

Elline Lipkin. *Girls' Studies*. Berkeley: Seal Press, 2009. Pp. 256. \$14.95 (paper). ISBN 978-1580052481

Reviewer: Mary Stricker¹

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“*Girls Can Do Anything!*” Both of my daughters, now ages 7 and 10, wore these t-shirts proudly until each had outgrown what became dingy looking rags that barely covered their belly buttons. They had been a gift from a close *girlfriend* of mine who said to me quietly when she handed them to the girls, “I don’t know if that’s true, but...” It is this quiet women’s secret of uncertainty, uncertainty about just what our girls *can* do amidst the oncoming waves of feminism, that is the subject of Elline Lipkin’s *Girls’ Studies*. Lipkin’s introduction to contemporary research on girls’ socialization offers us a hard look at how this uncertainty is experienced by girls in a world that tells them they can do anything, while actually being quite restrictive in what it allows them to do. While most of the topics covered will be familiar to anyone with a cursory interest in gender and/or women’s studies, Lipkin’s broad scope and generally unwavering attention to the unique contradictions facing girls in the “girls can do anything” age will provide even the most serious scholars and activists with something to savor. Beginning with a detailed look at the disturbing findings of the 1991 AAUW report, *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America*, and highlighting such girls’ studies’ canons as Mary Pipher’s *Reviving Ophelia* and Lynn Mikel Brown’s *Girlfighting*, Lipkin’s book makes a clear case for the need for an independent field of Girls’ Studies, one that brings the experiences of girls out of the shadows of their adult counterparts.

In the first chapter of the book, “Learning to be a Girl, Learning to be a Woman,” Lipkin notes that one of the most striking and now familiar findings of the 1991 AAUW report, the plummeting of girls’ confidence in math and science between elementary and high school, was partially explained by the discouragement felt by girls “both overtly and covertly”

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