



Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self Esteem, and the Confidence Gap

By Peggy Orenstein

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A NEW YORK TIMES NOTABLE BOOK OF THE YEAR

When Peggy Orenstein's now-classic examination of young girls and self-esteem was first published, it set off a groundswell that continues to this day. Inspired by an American Association of University Women survey that showed a steep decline in confidence as girls reach adolescence, Orenstein set out to explore the obstacles girls face--in school, in the home, and in our culture.

For this intimate, girls' eye view of the world, Orenstein spent months observing and interviewing eighth-graders from two ethnically disparate communities, seeking to discover what was causing girls to fall into traditional patterns of self-censorship and self-doubt. By taking us into the lives of real young women who are struggling with eating disorders, sexual harassment, and declining academic achievement, Orenstein brings the disturbing statistics to life with the skill and flair of an experienced journalist. Uncovering the adolescent roots of issues that remain important to American women throughout their lives, this groundbreaking book challenges us to change the way we raise and educate girls.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Following a 1990 poll which found that girls suffer plummeting self-esteem and reduced expectations as they enter adolescence, journalist Orenstein visited two California middle schools to take a more personal look at the statistics.

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From Library Journal

Troubled by the 1990 American Association of University Women report on the loss of self-esteem by American girls between the ages of nine and 15, journalist Orenstein sought the human stories behind the statistics. She worked for a year with girls from two California schools, interviewing students, their families, teachers, and the administrators of the two schools. She also observed classes, school ground behavior, and home life. Not aiming for an academic study, Orenstein places information from various studies in footnotes to the children's narratives. Her text focuses instead on situations ranging from subtle but definite discouragement of female students to a blatant devaluing of all students. Although there were other factors involved, she concentrates on the stories from school in describing the wrenching and all-too-typical conditions many girls face. Recommended for public libraries, high school libraries, and academic libraries with women's studies or education collections.

Sharon Firestone, Ross-Blakley Law Lib., Arizona State Univ., Tempe

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From Kirkus Reviews

An intimate and provocative glimpse into the lives of adolescent schoolgirls at two West Coast middle schools by journalist Orenstein (formerly managing editor of *Mother Jones*). Orenstein was motivated by the disturbing findings of a 1990 study from the American Association of University Women. It revealed that girls' self-esteem plummets as they reach adolescence, with a concomitant drop in academic achievement - especially in math and science. By sixth grade, both boys and girls have learned to equate masculinity with opportunity and assertiveness and femininity with reserve and restraint. In her attempt to delve more deeply into this phenomenon, Orenstein observed and interviewed dozens of young girls inside and outside their classrooms. The resulting narratives are likely to move and vex readers. The classrooms at Weston Middle School ring with the symptoms: Even girls who consider themselves feminists tend to ``recede from class proceedings'' while their male classmates vociferously respond to teachers' questions; girls who are generally outspoken remain silent in the classroom. When probed, they tell Orenstein that they are afraid of having the wrong answer and of being embarrassed. They are not willing to take the risks that boys routinely take. The girls are overly involved with their appearance, with clothes and beauty products, instead of their studies. Sexual desirability becomes the central component of their self-image, with negative feelings often translating themselves into eating disorders. At the Audubon Middle School, with its predominantly minority population, it is apparent that ``the consequences of silence and marginalization for Latinas are especially dire.'' The Latina girls we meet often become gang members and mothers, while school becomes increasingly irrelevant. A comprehensive bibliography and annotated notes enhance Orenstein's ardent and significant exploration of the adolescent roots of key women's issues. (First serial to the *New York Times Magazine*) -- Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jeffrey Sandoval:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite e-book and reading a e-book. Beside you can solve your condition; you can add your knowledge by the guide entitled Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self Esteem, and the Confidence Gap. Try to face the book Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self Esteem, and the Confidence Gap as your pal. It means that it can to become your friend when you feel alone and beside regarding course make you smarter than previously. Yeah, it is very fortuned to suit your needs. The book makes you more confidence because you can know anything by the book. So , let us make new experience and knowledge with this book.

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Lucy Fletcher:

People live in this new day of lifestyle always try and and must have the extra time or they will get wide range of stress from both everyday life and work. So , if we ask do people have extra time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not a robot. Then we question again, what kind of activity are you experiencing when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer may unlimited right. Then do you try this one, reading ebooks. It can be your alternative throughout spending your spare time, typically the book you have read is usually Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self Esteem, and the Confidence Gap.

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