice, Women's Studies

Summary: This section of the guide outlines how to use four pieces of writing by adolescent girls and two photographic works to explore issues of abuse and sexual assault with students and to consider the negative social impact of these practices, as well as possibilities for change.

Relevant statistic from the *GirlSpoken* survey: 60% of girls and young women have experienced some form of harassment or abuse.

Synopsis of Creative Works:

Click, Click..., by Chelsea Jones (age 18) is about an internet predator who poses as a 17-year old man. Using word play in her verse, Chelsea's poem poignantly comments on the pain of sexual abuse and the possible dangers of the internet. (page 108)

Anonymously written by a young woman of 16 years, **For Joshua** is about the author's personal experiences of abuse and addiction in childhood. Now a young mother whose child was taken away by the Children's Aid Society, she philosophizes about the hard learnt life lessons of having to overcome that abuse and love herself. (page 116)

Shadow of Me, written by Sarah Mclatchie (age 19), vividly portrays the psychological trauma and physical hurt that occurs in romantic relationships that are governed by sexual violence. She also addresses the complexity of emotions that surface in such a relationship, including the fear of leaving and the desire to be set free. (page 106)

All Women, written by Darcy Kadlutsiak-Devries (age 15), is an ode to women's strength and beauty. She offers a message of hope, appealing to women to take control of their lives so that their basic human right to live without abuse can be realized. (page 111)

While Michelle Clarke's photographs and reflections on their meaning do not speak specifically to the issues of abuse and violence, they raise many relevant concepts including the importance of sharing experiences with someone who can be trusted and taking action to make change. (pages 178-179)

Literature Summary of Abuse and Sexual Assault

Girls and women are disproportionately affected by abuse and sexual assault when compared with boys and men. In 2004, Statistics Canada reported that 58% of victims are young people and that young women under 25 years of age experience the highest rates of sexualized violence (Statistics Canada 2006). The prevalence of violence against girls and women demonstrates that it is not an isolated or geographically restricted phenomenon, but a systematized, gendered, misogynistic practice (Sev'er 2002).

The continuum of violence encompasses a wide range of transgressions, including but not limited to sexual harassment, domestic violence, woman battering, femicide, rape, girl-hating, incest, verbal abuse as well as homophobic and racist aggression (Schaffner 2004). Canada's historical development as a nation influenced by racist, sexist and imperialist values and policies situates girls of colour and Aboriginal girls as groups that are particularly vulnerable to racialized violence (Downe 2006). Furthermore, the violence perpetrated against queer, bisexual, transgendered and questioning girls as well as girls with disabilities speaks to the persistence of gender inequality, homophobia and ableism in Canada (Schaffner 2004).

Feminist theories acknowledge how violence is perpetuated through gendering and how it is used as a method of social control to maintain patriarchal relationships of power and dominance (Sev'er 2002). Girls are gendered so that they must protect themselves and evade abuse. Yet little attention is devoted to understanding how the gendering of violent masculinities is problematic and is a critical factor in the perpetuation of violence against girls and women. Pipher (1994) notes that living with the fear of violence shapes girls' lives by severely curtailing what they can and cannot do.

There is much concern about the silence surrounding the issue of violence against girls and women. Jiwani (2006) observes how girls and young women of colour in Canada are subject to erasure so that their experiences of abuse go unnoticed; arguably, this also applies to girls with disabilities. Girls, however, are not always passive victims of violence. Some may negotiate through their experiences of violence, speak out, or react violently in self-defence. Pipher (1994) underscores the importance of speaking out about violence in order to break the cycle. However, addressing violence is a responsibility that cannot solely rest on girls' and women's shoulders alone. Tackling violence at its core requires a collective effort by girls and women, as well as boys and men. Ending violence against girls and women also necessitates the eradication of inequalities that are based on race, class, ability, sexual identity, and gender. The creative works included in this section of the guide powerfully speak to the need to work for change.

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Essay or Individual Assignment

1. **Shadow of Me** and **For Joshua** mention the idea of consent in sexual relationships. What does consent mean? Is it verbal, non-verbal, and/or communicated through body language?
2. In **For Joshua**, the anonymous author discusses her childhood abuse and her drug and alcohol addictions. What, if any, do you think is the connection between abuse and addiction?
3. All four writings on this topic discuss physical violence as a form of abuse. What are other forms of abuse? How prevalent are these forms of abuse? What do you think can be done to stop abuse?

Classroom/Group Discussion Questions

Activity Length: 45 minutes

Ask students to read the pieces aloud. Then ask the following questions.

1. What are the common messages in what these writers have shared?
2. Chelsea Jones's poem implicitly discusses the dangers of the internet. Do you perceive the internet as dangerous? How can girls and young women enjoy the internet while avoiding dangerous situations?
3. Where do you think violence originates from? What can we do as individuals to end violence? What can we do as a society to end violence?

4. Several legal decisions and legislation in Canada have dealt with the issue of sexual assault (e.g. 1992, 1995 and 1999). Do you think that these legal decisions have helped to reduce the number of sexual assaults committed against women and girls?

School/Community Development Activity

Activity Length: Several classes or group sessions

1. As a class/group, research, list and discuss the different forms of abuse and sexual harassment.
2. Divide the students into groups and ask them to create skits that address one or multiple forms of abuse and/or sexual harassment.
3. Using props, puppets and other visual aids, have your students go into other classrooms or schools and perform their skits.

Untitled

Danielle Kieley, 19



Topic 6: Using Girls' Writing and Art to Explore Body Image and the Media

Topic: Body image and the media

Resources: Prose and poetry

Grade Level: Grade 7 through to post-secondary

Subjects: Social Studies, English, Ethics, Politics, Art, Social Justice, Media Studies, Women's Studies

Summary: This section of the guide outlines how to use four pieces of writing and two artworks by adolescent girls to explore issues of body image and the media with students. The writing and artwork speak to experiences of social pressure and the negative impacts of standardized beauty ideals upon girls and young women.

Relevant statistic from the *GirlSpoken* survey: 59% of girls and young women are interested in learning more about body image.

Synopsis of Creative Works:

Written by Joanne Cave (age 13), ***\$3.75 for a new you*** discusses the pressure that is put on girls to conform to idealized standards of beauty and how this affects their self-esteem. She nostalgically ponders a carefree girlhood. Joanne imagines how girls could have a more positive experience of growing up in their teenage years if concepts of beauty were based on girls' varied strengths and qualities. (page 64)

In ***Open Letter***, Diana Biacora (age 18) shares her painful experiences of self-discovery. She writes about how she developed eating disorders in order to cope with societal pressures, her self-dissatisfaction and her depression. (page 80)

I am Woman by Caitlin Hutt (age 18) is a clever play on Helen Reddy's song "I am Woman" which is about women's empowerment. Caitlin raises questions about what she sees as the contradiction of obsessing over beauty and trying to be a feminist. Like the song, she finishes the poem by asking women to resist social pressures. (page 95)

In ***December 8th***, Emma Ruth (age 15) expresses her sentiments about growing up girl, and observes how it is a stage of life characterized by self-consciousness about appearance and self-doubt. (page 50)

In ***Mirror***, Brandy Mars (age 17) depicts fragments of her face and eyes staring out of a broken mirror. (page 63)

Danielle Kieley's collage explores struggles with body image and eating disorders through words and images. (page 24, Facilitator's Guide)

Literature Summary on Body Image and the Media

The experiences of GirlSpoken project participants underscore the importance of providing girls and young women with opportunities to explore critically the media messages they receive about body shape and size. The published literature also emphasizes the connection between media imagery and girls' conceptions of ideal body type. West and Zimmerman (1987) identify mass media as impersonal yet powerful agents of socialization that transmit messages about appropriate gender development for girls and boys. Key aspects of gender development for girls in Canada, according to Carla Rice (2005), include grooming and regulating one's body to fit the mould of white femininity, the dominant image of beauty in the West. Given the prevalence of such ideologies in television, film, advertisements and magazines in girls' day-to-day lives, it is not hard to understand how, as recent studies suggest, media have greater and more detrimental consequences for girls than for boys (Ward et al. 2005).

Rice notes that dominant images of beauty encompass a wide and conflicting range of characteristics, and because girls are not a homogenous group, differences in race, class, gender and ability affect their experiences. For girls of colour, racism and racist ideals of beauty may lead to colour-consciousness and a desire to emulate white physical features with makeup, clothing, cosmetic surgery or hair straightening and styling (Rice 2005). Similarly, girls attempting to achieve an idealized standard of thinness may experience a range of eating disorders which include dieting, anorexia, bulimia and laxative use, binge eating and overeating.

While media are not the only source of body and gender regulation, girls' exposure to media nevertheless constrains them to internalize negative body perceptions, a process that can lower their self-esteem, cause anxiety, depression and anger (Ward et al. 2005). In order to address these emotions, scholars stress the importance of developing girls' media literacy and suggest activism as a method of resistance (Gilbert et al. 2005). The creative works included in this section of the guide offer insights into girls' and young women's perspectives on the pressures to conform to dominant standards of beauty that are portrayed in the media, the impacts, and some of the changes that need to take place.

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Essay or Individual Assignment

1. ***I am Woman*** and ***\$3.75 for a new you*** examine the influence of magazines on girls and women. Do you agree with these writers? What are the messages that magazines transmit to girls? What are the messages that magazines transmit to boys and men?
2. In ***Open Letter***, Diana tells us that she starved herself in order to look like an ultra-skinny model who she perceived as beautiful. Do you think there can only be one standard of beauty? What does beauty mean to you? What does Danielle's collage tell us about standards of beauty in the media and its relationship to body image?
3. What do you think Joanne means when she says, in ***\$3.75 for a new you***, "Becoming a teenage girl is an identity-shattering process"? How does Joanne's writing relate to ***Mirror*** by Brandy Mars?
4. Emma, the author of ***December 8th***, argues that changing one's appearance will not change how one feels inside. What can be done to help girls feel better about themselves? What kinds of changes would have to take place? How does the art piece ***embracing myself*** (page 176) by Liz Toohey-Wiese also speak to the need for change?
5. In 1995, a touring exhibition on the topic of breast cancer featuring the work of Canadian women artists was controversial because it was considered to be a taboo subject. How can women's artwork, such as the 1995 exhibition, offer a different view of girls and women's bodies than the mainstream media?

Classroom/Group Discussion Questions

Activity Length: 45 minutes

Ask students to read the pieces aloud. Then engage the class/group in a discussion based on the following questions and activities.

1. As a class/group, discuss the various ways in which the media objectify women. In media images, what do women's bodies often look like? In media images, what kinds of activities are women most often involved in? Look at Danielle's collage: how are media images used to sell commercial products to girls and young women? What kinds of effects do these images and products have on girls and young women?
2. What are the common feelings that these writers have shared about their bodies?

School/Community Development Activity

Activity Length: 1.5 hours (1st class/group), 30 min (2nd class/group)

Prior to the class/group meeting that you have scheduled for this activity, ask girls to bring in photographs of themselves that they would not mind contributing to a collective art project.

1. As a class/group, brainstorm the things girls can do to change how other girls and women are portrayed in the media.
2. Provide students with a variety of magazines. Ask them to leaf through them, and to cut out images that objectify women. Then ask the students to create a collage. Next, ask students to search for images of healthy girlhood and womanhood that they can use to create another, separate collage. Invite girls to contribute the photographs of themselves to the positive collage. Also, encourage the class/group to paint or draw images into the positive collage.
3. During the next class/group meeting, ask students to discuss the differences between the two collages and 'unpack' the meaning of each.

Topic 7 : Using Girls' Writing and Art to Explore Bullying

Topic: Bullying and harassment

Resources: Prose and poetry

Grade Level: Grade 7 through to post-secondary

Subjects: Social Studies, English, Ethics, Politics, Art, Social Justice, Women's Studies

Summary: This section of the guide outlines how to use four pieces of writing by adolescent girls to explore issues of bullying and social exclusion with students.

Relevant statistic from the *GirlSpoken* survey: 45% of girls and young women are interested in learning more about bullying.

Synopsis of Creative Works:

In ***Confessions of a Mean Girl***, Yazzy (age 17), writes about her experiences as a self-proclaimed bully. Yazzy reflects on a time in her life when she was a bully. She describes the kinds of bullying behaviours in which her clique of friends were involved and offers her thoughts on creating a 'meanness prevention program'. (page 124)

Bathroom Walls, written by Deidra Cathcart (age 16), makes an appeal to youth to put down the pens they've been using to write negative comments about fellow students. She describes what it felt like to read a negative comment about herself on her school's bathroom wall. (page 128)

Written by Avelyn Waldman when she was just 14 years old, ***To Shave or Not to Shave*** cleverly explores the social pressures that convince girls to display their bodies in certain ways. Her poem also touches on the potential impacts of nonconformity. The style of Avelyn's poem was inspired by Hamlet's soliloquy (To Be or Not To Be). (page 77)

In ***My Dance*** Jessie Denise Huggett (age 17) writes about the social exclusion she faces as a young woman with Down syndrome. She wants to be seen for *all* of who she is and she calls on youth to include people with disabilities in social activities and community life. (page 29)

Literature Summary on Bullying

During the 1990s, a considerable body of literature emerged documenting girls' aggression; it sought to uncover the "hidden culture" or "subculture" of female aggression. While girl violence is certainly not a new phenomenon, its discovery coincides with the observation that girl violence in the schoolyard was indeed a problem (Artz 2004).

The form of bullying that has generally come to be associated with girls is referred to as "relational aggression" and includes sexual insults, name-calling, ridicule, sarcasm, exclusion, racism (Currie et al. 2006), rumour, talking behind one's back, gossip and shunning (Artz 2004). Bullying also includes all other abusive tactics used with the aim of exerting power over and controlling another person, including the use of physical measures (Currie et al. 2006). While girls' aggression is considered manipulative and indirect, boys, on the other hand, are thought to be more outward and physical in their expressions of violence (Artz 2004). Scholar Marnina Gonick (2004) has pointed out that this particular representation of girls pathologizes but fails to address the realities of violence in girls' lives as well as the origins of their aggression.

Schaffner (2004) argues that girls' violence cannot be examined and contextualized within the same paradigms used to understand boys' violence; differences in gendering as well as girls' experiences of violence affect how violence among girls is perpetrated. The violence that girls commit finds its roots in their experiences of having been the witness or the victim of violent acts, of living in a girl-hating culture and of other oppressive factors like homophobia (Schaffner 2004) and racism (Currie et al 2006). Theorist Rachel Simmons posits that relational aggression and bullying are negotiations of the constraining definitions of femininity that disallow female violence. Don Merten examines how it is used as a way to control friendship connections and establish one's status within the group (as cited in Currie et al. 2006). Furthermore, there is much silence surrounding the racism in violence against girls and women of colour; the refusal to acknowledge this aspect legitimizes the macropolitics of Canadian racism and colonialism (Alder et al. 2004).

Relational aggression and bullying appear to originate in misguided strategies through which girls strive to negotiate their agency and power. These abusive behaviours engender feelings of hurt, betrayal, fear, and self-loathing as well as internalized racism and homophobia among its victims who struggle to navigate the terrain of violence. In examining female aggression, attention must be paid to the ways in which girls' violence perpetuates rather than subverts patriarchal forms of violence (Artz 2004). Moreover, it is important to note the consistent findings of Canadian studies indicating that boys report more bullying behaviour than girls while girls report less involvement in various forms of violent behaviours (National Crime Prevention Strategy, 2005).

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Essay or Individual Assignment

1. What is Deidra Cathcart's message? What is Yazzy's message? What are the similarities and differences in what Deidra and Yazzy have to say?
2. Do bullies "grow out of it"? Should something be done to stop bullying behaviour? If yes, what should be done to stop bullying?
3. Jessie Denise Huggett writes about wanting to feel included. When did you last feel included, and why? When did you last feel excluded, and why? What can you do, as an individual, to make others feel included?
4. Avelyn Waldman writes about how girls face pressures to shave. What other societal messages do girls receive about how they should look? How can a decision to look different from others result in victimization from bullying? Do boys who decide to defy male standards for appearance or behaviour also risk becoming targets of bullying?
5. In 1986, the Employment Equity Act was introduced to deal with historic and ongoing discrimination against various groups including Aboriginal peoples, members of visible minorities and people with disabilities. Why are these groups at higher risk of experiencing bullying in schools, as well as discrimination in the workplace?

Classroom/Group Discussion Questions

Activity Length: 45 minutes

Ask students to read the pieces aloud. Then ask:

1. What are the common messages in what these writers have shared?
2. What can bystanders do to stop bullying and social exclusion?
3. What do you think the roots of bullying and social exclusion are? Why does it happen? What does it look like? What changes do Deidra, Yazzy, Jessie and Avelyn want to see made?

School/Community Development Activity

Activity Length: 20 minutes (1st class/group), 45 min (2nd class/group)

According to Yazzy, bullying can be prevented by getting youth more involved in their communities.

1. As a class/group, brainstorm ways in which youth can become more involved in their schools and communities.
2. Provide students with a directory of community services and programs in the community. For homework, ask students to conduct a brief phone interview or visit to an agency of their choice to find out what it is that the agency does and how volunteers can get involved.
3. During the next class/group, ask students to create a 'community map' by asking each student to draw/paint the agency that they spoke to on a paper mural. Invite students to use colours and symbols to represent what they learned about the agency.

Topic 8: Using Girls' Writing and Art to Explore Relationships

Topic: Relationships

Resources: Prose, poetry and art

Grade Level: Grade 7 through to post-secondary

Subjects: Social Studies, English, Ethics, Politics, Art, Social Justice, Women's Studies

Summary: This section of the guide outlines how to use four pieces of writing and one piece of art by adolescent girls to discuss with students issues surrounding relationships. Some other artwork by girls included in the book also speaks to experiences of love, sex and identity in relationships.

Relevant statistic from the *GirlSpoken* survey: 13% of girls and young women feel like they have no one to talk to when they're upset.

Synopsis of Creative Works

In *I Saw Myself*, Adèle Barclay (age 18) writes critically about how girls are gendered and socialized to be self-sacrificing and accepting of men's abuse and/or ill-treatment of them. Feeling undervalued in our society, many girls unsuccessfully attempt to find validation through their relationships with men. (page 54)

Erin Lorenz (age 16), the author of *Sixteen*, writes about the diversity and complexity of human relationships. She expresses wonder about her first experiences with a romantic partner, but reminds her readers that the relationships with her friends, her sisters, are central. (page 145)

Birthday Letter, written by Leah Innes (age 15), speaks of the importance and vulnerability of relationships between mothers and daughters. Despite their differences or problems, Leah writes that she will always be connected to her mother. (page 160)

Elizabeth Mianscum's (age 14) written piece, *Ka Oopad Adums*, was inspired by her family's ancestral story of that same title. In telling the story, Elizabeth conveys her father's desire to keep his daughter safe and instill within her a sense of tradition. She tells us that she would like to pass on that same kind of safety and care to her own children in the future when she becomes a mother. (page 166)

In her photographic piece, *loving it!*, Yekaterina Yelizarov (age 17) encourages girls and young women to love themselves. (page 89).

Literature Summary of Relationships

Socialization is not a process that occurs independently of human relationships. In their relationships, girls are socialized by their friends, family members, teachers, communities and mass media. Furthermore, in their interactions with people in their lives, girls are active participants in socializing others. Through various forms of reciprocity in human relationships, girls are involved in establishing and sometimes validating certain forms of conversation, play and emotional and physical interactions as normative. It is within these interactions that girls negotiate their identities.

A girl's relationships to members of her family—such as her mother, father, step-parent, caregiver, brothers, sisters, step- or foster-siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins or grandparents—are most often the primary relationships in which she strives to meet her emotional and physical needs. Depending on her family structure, a girl may have limited or no contact with one or both parents, or she may be closely bonded to one or several family members. Pipher (1994) notes how, as girls age, they may assert their need for distance from the family, while paradoxically requiring their closeness, love and support. The relationships girls form with peers often figure more prominently in girlhood and adolescence as they assert their need for individuation (Merton 2005). The nature of family relationships, however, is culturally dependent and will vary from one context to another.

Kin relationships are similar to peer relationships in that they allow space for the formation and negotiation of gender identity. These relationships also provide the social context for the development of affection, companionship and intimacy but it must be recognized that some family relationships are problematic or difficult (Kuttler et al. 2000). In friend relationships, girls learn how to perform femininity and are afforded opportunities to test different feminine identities (Bettis et al. 2005). As they mature sexually, girls may also form romantic relationships in which they explore their sexual identities. Both peer and romantic relationships are important as they are thought to contribute to girls' feelings of self-worth (Kuttler et al. 2000).

Unfortunately, not all relationships are healthy. As Merton (2005) observes, the family may be a site of physical and emotional abuse and difficult to evade. This too applies to girls' friendships and romantic relationships. Teaching girls the skills to recognize what constitutes healthy and unhealthy relationships is therefore key to enabling them to make good choices about their personal affiliations.

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Essay or Individual Assignment

1. Adèle writes that girls “give themselves away” to their romantic partners. What do you think this means? Do you feel that this is true? If yes, why do you think girls do this?
2. In ***Sixteen***, Erin expresses how, in growing up, she is *learning* how to be alone. Do you feel this way too? How do you think being alone sometimes might help a young woman develop her identity and her sense of self?
3. How can the telling of myths or stories strengthen the relationships between children, parents and grandparents and other kin? Can you think of any stories that you heard as a child that brought you closer to someone?
4. Although most of these written pieces focus on relationships with other people, Yekaterina Yelizarov (age 17), in her writing and artwork entitled ***loving it!***, points out that our relationships with ourselves are one of the most important ones we may ever experience. How do you feel about your relationship with yourself? In what ways do you think this affects your relationships with other people?
5. In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which proclaims the equality of all human beings. Canada signed on to this declaration. Are girls and boys/women and men truly equal in Canada? Review the information in the “Equality Wheel”. How does inequality impact on relationships?

Classroom/Group Discussion Questions

Activity Length: 45 minutes

Ask students to read the pieces aloud. Then ask the following questions.

1. According to Adèle, girls are socialized to accept what they are handed by others. What does this mean? If this is true, how does this affect the ways in which friends, family and romantic relationships are formed and maintained or disintegrate?
2. Leah's letter demonstrates how relationships can often be loving and painful at the same time. She also sees how they require communication and sometimes, forgiveness. How does Leah communicate with her mother? How does her mother respond to her pain?
3. What are the characteristics of a healthy relationship? What are the characteristics of an unhealthy relationship?

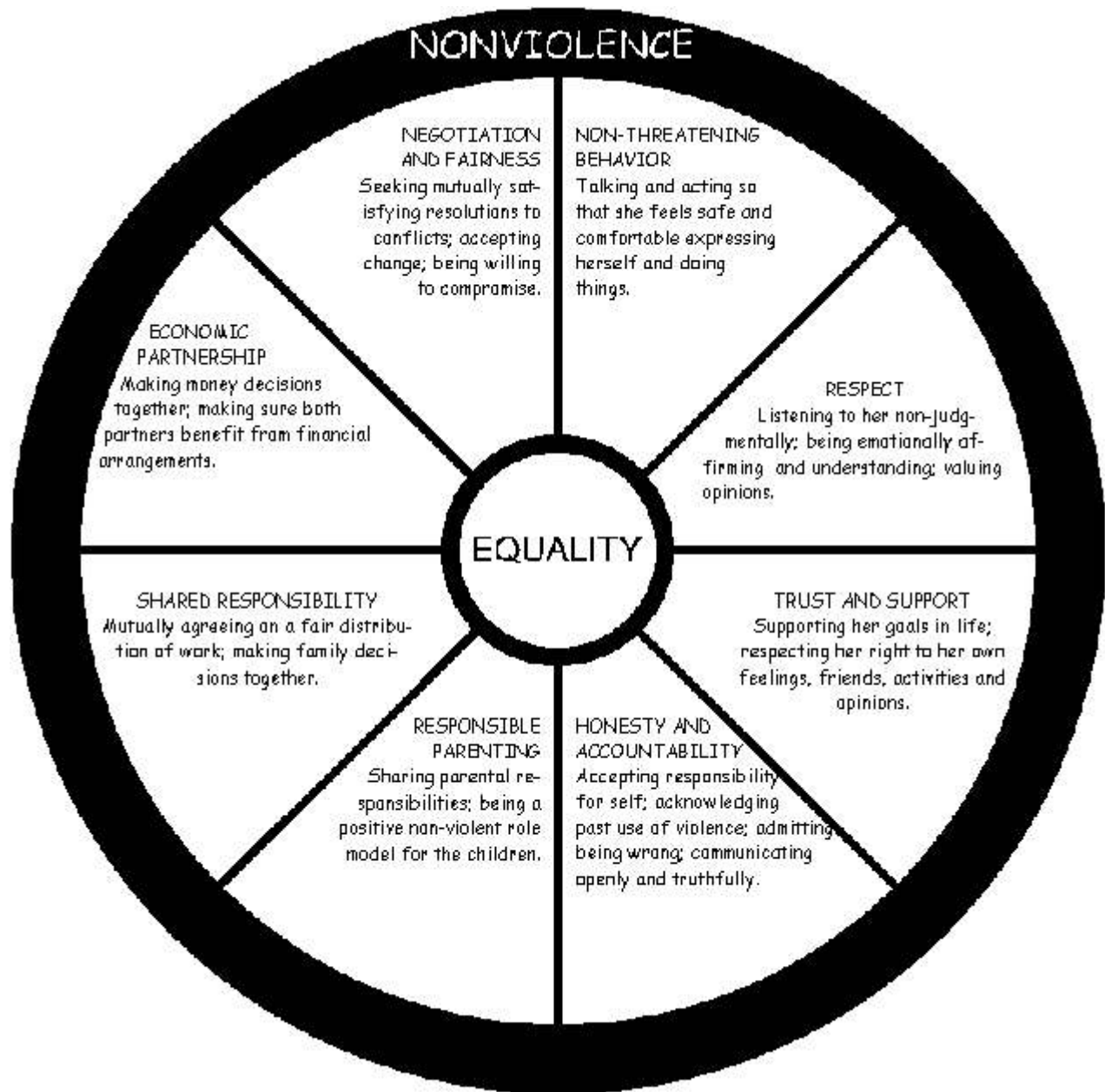
Classroom/Group Activity

1. Divide students into groups. Invite students to consider how our senses reveal a great deal about healthy or unhealthy relationships with friends or others. Ask them to use the relationship chart to identify the things they have seen, heard, or felt about healthy or unhealthy relationships.

Relationship Chart		
Senses	Healthy relationship	Unhealthy relationship
Seeing		
Hearing		
Feeling		

2. First, ask students to examine the Equality Wheel illustrated on the next page. Second, based on the information shown in the Equality Wheel and the information that students have listed in the Relationship Chart, ask them to identify two ways in which the media represent relationships. They should give one example of a healthy relationship and one example of an unhealthy one. The examples may come from a variety of sources including, but not limited to, television shows, films or books.
3. Invite students to have a class/group discussion of their findings. Pose these questions: "What elements distinguish healthy and unhealthy relationships? How is power an important element of relationships?"

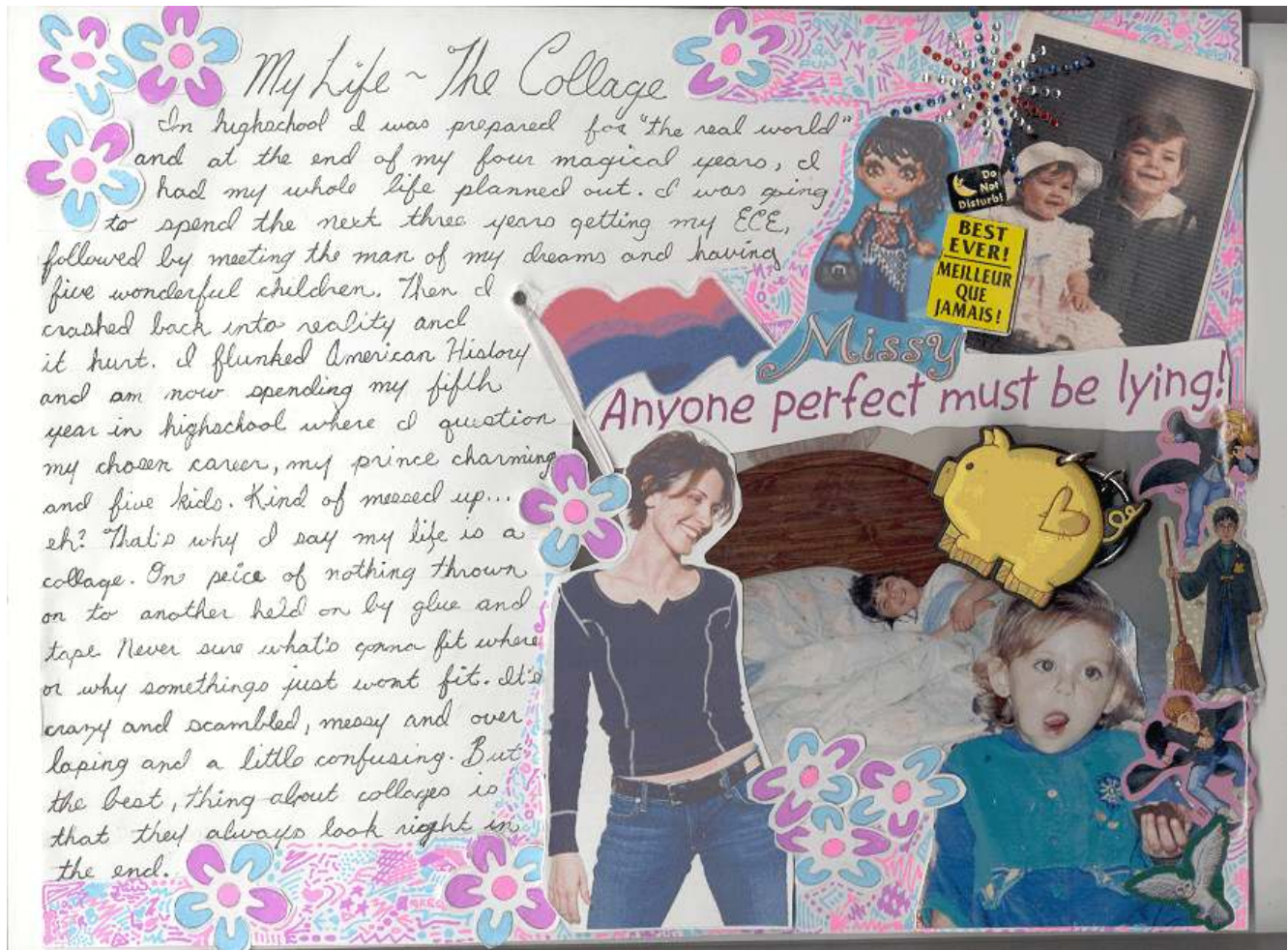
Equality Wheel ³



³ The Equality Wheel is a tool used to explore dimensions of healthy relationships. It is used by many organizations working to fight violence against women. Source: http://www.wm.edu/sexualassault/geteducated_healthy_equality.php

Untitled

Missy Tolton, 19



Topic 9: Using Girls' Writing and Art to Explore Self-Concept

Topic: Self-concept

Resources: Prose, poetry and art

Grade Level: Grade 7 through to post-secondary

Subjects: Social Studies, English, Ethics, Politics, Art, Social Justice, Women's Studies

Summary: This section of the guide outlines how to use four pieces of writing by adolescent girls to explore with students issues surrounding self-concept. Four pieces of artwork by girls are also included in this section since they speak to experiences of emotions, self-awareness and self-perception. It is important to note that all contributors of artwork for the book were invited to submit self-portraits. Therefore, most of the art in the book is relevant to the theme of self-concept.

Relevant statistic from the *GirlSpoken* survey: 31% of girls and young women express themselves by writing poetry or stories.

Synopsis of Creative Works

In ***Through the Eyes of a Girl***, Monica Mutale (age 14) reveals how she is conscious about the stereotypes associated with the roles of girls and women and how she is shaped by them. In this moment of self-awareness, she wonders how she is perceived by others. (page 21)

Otiena Ellwand's (age 15) poem ***Square*** reveals the shame and embarrassment that girls sometimes feel about revealing their true selves. She tells us that her reluctance comes from a fear of being labeled "abnormal" and rejected by her peers. (page 17)

Vacancy by Vanessa Fernando (age 15) expresses how she sees herself as lost, unstable and fragmented. She describes her need to be listened to, understood and seen as a complex human being. (page 35)

In ***Paint Brushes and Butterfly Wings***, Sarah Ferber (age 19) describes how growing up has brought about changes in her self-concept. As a maturing young woman, she has learned to love herself and see herself as whole, a process that will allow her to make a positive mark on the world. (page 12)

In her drawing entitled ***self-portrait***, Alejandra Peña Salguero (age 16) writes that she is more than what her appearance reveals (page 16).

Me, Myself and I (page 13) is a triptych or panel painting that represents three quite different self-portraits of the artist, Betty Huang (age 16).

Missy Tolton sees some aspects of her life as being similar to a collage. She reveals how disappointments can lead to feelings of being “messed up” but her collage contains a message of hope and encouragement. (page 35, Facilitator's Guide)

Kirstie Themeles' self-portrait depicts the idea that there are different sides of self. (page 39, Facilitator's Guide)

Literature Summary on Self-Concept

Subjectivity is defined as an individual's concept of herself and her relation to the world. In a patriarchal culture, girls' subjectivities may be cast as innocent, helpless, vulnerable (Cherland 2005), and depending on their race, class and sexual orientation, as "others," sexually loose, exotic, or even a threat to the Canadian nation-state (Gonick 2006). A girl's concept of herself, then, is complex and variable depending on her access and relationship to power structures. Gonick (2006) identifies the school as an important location for the formation of identity. The school's curriculum, policies and administration that establish the relationships between students as well as between teachers and students are fundamental in the creation of normative identities (Gonick 2006). Students who deviate from the normative category of white, heterosexual, able-bodied and middle-class may therefore often experience social exclusion, violence, harassment, dislocation or invisibility. Furthermore, racism, sexism and ableism may prompt girls to internalize these dominant values, which in turn, affects how they perceive themselves, their communities, and society at large (Jiwani 2006).

As girls age, their identities become more closely associated with those of their peers and romantic partners, and it is in this space that they negotiate and define who they are as individuals. The pressures to conform also shape how girls perceive themselves and how they feel they are perceived by others. Pipher (1994) observes how this pressure often leads young women to believe that there is an "imaginary audience" monitoring their appearance and actions. This self-surveillance speaks of the ways in which female bodies in western countries are subject to patriarchal surveillance, particularly by the male gaze that denigrates, sexualizes and objectifies them (Cherland 2005).

Fostering healthy development and positive self-concepts in girls' formative years is integral to empowering girls and ensuring that they grow into strong, resilient and active individuals. This empowerment, however, requires a strong opposition towards issues like racism, homophobia, sexism, ableism and "lookism" that are more likely to perpetuate negative self-concepts for many girls.

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Essay or Individual Assignment

1. What are the stereotypes that Monica refers to when she writes about the roles of girls and women? Do you think that you are affected by these or other roles/stereotypes? If yes, in what ways?
2. Otiena expresses her fear of revealing her true self to others. What messages do girls receive about themselves that may cause them to hide parts of their lives or feel embarrassed by aspects of their personhood?
3. In what ways are girls' appearances valued over their intellect? How does this affect their perceptions of themselves?
4. How is self-concept linked to self-esteem? What are the things girls can do to improve their self-esteem? How can temporary disappointments or set-backs impact on one's sense of self?

Classroom/Group Discussion Questions

Activity Length: 45 minutes

Ask students to read the pieces aloud. Then ask the following questions.

1. In what ways do girls' self-concepts change as they mature? Make a list of positive and not-so-positive characteristics and discuss them.
2. What do Betty's panel painting, *Me, Myself and I*, and Kirstie's collage say about human perception? Do you have different images of yourself? Do you reveal all the sides of yourself to others?

3. Communication is our ability to convey information or meaning, whether it is passed to others through body language, signing, writing, or speech. In what ways are communication patterns affected by ideas about who we are (i.e. self-concept)?
4. How do you think legal victories such as the one achieved by the “Famous Five” in 1929—which led to the recognition of women in Canada as “persons”—have impacted on self-concepts and self-esteem among girls and women?

School/Community Development Activity

Activity Length: 30 minutes (1st class/group), 1 hour (2nd class/group), 45 minutes (3rd class/group)

1. Locate a small box which will serve as a “put-up box.”⁴ Write the names of all students on small pieces of paper and put them in the box. Have each student pick another student's name out of the box. Instruct students to pick another name if they choose their own. Ask students to write a positive “put-up” comment about their chosen student and at the end of the activity, empty the box and read each comment aloud. This activity can help bolster your students' self-concepts and self-esteem.
2. In *Me, Myself and I*, Betty Huang demonstrates how art is a valuable tool for self-expression and Missy Tolton uses collage as a way to reflect on her life. Invite students to create an image that represents themselves through any medium such as drawing, painting or photography or by making a collage.
3. In the next class/group meeting, ask students to present their art pieces to their peers and share something about the meaning of the piece.

4 Cotton, K. (2001). Building Positive Student Self-Concept. *School Improvement Research Series*. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/7/snap25.html>

Untitled

Kirstie Themeles, 15



Topic 10: Using Girls' Writing and Art to Explore Self-harm

Topic: Self-harm

Resources: Prose, poetry and art

Grade Level: Grade 7 through to post-secondary

Subjects: Social Studies, English, Ethics, Politics, Art, Social Justice, Women's Studies

Summary: This teaching guide outlines how to use four pieces of writing and one piece of art by adolescent girls to explore issues surrounding self-harm and addiction.

Relevant statistic from the *GirlSpoken* survey: 20% of girls and young women say they take drugs or drink alcohol when they are upset and feel like there is no one they can talk to who would understand.

Synopsis of Creative Works:

Written anonymously (age 15), ***Finding the Pieces*** is about a young woman, who, in order to cope with the pain of her adolescence, developed addictions and engaged in activities that were self-destructive. The title, "Finding the Pieces," refers to her struggle to discover who she is and to become that person she knows is buried inside of her. (page 156)

Morning, also written anonymously by a girl of 19 years of age, explores the seriousness of teenage girls' pain and how these feelings can result in addiction, cutting, anorexia and trauma. She focuses on how art and music can be avenues to healing this pain. (page 133)

In ***Caution: I Contain...***, Natalie Barrales-Hall (age 17) cleverly combines art and writing to communicate how young women may be prescribed medications or may sometimes turn to harmful substances like drugs in order to deal with their realities. Her raw style of poetry expresses the numbness and dream-like state that medications or addictions will induce. (page 110)

In the short essay ***More than this***, Ruby van Vliet (age 19) writes about how her dissatisfaction with herself and society at large led her to experiment with different forms of self-harm. She expressively observes how girls and women are searching for understanding and valuation, two things that, too often, they are not afforded in our society. (page 18)

The painting by Yo Oun Choi (age 17) entitled ***Anger*** (page 135) effectively expresses this emotion.

Literature Summary on Self-Harm

Past and current literature dating from the 1930s to the present in Britain and North America support the claim that incidences of self-harm primarily occur among girls during their adolescence years. Doubt has been raised about this perspective, however, and it has been suggested that self-harm is more common than previously thought and that incidences are seldom reported, thus contributing to the silence surrounding the issue (Shaw 2002). In more recent years, numerous publications have been written which have contributed to the sensationalization of the issue as a "girl's method of self-expression" (Lamb 2006). While self-injury was historically conceptualized as pathological, feminist approaches have come to acknowledge that it is primarily a manifestation of girls' feelings of powerlessness that are framed within the interlocking oppressions of race, class and sexuality (Shaw 2002).

Self-harm includes but is not limited to cutting, burning, bruising, picking at one's skin, substance abuse, anorexia and bulimia (Shaw 2002; Pipher 1994). Shaw (2002) notes that these behaviours, although harmful, may be regarded as "anti-suicide"; in other words, girls who engage in self-mutilation do so out of determination to reduce their internal, emotional pain and continue living. It is a coping mechanism for girls to relieve the stress and anxiety of violence and sexual abuse, illness, loss, difficulties with peers and alienation. Although it may become aggravated over time, self-harm is most often transitory for girls (Shaw 2002).

Some feminist theorists understand girls' propensity to engage in self-harm as an attempt to find language and voice, as, too often, girls do not have many avenues to heal and express themselves. Shaw (2002) suggests that self-injury in girls is a direct consequence, or an internalization of the climate of misogyny in the West that encourages the objectification of girls' bodies. As Pipher (1994) observes, the prevalence and persistence of the problem testifies to the fact that girls are not given the tools to cope with the complexities and inequalities of their life circumstances. Scholars such as Pipher and Shaw highlight the importance of discovering less harmful coping strategies for girls in order to foster resilience rather than victimization. Eliminating the problem, however, ultimately requires the elimination of oppression at large. The creative works included in this section of the guide provide first-hand accounts of the circumstances and experiences associated with self-harm among teenage girls. In some cases, the contributors show how they cope with circumstances that led them to harm themselves.

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Essay or Individual Assignment

1. Based on the four written pieces, what are some types of addiction and self-harm? What do these behaviours all have in common?
2. The author of ***Morning*** reveals how art, writing and music can be a valuable ways to express our emotions and try and work through them. Have you ever used art to express your emotions? What effect did it have on you?
3. What do you think Ruby means when she says that she is looking for “something more?” Do you feel that girls have something in common that is lacking in their lives? If yes, what do you think is lacking?
4. The theme of anger surfaces in the artwork ***Anger*** and in the brief essay ***More than this***. Do you think that, in some ways, anger could be an empowering alternative to self-harm?
5. In 1995, Bill C-72 made changes to the Criminal Code which eliminated intoxication as a defense for those accused of committing sexual assault or battery. Consider how experiences of sexual assault and physical abuse are linked to self-harm. Can you think of other types of legal or social changes that could be made to strengthen societal action to counter crimes like sexual and physical assault that are connected to self-harm?

Classroom/Group Discussion Questions

Activity Length: 45 minutes

Ask students to read the pieces aloud. Then ask the following questions.

1. Based on these four pieces, what are the common factors that push girls and young women to inflict self-harm?
2. In what ways do you think addiction and self-harm are dangerous? How do these behaviours affect girls and young women emotionally, psychologically and physiologically?
3. What are some things that need to change in society to help prevent addiction and self-harm?

School/Community Development Activity

Activity Length: 40 minutes (1st class/group); several classes or group meetings will need to be reserved to create and complete this project.

In an attempt to work through her pain, the author of ***Morning*** started blogging to make a connection with other students who may have been experiencing similar problems.

1. Research blog hosts online and pick one that will serve your specific purposes. Ask students to draft and plan an online blog. Discuss its layout and the possible features that can be included in the blog.
2. Create the blog. Ensure that comments can be posted anonymously to safeguard your students' identities. A teacher must also take on the responsibility of monitoring the comments before they are posted "live" to the internet or an intranet (i.e. a networked connection within an organization) so that students will in no way be shamed, harassed or abused because of the content of the postings.
3. After all students in the class/group have reached agreement on the content, make the blog available to the entire school or organization.

Topic 11: Using Girls' Writing and Art to Explore Strengths and Resilience

Topic: Strengths and resilience

Resources: Prose, poetry and art

Grade Level: Grade 7 through to post-secondary

Subjects: Social Studies, English, Ethics, Politics, Art, Social Justice, Women's Studies

Summary: This teaching guide outlines how to use four pieces of writing and two pieces of art by adolescent girls to gain an understanding of the strengths and resilience of teenage girls with students.

Relevant statistics from the *GirlSpoken* survey: 49% of girls and young women say the last time they felt really proud or good about themselves was in relation to their accomplishments in school. 17% felt good about their relationships with their friends, family or other people in their lives and another 17% said they were proud of their accomplishments in art, writing, sports, music, dancing or physical activities.

Synopsis of Creative Works

In the poem *into me*, Randi Edmundston (age 14) writes about growing beyond her “cage of self consciousness”. Her curiosity about life pushes her to explore various aspects of herself, including her body and her mind. Her self-exploration leads to the discovery of inner resourcefulness. (page 33)

Kaitlin Schwan (age 18), author of *Daddy Poem*, bravely and sadly wonders about the hardship her dad has faced. She tells her father that she is ready to take on some of the roles he played when she was a child. (page 170)

In *Escape*, a girl writes anonymously about a calm feeling of confidence that comes over her when she is outdoors enjoying nature. (page 114)

Anne-Marie (age 16) writes honestly about her feelings as a young mother in *I Can*. She shares her thoughts about the daughter who has given her hope for the future and “a reason to try”. She promises to be resilient and to rise to the challenges that life presents. (page 153)

Zann Hemphill (age 16) has painted a strong image of herself in *The Behind of a Peacock and I*. She states that her painting was inspired by the reflection of her own face in reflective surfaces wherever she goes. (page 71)

Real Side of Myself is a painting by Seung-Min Nam (age 15). It is a powerful self-portrait that represents a side of herself that is often hidden from view. (page 34)

Literature Summary on Strengths and Resilience

Mainstream literature on adolescence often focuses on challenges, risks, and problems. Relatively little of it has taken an explicit stance of examining the strengths and resilience of girls and young women from their own perspectives. Resilience is the process of overcoming adversity. Gilligan (2000) has defined resilient adolescents as those who have the ability to bounce back in the face of adversity. Thus resilient girls are able to function reasonably well even when they are exposed to ongoing risks or stressors.

Forces of oppression are widespread in our society. They exert negative impacts on individuals in the form of varied constraints, and they are more numerous and onerous for members of subordinate groups. Oppression and associated constraints can take the form of unquestioned norms which must be adhered to and which dictate acceptable behaviours. Oppression is often systemic as it is built into our social structures and often occurs with little recognition of the way it operates (Mullaly, 2002). Marginalization is a significant form of oppression as it excludes both individuals and particular groups of people from meaningful participation in their communities.

Harris (2004) argues that girls refine or redefine concepts of girlhood largely in private spaces—in the home and primarily in the bedroom. Thus personal development in these unregulated spaces may be contrasted with the social regulation that takes place in outside areas such as at school, work, or in the community. In private spaces, girls find ways to transcend dominant discourses. According to Fook, (2002), discourse is powerful when it is uncontested. Therefore, understanding resilience requires that we gain an appreciation of girls' strengths and experiences in challenging dominant discourses. Such strengths enable them to achieve favourable outcomes despite the presence of risk factors within the varied social contexts of their daily lives.

A major force of oppression for girls is that they are defined as female and required to behave according to the rules and restrictions of society and community (Campbell, 2005). In order to tackle the forces of oppression in girls' and young women's lives, it is important to focus on strategies that enhance resilience in a holistic manner, rather than attempting to "fix" one aspect of a young person's life. Holistic approaches to wellness include an emphasis on physical, emotional, and social well being. Unfortunately, many social programs and services are designed with a single issue as the central focus. It is arguably more effective to develop supportive strategies that both decrease risks and improve the ability to cope with risks. Decreasing or eliminating risks requires structural change and young people have many strengths that can be nurtured so that they become involved in activities and social action that may lead to positive change. Olson, Bond, Burns, Vella-Brodrick and Sawyer (2003) argue that building up young people's internal resources can enable them to adapt to adversity. In other words, resilience is enhanced when there is a focus on recognizing girls' strengths.

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Essay or Individual Assignment

1. In **Escape**, the author finds strength in nature. What kind of message do you think Zann is conveying in her painting **The Behind of a Peacock and I?** Do you think that she is in a personal space that displays confidence? What places, spaces or people make you feel calm, confident and/or strong? What qualities about these places, spaces or people provoke those positive feelings?
2. In **into me** Randi writes about soaring beyond her cage of self-consciousness and Seung-Min Nam moves beyond self-consciousness in her drawing **Real Side of Myself**. What kinds of things do you think girls and young women might be self-conscious about? How do you think we learn to become self-conscious about some things? How do you think people in general can become less self-conscious?
3. How can you tell that someone is a strong person? In what ways do you think that these writers and artists are strong? Do you believe that everyone has strengths?
4. Many successful Canadian women writers, like Lucy Maud Montgomery (who published *Anne of Green Gables* in 1908) and Margaret Atwood (who published her first successful novel, *Edible Woman*, in 1969) began writing when they were teenagers. Do you think that more should be done to encourage girls and young women to express themselves through creative writing? Can you think of specific things that schools or community agencies can do to support this?

Classroom/Group Discussion Questions

Activity Length: 45 minutes

1. What do you think the similarities and differences are between confidence and strength? What makes these distinct qualities? How do these writers and artists exhibit both confidence and strength?
2. Both Kaitlin and Anne-Marie deal with challenging experiences in their lives. Do you think there is any truth to the idea that facing challenges in life makes people stronger? Why or

why not?

3. What kinds of experiences, situations, or challenges in life might hold people back from discovering their own strengths?
4. How do societal ideas about strength and resilience differ for boys and girls? Do you agree with the dominant societal ideas about this (e.g. strong boys don't cry)?

School/Community Development Activity

Activity Length: 1.5 hours

1. Provide the students with art supplies (e.g. paint, paper, markers, pastels, etc.).
2. If you think that they would be willing and comfortable, ask the students to close their eyes for this exercise. Ask them to take a minute to remember a time in their lives when they felt strong. Ask them: *Where were you? What were you doing? Who were you with? What were you thinking and feeling?*
3. Provide 45 minutes for students to create an image that represents a time in their lives when they felt strong. Tell students that the image can be either literal or abstract.
4. Invite students to share their work with the class and to speak about the meaning of their piece.
5. If feasible, secure space where interested students can collectively exhibit their work somewhere in the school or community.

Topic 12: Using Girls' Writing and Art to Explore Strategies for Change

Topic: Strategies for making change

Resources: Prose, poetry and art

Grade Level: Grade 7 through to post-secondary

Subjects: Social Studies, English, Ethics, Politics, Art, Social Justice, Women's Studies

Summary: This teaching guide outlines how to use four pieces of writing by adolescent girls to explore strategies for making positive change with students. A piece of photography is also included in this section since it speaks to experiences of social awareness, activism and strategies for change.

Relevant statistic from the *girlSpoken* survey: 60% of girls and young women are interested in learning more about or working on women's rights.

Synopsis of Creative Works

In her poem ***Never Normal***, Janelle Riedstra (age 19) writes about the stigma attached to her as a result of her hearing disability. She appeals to her readers to become aware and sensitive to people with disabilities and to rethink the concept of who and what is "normal". (page 122)

Getting out of this place by Adèle Barclay (age 18) explores how young people sometimes act out when they feel undervalued and think that their lives are without purpose. She expresses her frustration with the violence that both teenagers and police officers exhibit and reveals how she wants to experience positive movement in her life. (page 149)

An inspirational piece, ***Splendors*** by Jessica Shewbridge (age 16) provides us with strategies to resist the negative messages that are imposed upon women and suggests ways in which girls can think positively about themselves. (page 174)

Caylee Raber's (age 16) written piece, ***She Inspires Me***, is an expression of how she found inspiration and strength within herself. Caylee mentions the value of sharing this message collectively so that others may also see and experience their strengths. (page 118)

Michelle Clarke's untitled photograph draws inspiration from the work of a graffiti artist who urges us to "*provoke freedom*" (page 179).

Literature Summary on Strategies for Change

One of the central criticisms in the current literature on girlhood is that girls are too often portrayed as victims, whether that is because of the prevalence of eating disorders, substance abuse and violence among groups of young women (Currie et al. 2006). These are important issues in girls' lives that cannot be overlooked; however, an overemphasis on these aspects of girlhood not only reconstructs girls as "passive," but also overshadows the ways in which girls actively engage in struggle and resistance.

Pipher (1994) observes that girls in their younger years take more of an interest in social justice issues such as animal rights, anti-poverty and environmentalism compared with older girls. She attributes this to the idealism of youth as well as to the ways in which girls empathize with others' powerlessness. Activism, however, is not an expression of powerlessness; Gonick (2006) notes how social interventions such as activism and advocacy challenge oppression and hierarchy and provide space for girls to express and assert themselves. As activists, girls are given a chance to embody different identities, whether their expressions are manifested through sexuality (Gonick 2006), gender, race, ethnicity or of varying abilities and appearances.

There are many examples of girls' activism in Canada and the United States. Lee (2006) includes the use of popular theatre as a mode to explore and express racial identity or experiences of racism and sexism. Gonick (2006) also observes how girl activists in California have organized in their schools and communities, staging marches, protests and events to address issues like suicide among LGTB youth and challenge heteronormativity, homophobia and heterosexism (Gonick 2006). Girls are also increasingly creating feminist ezines, which are self-published web pages designed to provide room for community, self-expression and dialogue with other young feminists (Scott-Dixon 2001). The possibilities and examples of girls' activism are limitless.

Working towards social change allows girls to share knowledge, imagine new perspectives and build self esteem and self-confidence (Lee 2006). Most importantly, it encourages young women to form coalitions across difference and to work together with the aim of transforming themselves and their communities (Fraser 2006).

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Essay or Individual Assignment

1. According to Janelle, we need to raise awareness about people with disabilities and eradicate prejudice. How could we go about creating a society that includes all people regardless of their differing abilities?
2. Adèle's poem explores the ways violence is used to create change and to obstruct change. Do you think violence is a good way to create change? Can you think of instances in our Canadian history where non-violence was used? When was violence used?
3. According to Caylee, where does change begin? Do you agree with her message?
4. What does the photograph by Michelle mean to you (Untitled 2)?
5. Gather information about the "Famous Five" (1929) or the Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Quebec (1907) to learn about the strategies these women used to fight for women's rights in Canada. Could these strategies be used to work for the type of change that Janelle wants to see take place?

Classroom/Group Discussion Questions

Activity Length: 45 minutes

Ask students to read the pieces aloud. Then ask the following questions.

1. According to each author, what needs to be changed? As a group, discuss what aspects of society you think need changing. Do you all agree on the same things?
2. In *Splendors*, Jessica notes the importance of critical thinking so that girls can identify the problems with beauty ideals. What is critical thinking? Do you think it is important for girls to be critical thinkers? How is critical thinking linked to change?
3. Ask each student to identify a female role model. Discuss what makes these women strong and unique. What are the benefits of having female role models? What do you think this has to do with change?

School/Community Development Activity

Activity Length: 20 minutes (1st class/session), 45 min (2nd class/session)

Jessica and Caylee see themselves as agents of change.

1. As a class or group, brainstorm the ways in which individual students can make a positive mark or create social change.
2. Introduce students to the philosophy of “paying it forward,” an activity in which students repay the good deeds one has received by doing good things for other unrelated people. During the next week, ask students to “pay it forward” for friends and community members and organizations. Activities may include, but are not limited to, community service for a day, doing a favour for a neighbour or friend, tutoring students in need of help at school, etc.
3. Allow students a span of a week to pay it forward. In a week, ask students to discuss the kinds of activities they participated in and describe how they had a positive impact.

conclusion

We have selected twelve topics that are raised in the art and writing of contributors in the *girlSpoken* book. Each of these topics was identified in at least four pieces in the book. We would also like to note that there are many other topics that our contributors have written about or depicted in their artwork. For example, a number have written about their views of boys and men, communication issues (both positive and negative aspects), secrets they hold, searching for meaning or answers, losses, critiques of gender, and survival and healing. These and other topics can be explored through a careful reading of the pieces in the book. A group of students could be asked to read the *girlSpoken* book with an open mind and to look for issues of personal interest.

This facilitator's guide provides guidance for using the *girlSpoken* book based on a thematic or topical approach to examining the issues identified by girls. It also seems evident that there may be other approaches that can be used in classroom or group settings. For example, English teachers may wish to focus on the writing styles and techniques used by the contributors and art teachers may focus on the creative techniques used. These approaches could help girls and young women, as well as boys and young men, to appreciate the talents, skills and abilities of Canadian girls and young women. Such an approach could inspire them to pick up pencils, pens, paintbrushes and cameras and to begin writing or creating art as a means of self expression.

additional resources available from the GirlSpoken Project

We have produced three workshop manuals in response to requests from service providers for our detailed workshop plans. The manuals available for downloading from www.girlspoken.com describe a five-week art-based workshop series developed within the project. The original workshop guidelines are available as well as adaptations for use specifically with Francophone and Aboriginal girls:

GirlSpoken Workshop Manual: An Art-Based Approach to Programming for Girls.

GirlSpoken Workshop Manual: An Art-Based Approach to Programming for Aboriginal Girls.

Filles Fantastiques Lignes directrices des ateliers filles fantastiques.

contact us

We would like to have your feedback about the book and this facilitator's guide. Please email us at girlspokenbook@sympatico.ca or ckauppi@laurentian.ca to tell us about your views.

For more information about the project, *GirlSpoken: Creative Voices for Change*, please visit our website at www.girlspoken.com

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