



INTRODUCTION

Girls in Development

Discovering Girls, Producing Girl Effects

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As girlhood studies scholars, we have for many years been interested in the paradoxical ways that global development actors, feminist scholars, human rights activists, NGO practitioners, world leaders, and everyday global citizens have been willing, if uneasy, bedfellows in their affective investments in girls and their girlhoods. Our own scholarship has been profoundly shaped by what we name and operationalize in this collection as Girls in Development (GID). We argue GID is an epistemological mode in the genealogy of Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) and a key paradigm shaping what is known (and can be known) about girls in a global system.

This edited volume has taken us more time to complete than we anticipated. In 2019 we had a robust response to our call for abstracts, and by early 2020, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were working with contributing authors to revise the chapters we enthusiastically share here. The pandemic has not diminished our commitment to critically examining how girls and their girlhoods are implicated in development regimes; however, it has altered each of our personal and professional

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lives in fundamental ways. Like others around the world, through successive waves of viral mutation and social response to the pandemic, we have braved lockdowns, cared for and homeschooled children, supported partners working on the front lines, donned masks, lined up for vaccines and boosters, grieved the deaths of our loved ones near and far, spit into testing-kit straws, and managed to the best of our ability the stressors of this moment—including the call to pivot our professional lives in the academy to respond to the ever-evolving crises of university survival politics. While our ideas for an edited volume focused on the intersections of girls’ lives, girlhood as a cultural formation, and global development regimes inflected our conversations and work long before the transnational circulation of SARS-CoV-2, as we write this introduction more than two years after COVID-19 became a household phrase, this work now carries with it a new sense of urgency and relevance for thinking about the state of the world’s girls. The pandemic has only exacerbated and laid bare how interlocking systems of power and oppression both generate and sustain global inequalities buttressed by different forms of neocolonial imperialism, settler colonialism, white supremacist nationalism, anti-Black racism, anti-Asian hate, misogyny, homo- and transphobia, and economic exploitation.

GID discourses suturing narratives of rising structural inequalities to girl-centered agency and resilience continue to circulate in pandemic times. Global development actors at all scales, including girls themselves, continue to endow participation in formal schooling with the power to predict social and economic success, yet the exigencies of COVID-19 highlight in real time the risks inherent in this global faith.¹ Girls’ lived experiences of vulnerability, risk, and assumed resiliencies are starkly visible, from the impacts of the lockdowns on girls’ physical and emotional safety to their intensified caregiving and economic responsibilities in the face of community-wide spread of the virus in the context of development as an extension of neoliberal racial capitalism. Many countries have doubled down on the promises of GID, particularly the role of girls in STEM fields, to suggest that girls not only stand “fearlessly” in the face of global challenges evidenced by the pandemic and climate change, but also take action with “resilience and courage” because they “are more hopeful and confident that the world is becoming a better place” (UNICEF 2021). Further, while emphasis on girls’ education as a marker for girls’ empowerment and gendered social change persists, GID discourse has also shifted from a singular focus on participation in formal schooling to “life skills as

a vehicle for empowerment” and sociocultural as well as economic transformation (Desai 2020: 2). The pandemic has only intensified the significance of this shift, emphasizing a focus on cultivating internal qualities such as resilience within individuals and communities to foster social and national transformation instead of addressing larger structural and geopolitical issues. Girls worldwide have been disproportionately affected by the crisis while simultaneously heralded as essential change agents and leaders in their local communities. It is our position that this routinized practice of overvaluing girls’ participation in formal schooling, their future capitalist labor (via schooling and skilling), and their essentialized, gendered power to “save the future of humanity”—even in the face of a global pandemic—further codifies GID as a kind of common sense, an epistemological paradigm and patterned way of thinking about the biopolitical value of girls’ lives.

While scholars from a broad range of disciplines have investigated how global development processes inform discourses of childhood and youth as well as the material conditions that shape young people’s lived realities in various parts of the world, a specific focus on girls’ lives and girlhood as a site for intervention is relatively new. Key texts like Afua Twum-Danso Imoh, Michael Bourdillon, and Sylvia Meichsner’s collection *Global Childhoods beyond the North-South Divide* (2019) provide essential analytical tools for troubling the still-prevailing tendency to reduce children’s complex and interconnected lives into binary dichotomies (e.g., developed/developing) mapped to purportedly distinct political geographies (i.e., Global North and Global South). Nicola Ansell’s *Children, Youth, and Development* (2016) explicates the impact of global development policies and practices on children’s lives, including children’s agentic negotiations within these processes. Kristen Cheney and Aviva Sinervo’s *Disadvantaged Childhoods and Humanitarian Intervention* (2019) contends with how humanitarian interventions for children in difficult circumstances effectively and affectively commodify child suffering in ways that can further immiserate the children targeted for aid. In conversation with this work, scholars focused on girlhood as a particular form of gendered childhood and adolescence have critiqued the (neo)colonial assumptions embedded in global development agendas focused on poor, racialized adolescent girls’ bodies and lives in the Global South as ideal sites for intervention based on their potential to multiply investment, interrupt intergenerational poverty, and predict economic growth; others have examined how girls in the Global North are problematically positioned as “empowered” relative to girls in

the Global South through affective appeals to postfeminist neoliberal sensibilities that reinforce normative geopolitical power relations.

Indeed, as we will go on to discuss, the discursive practice of centering girlhood as a site for intervention and investment while diverting attention from efforts to end geo-structural political and economic inequity is now, and has always been, consistent with policies designed to preserve western hegemony in the global system. A groundswell of recent empirical and conceptual scholarship provides rich insight into the intersections of global girlhood and development as imbricated in transnational legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and the late modern ascendancy of neoliberal racial capitalism.² In this conceptual framework, girls (and their girlhoods) anywhere in the global system are (and have been in many ways) the subjects of inquiry and investment across a range of empirical sites, theoretical frameworks, and institutional domains. The chapters collected in this volume work to explicitly theorize the intersections of girlhood and global development in the context of GID as a power/knowledge regime—the de facto epistemological and ontological framework that shapes how girlhoods are configured, what we can know about girls’ lives, and what girls’ lives and their girlhoods can mean and for whom.

Theorizing “the Girl” in Development

To theorize GID as a regime of power, we understand development, both discursively and in its material enactments, as an ongoing historical transnational process of disruption and a reorganization of social relations (Chowdhury 2016). We also understand girls as *vital figures*—historical actors—in these processes as well as “the girl” as a *vital figuration*. Drawing on Donna Haraway’s formulation, Shenila Khoja-Moolji argues that girl “figurations” act as “distillations of shared meanings through which we make sense of the world around us” (2021: 24).

Suturing this understanding of “girls” to “development” allows us to argue that girlhood itself functions as a historically unfolding, transnationally circulating formation, or what Karishma Desai theorizes elsewhere as “girlscape” (2017: 12). In this frame, figurations of “the girl” in development pose as universal and abstractable, mobile and dynamic, and seemingly decontextualized in the social imaginary (Ong and Collier 2005). As such, “the girl” is ultimately deployable across literal and metaphoric borders through development campaigns, interventions, and policies pro-

pelled by the fantasies, promises, and fears attached to her potential for materializing collective and contested aspirations. Figurations of the girl in development as simultaneously vulnerable and powerful come forward as reorganized and altered versions of conventional girlhood as a social relation or cultural formation—that is, shared fantasies about the girl in development seem to diverge from originating (transnational) cultural ideas about who the girl is, has been, and can be. Yet, contemporary figurations of the girl in development are the products of particular historical processes that are immanent to legacies of western modernity and attendant social arrangements (e.g., colonialism, capitalism, racialized gender regimes) such that specific discourses, institutions, regulatory regimes, and affects come together to variously reconstitute “the girl” in development according to shared and also contested interests.

For the authors in this volume, examining girls’ lives as vital figures *and* figurations of girlhood in development provides an analytical threshold for understanding historical and contemporary geopolitical power.

Figuring “the Girl” in Development: Complex Genealogies

The consolidation of “the girl”—first languaged as “the girl-child”—as a category of intervention and a particular form of gendered, racialized personhood is the ongoing result of intersecting historical processes seeded in colonial imperialism and variously reconstituted in contemporary global development processes focused on girls (and girlhoods), particularly girls’ education as a mode for enculturating white, western, capitalist modernity.³ For instance, as Christopher Kirchgasler and Karishma Desai (2020) document in their archival study of transnational school reforms in the Kenya Colony—specifically the Jeanes School in the 1920s and 1930s as well as Mau Mau prison camp reeducation in the 1950s and 1960s—the girl-child makes visible how colonial norms for gendered domesticity offered African girls a shifting biopolitical strategy, wherein acceding to properly gendered roles was made a condition for economic and political maturity for racialized populations. Residues of colonial domesticity persist in the contemporary “girl-powering of development” (Koffman and Gill 2013a) in the yoking of the performance of “proper” modern girlhood and womanhood to civilizational progress and economic development (Kirchgasler and Desai 2020). As the chapters in this volume variously illustrate, “older colonial and nationalistic logics connected to social welfare and development” have been recuperated, repurposed, and redeployed within WID, GAD, and, concomitantly, GID (Bellows-Blakely, forthcoming).

Indeed, as historian Sarah Bellows-Blakely's research shows, GID has a "troubled origin story" that existing analyses (our own included) have not considered, in part because, as she argues, knowledge concerning these origins has been suppressed. While the "turn to the girl" in development is typically articulated as originating in development discourse authored (at least ostensibly) by development actors in the Global North and then circulated south, the contemporary figurations of "the girl" as the "key" to unlocking global economic growth has more accurately emerged through a complex confluence of feminist research and grassroots activism in India and Africa; western feminist activism in the international NGO system committed to children's rights; and the interests and influence of high-ranking officials in UNICEF, the multilateral agency at the center of GID's complex emergence. According to Ashwini Tambe, the phrase "girl-child" originated in the work of South Asian feminist researchers in the 1980s who were attendant to "the deeper vulnerability of girls than boys to malnutrition, violence and illiteracy" related to "the problem of skewed sex ratios" attributed to sex selective abortions and female infanticide (2019: 123). Tambe argues that this phrase "traveled" to the UN and other multilateral systems through this research and activism.

Although "UN concerns associated with girls" had historically and "typically [fallen] under the umbrella of women's issues" (Tambe 2019: 127), by 1990 a cross-sectoral emphasis on girls' development and human rights coalesced under the "rubric of 'the girl child'" (Croll 2006: 1285). As Bellows-Blakely argues, significant contestations around the "turn to the girl" for development were steeped in debates about development itself. African feminists were motivated by the deleterious effects of economic restructuring policies that attached austerity conditions to loans imposed on nation-states in the Global South from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) known as Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPS) (Bellows-Blakely, forthcoming). She points out that "explicitly girl-focused economic programming" in this period expanded earlier "domesticity-focused developmentalism" focused on training girls becoming good mothers according to western gender expectations to include training girls "to labor in for-profit economies" in "direct response to the global economic crash of the 1970s, the debt crises of the 1980s, and economic austerity and shrinking welfare states mandated by Structural Adjustment Programs." Bellows-Blakely documents speeches made by activists involved in FEMNET, a Pan-African NGO tied, not coincidentally, to UNICEF, at key conferences during this period in which they articulate

clear connections between economic restructuring and the disempowerment and gendered immiseration of African girl-children. For instance, in a speech in 1990 before the International Conference on Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Tanzania,

Miriam Khamadi Were, a Kenyan medical doctor who served as the Chief Health and Nutrition Officer at UNICEF's offices in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, used the symbol of a girl being strangled to death by a snake to describe the impact of global economic policymaking and Structural Adjustment Programs on Africa . . . [indicating how] the education and employment of girls—the “brilliant daughters of Africa”—were tangibly harmed by systemic poverty the geopolitical system manufactured and Structural Adjustment perpetuated, in part because of the gendered impacts of shrinking welfare state funding for public education, healthcare, and more. For Were and others, “Asking the victims—Africa as a whole and girls, in particular—to create their own salvation under ongoing conditions of externally imposed austerity was like asking a caged mouse to scramble to freedom: ‘no matter how active it becomes, it is still in the confines of a cage.’” (Bellows-Blakely, forthcoming)

That same year, Kenyan educator and coordinator of FEMNET Njoki Wainaina spoke before the UN World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. In her speech, “Wainaina blamed Structural Adjustment Policies for hurting girls’ education and condemned leaders of international agencies for supporting the programs” (Bellows-Blakely, forthcoming). African feminist activists foregrounded western-designed austerity programs—the nascent “neoliberal” ethos that continues to shape development policy and programming—as the root (or, perhaps more accurately, the rhizomatic) cause of girls’ increased deprivation. Although pointed, their critiques of global development were inherently complicated by their positions in or associated with UNICEF.

During this same period, western feminist activists among childhood experts were likewise concerned about the well-being of girls in the Global South. They were frustrated by childhood data that was not disaggregated by gender as well as data on women that failed to account for generational discrimination and violence marked by age or status vis-à-vis the biosocio-cultural life course (Croll 2006; Price-Cohen 1997; Warner et al. 2013). The inclination among some western feminist advocates for girls was also to turn to the UN, although less to explicitly critique development policy as a “snake . . . strangling Africa’s daughters” and more as a site for protecting girls’ rights. Many looked to the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) as the “most widely accepted framework for action in favor of the fundamental rights of girls” (CRC/C/38, 49, para 278; 52, para.

299). For example, Cynthia Price-Cohen (1997) has maintained that the CRC is a “feminist landmark” because the drafters explicitly used gender-neutral language—“the child”—as a way of “avoiding the mention of gender entirely” or using both masculine and feminine pronouns when necessary (47). From the perspective of liberal western feminists working to neutralize masculinist language and center girls, the CRC is the only treaty in which “both genders are given true equality in the exercise of their rights” (47). For many western feminists, this discursive maneuver was a positive, progressive, and inherently political step away from the exclusively masculine pronouns used in all other human rights treaties.

Nonetheless, gender-neutral language in the CRC and other policy documents has been critiqued for failing to disentangle the gendered contours of childhood by homogenizing “the child” (Croll 2006). Some western activists endeavored to articulate and disseminate the generative overlaps between the CRC and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Price-Cohen 1997; WGG 2015). However, historical reluctance among mainstream western women’s rights advocates to discursively associate women with children and particularly girls (Kearney 1990) worked against singling girls out for development intervention. For example, although the Vienna Declaration mentioned “girl-children” (Price-Cohen 1997), UNICEF delegates attending the World Human Rights Conference in Vienna in 1993 had encountered explicit resistance to talk of girls’ rights in the context of women’s rights (WGG 2015). While African feminists saw clear connections between macroeconomic policy and the everyday gendered lives of girl-children—that is, linkages between western economic hegemony as a colonizing force and global/local gender regimes—western feminist activists understood girls’ oppression primarily through the lens of gender and were less overtly critical of development itself as an ongoing historical transnational process of disruption and reorganization of social relations according to western expectations and standards.

Despite these contestations, African and western feminist activists understood that the processes leading up to the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, and the conference (both the official conference and the parallel NGO conference) itself would be key sites for foregrounding girls. As advocates organized for Beijing, the Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee of UNICEF (WGG) was established in 1993/94 to facilitate the development of an advocacy network among national and international NGOs on behalf of girls to

convince leaders in state and non-state development institutions (including key leaders of the women's movement in the Global North) that a focus on girls was key to women's rights and access to development (WGG 2015). Out of this intentional networking process, UN Member States delegates and NGOs came together "to make the plight of girls visible" (WGG 2008) by explicitly inserting girls into the action platform.

Yet the WGG's initial approach to simply "insert the word 'girls' after 'women'" was considered "too conservative" (WGG 2015) for African feminist activists; they argued in regional meetings in Africa (Dakar, Senegal) as well as in WGG networking sessions in New York that girls needed a specific, separate section in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). After a complex process of adjudication, which included processes of negotiation among UNICEF and African feminist leaders and activists, Section L, "The Girl-Child," was added to the Platform. The BPfA became the first (and only) global agenda-setting platform and multilateral agreement to single out girls as a discrete demographic disaggregated from "women" and "children" (Bellows-Blakely, forthcoming; Croll 2006; Switzer 2018; Tambe 2019).

"The Girl" as the Subject of Rights

Article 39 of the Global Framework preceding the BPfA configures the terms of recognition for being a "girl-child" by outlining the parameters within which her rights should be understood:

The girl-child of today is the woman of tomorrow. The skills, ideas, and energy of the girl-child are vital for full attainment of the goals of equality, development and peace. For the girl-child to develop her full potential she needs to be nurtured in an enabling environment, where her spiritual, intellectual and material needs for survival, protection and development are met and her equal rights are safeguarded. If women are to be equal with men in every aspect of life and development, now is the time to recognize the human dignity and worth of the girl-child and to ensure her full enjoyment of her human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights assured by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. (UNDAW: 30)

Section L the of the BPfA itself enumerates the intersecting constraints of girls' lives and offers nine strategic objectives, in addition to corresponding "actions to be taken" by governments and NGOs, intended to compel

them to “promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on girls and boys, respectively” (UNDAW: 148). Along with the eradication of discriminatory violence and exclusion, Section L also requires the promotion and protection of girls’ rights, awareness of their needs and potential, and their participation in social, economic, and political life. Last, the section recognizes the structural limits and possibilities of girls’ relational contexts as members of households by requiring states to strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl-child (UNDAW: 145). Bellows-Blakely (forthcoming) asserts that African feminists fervently resisted this focus on parents and culture in the negotiated drafting of Section L because it negated the fundamental role that structural adjustment programs from the IMF and World Bank played in shaping the lives (and economic futures) of girls and women in the Global South.

Section L and Article 39 together make the case for governments and NGOs to focus on girls’ needs by demonstrating that because they are female children, they suffer before birth (sex selective abortions), at birth (female infanticide), and throughout childhood (malnutrition, withheld and selective health care, denied education, exploitive labor for/in the household, early marriage, early pregnancy/motherhood, and “harmful attitudes and practices” including female genital modification and son preference). Critically, the BPfA does not cite references to support the claims it makes about girls and on their behalf,⁴ and does not foreground the effects of macroeconomic policies instantiated by the IMF and related institutions. Rather, the authors of Section L rely on the BPfA as a binding global agreement directing ratifying states to recognize the “plight” of girls and to ignite their will to act in the interests of girls’ “spiritual, intellectual and material needs for survival, protection and development and rights” (BPfA: 30) by (re)allocating resources, creating and enforcing legislation, implementing policies, and leveraging expertise and influence on the behalf of girls. Section L and related documents therefore established the normative terms of recognition with which girls targeted for development intervention would come to be seen, reinforcing the legitimacy of and authority of global institutions to define these terms despite contestation from local organizations. Section L is thus productive of girl-children as the subjects of rights while reifying the power of member states to target girls for intervention on legal, political, and moral grounds. This frame-

work for recognizing girls' human rights assumes development itself is a neutral process somehow removed from larger systems of power.

The BPfA is perhaps axiomatic of the shift in the overall multi- and bilateral development agenda that established a pattern of illuminating girls' uniquely gendered experiences of poverty, deprivation, underdevelopment, violence, and lack of rights and forwarding inclusion as the mechanism for gender justice. A concerted call for centering girls' futurity and potential provided the ethio-ontological rationale for bringing racialized, gendered childhood into the spotlight even as it obscured larger geopolitical-economic structural violence and ushered a "discursive explosion" (Tambe 2019: 133) of "girlwork" (Warner et al. 2013), including a marked shift in emphasis from "issues affecting female infants" to "those affecting female teens" (Tambe 2019: 133). In this discourse, adolescence is defined as a period of time between the ages of ten and twenty in which the biosocial processes like puberty, schooling, sexual debut, pregnancy, motherhood, and marriage interconnect to profoundly constrain girls' options and labored futures. As Barbara Mensch, Judith Bruce, and Margaret E. Greene argued in the late 1990s, "during adolescence, the world expands for boys and contracts for girls. Boys enjoy new privileges reserved for men; girls endure new restrictions reserved for women. Boys gain autonomy, mobility, opportunity, and power (including power over girls' sexual and reproductive lives); girls are systematically deprived of these assets" (1998: 2).

Feminist researchers working in the development policy realm focused similarly on "inventing adolescent policy; making girls visible and valued; recognizing the particularity of girls' adolescence and changing the gender rules; moving adolescent policy beyond reproductive health; and supporting girls through sexual initiation, pregnancy and marriage" (Mensch, Bruce, and Greene 1998: 2). The "girl-child," resignified through her specification as an "adolescent girl" living in the "developing world," is constructed in turn as either inherently vulnerable or potentially empowered simply because she is on the threshold of puberty and sexual maturation; her access to school becomes a key lever for catalyzing her future increased productive (and decreased reproductive) potential (Mensch, Bruce, and Greene 1998). Tambe (2019) asserts that the discursive shift to investment "took root around 2005 in UN circles" (135) which coincides with the neoliberal turn to public-private partnerships for interventions focused on girls and specifically in 2004 the formation of the Nike Foundation as

a key knowledge-broker and arbiter of “the girl effect.” “Girl effects logic” (Switzer 2018) sutures the individual adolescent girl’s empowerment to collective economic development on a world scale; this analytical move further specifies the “girl-child” as a “schoolgirl,” and in so doing, limits education to a means to an end and economic participation as the only viable life course for the “woman of tomorrow.”

The chapters in this volume document and discuss current discourse, policy, and practice that circulate the adolescent girl as the agent of change, the entrepreneurial subject, the potential consumer, as well as the consummate worker in formal, informal, and invisible economies. Adolescent girls’ proper “development” into entrepreneurial subjects recapitulates the proper “development” of global capitalism in the form of increased GDP for individual states and predictable aggregate growth. Importantly, the emphasis on girls’ bodies as human capital investments has simultaneously muted calls for girls’ rights to substantive equality and relational autonomy by emphasizing their economic potential to break vicious cycles of abjection—not just for themselves and their immediate families, but also for their nations and, indeed, the world. This discursive and affective commonsense about girls’ lives has made their material circumstances available for (re)presentation and recuperation by the fleet logic of the marketplace. As Navtej Purewal (2019) asserts, “corporatized development, rather than being a new form, has been a built-in part of the expansion of global capitalism as a means of accessing new markets as well as justifying otherwise questionable ethical practices” (13–14).

Summary of Chapters

Girls in Development: Figurations of Gendered Power opens with chapters from Sydney Calkin and Kathryn Moeller that historicize and conceptually scaffold how girls’ lives and girlhood itself have become sites of, and rationales for, investment and situate the GID framework within a broader context of neoliberal feminism. In chapter 1, Calkin offers a feminist Foucauldian critique of human capital theory (HCT) by focusing on the role its ascendance has played in the making of contemporary GID discourse. She illustrates how HCT provides a persuasive rationale for the “Gender Equality as Smart Economics” agenda across development institutions and the private sector and among political elites. Calkin argues that girl-powered development discourses anchored in HCT present a ru-

bric for understanding girls' lives and value through the lens of gendered futurity. Representing girls' potential as future workers and mothers translates productive potential and reproductive risk into the familiar policy language of equating gender equality with economic efficiency. In chapter 2, Moeller follows the Nike Foundation's corporate philanthropic brand the Girl Effect as it moves from partnerships with traditional international development NGOs to the entrepreneurial innovations and fast capital of Silicon Valley. In its last stage of investment in girls, the Nike Foundation partnered with Unreasonable Group to launch the Girl Effect Accelerator, a program that puts seed capital and mentoring into new for-profit ventures focused on helping girls. The accelerator program that involved entrepreneurs from India and Africa participated in an intense process where they pitched their ideas and received intensive feedback from mentors on how to target girls, take their businesses to scale, and profit while doing good. While the accelerator program lasted for just a year, Moeller illustrates how the Nike Foundation moved from talking about girls as an emerging market and investing in girl-targeted programs to the production of transnational girlhood as a new capitalist frontier. Moeller suggests that this final moment of Nike Foundation's investment in the Girl Effect exemplifies GID as an expanding regime of power.

Calkin and Moeller's conceptual chapters provide the backdrop and foundation for a series of chapters (3–6) that offer ethnographic considerations of how GID discourses inform the roles significant adults play in girls' lives and how girls themselves are paradoxically positioned as vital figures in and for development. Taken together, these chapters consider how leveraging GID discourses lead to poignant implications for girls as development targets and for ideas about girlhood itself. In chapter 3, Erin V. Moore centers how NGO workers in Uganda implement empowerment programs for girls; chapters 4 (Rachel Silver) and 5 (Alyssa Morley) explore how GID positions key adults—NGO workers and women teachers, respectively—in Malawi, while in chapter 6 Tracy Rogers focuses on how Cambodian schoolgirls provide meaningful critiques of local patriarchies and discourses of individual empowerment.

In chapter 3, Moore provides insights into an empowerment program implemented by a Ugandan NGO she calls K-PEG. Moore traces how self-esteem emerged as a key concern for adolescent girls in the 1980s and 1990s in the western world and traveled to international contexts in the early 2000s. Because Ugandan female participants did not display a lack of self-confidence, Moore explains that the NGO officers converged fem-

inist pedagogy with an ethos of “aspirant feminism”—that is, a taste for foreign foods, fashion, and travel—as a cultural style and form of (hetero) sexual citizenship that inculcates a feeling of striving and accomplishment according to heteronormative expectations for female success. Aspirant feminism effectively cultivates a desire for membership in the transnational feminist movement because it offers pathways to social mobility that are both desirable and difficult for young Ugandan women to obtain. Ultimately, Moore argues that new aspirational capacities shape new lines of desire for girls while reproducing class differences.

Chapters 4 and 5 focus on how GID operates in Malawi; in chapter 4, Silver draws on ethnographic research to explore the moral and political economy of girls’ education in Malawi through the experiences of a cadre of Malawian NGO workers charged with keeping girls in schools. As Silver demonstrates, despite deep expertise and initiative, Malawians situated in “local” NGOs found their efforts to promote gender equity in education constrained by the structures of aid itself. As one of many forces in a larger operating system of power, GID has implications not only for the girls in whose name funding flows, but also for the activists who have dedicated themselves to supporting community-based efforts of gender justice.

In chapter 5, Morley examines the contradictory spaces Malawian women teachers occupy within the GID landscape. As the former students targeted by girls’ education reforms, Morley notes today’s women teachers are tasked with carrying out girl-focused programming funded by bilateral organizations. However, tasking women teachers with this work is more than a new instantiation of women’s responsabilization in global development. Morley’s close examination of how women teachers navigate their work reveals the fundamental flaws of “girl effects logic” (Switzer 2018). Pairing discourse and ethnographic analysis, Morley investigates how GID projects cast women teachers as empowered role models for girls and how women teachers’ “empowerment” is heavily delimited by inequitable geopolitical and patriarchal structures left untouched—and even exacerbated—by GID reforms.

In chapter 6, Rogers draws on qualitative visual research with Cambodian adolescent schoolgirls to understand their perceptions about barriers faced in attending school. She illustrates the multiple discourses shaping girls’ lives by examining how they receive gendered scripts for normative performances of domesticity, submissiveness, and constrained mobility from *Chhap Srei (Code for Women)*, taught at home

and at school as part of Khmer literature studies, while at the same time, because they are in school, girls are also encouraged and taught to be assertive as a new cultural mode for overcoming gender discrimination. Positioning young women as knowledgeable subjects with particular insight into the role development policy plays in their every lives, Rogers focuses on a participatory action project in which schoolgirls created a personalized poster campaign to express their advice regarding the predominant barriers to girls' education in Cambodia. As she shows, girls' lived realities and GID discourse converge in this "advice," illustrating how schoolgirls' desires resist the empowered schoolgirl script and provide meaningful critiques of local patriarchies and discourses of individual empowerment.

Virginia Caputo and Anuppiya Sriskandarajah conclude the volume with considerations of how media representations of girls and girlhoods intersect with GID paradigms. In chapter 7, Caputo analyzes #FreedomForGirls, a video campaign designed to raise awareness and financial support for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals featuring lyrics and music from Beyoncé's song "Freedom" laid over images of Black and Brown girls dancing and lip-syncing to "girl-power" lyrics. While most development campaigns have tended to feature "western" girls who are often represented as white, middle-class, and able-bodied saving their Black and Brown sisters in the Global South, Caputo argues that in "Freedom for Girls," racialized girls positioned in various locations across the Global North and South are instead situated as actors able to save themselves and their sisters in the Global South. Following other scholars examining media campaigns, Caputo argues that the video's main message emphasizes the notion that empowered girls are the ones to demand freedom and are responsible for achieving it. Catchy and inspiring, this media campaign elides an examination of interdependent geopolitical contexts that produce inequity. While championing sustainable development, the chapter shows how Beyoncé's celebrity status and freedom discourses bolster a postfeminist framing that facilitates short-term intervention as opposed to a sustainable plan to improve girls' lives globally.

In chapter 8, Sriskandarajah turns toward indigeneity and Indigenous girlhoods in the Global North, a context often overlooked within GID scholarship. Sriskandarajah brings light to this significant gap through a reading of young Anishinaabe activist Autumn Peltier's speeches and interviews on climate justice and clean water. Placing the settler colonial context in relationship with contemporary scholarship about and critiques

of development offers new perspectives in this chapter, and in doing so, Sriskandarajah invites a reckoning with settler coloniality in making sense of the GID framework.

Conclusion

Our goal with this introduction is to theorize GID as regime of power in the larger genealogy of normative frameworks for women and gender in development discourse, policy, and agenda setting. By operationalizing GID as a knowledge paradigm, these chapters consider its differential implications in a variety of geopolitical locations and across disciplines through a critical feminist lens. This volume contributes to ongoing conversations about gender equality, human rights, and global development from the perspective of our “post-girl effect” moment in which the imperative to “invest” in girls functions “as a natural, seemingly obvious solution to ending poverty and promoting economic growth” (Moeller 2018, 62). By theorizing GID as a distinctive discursive and affective regime structuring knowledge about girls and girlhoods in a global system shaped by transnational circuits of power, the chapters in this collection fundamentally enlarge and enrich the scope of girlhood studies (which has conventionally focused on girls and girlhoods in the West/Global North) and development studies (which has conventionally focused on girls in the Global South through social scientific, and often quantitative, frameworks). The chapters gathered in this text tether together several conversations about GID with the collective intent to centralize the lives of girls and their girlhoods as cultural forms and to document GID’s emergence, impact, and conditions of possibility in variety of geopolitical locations, in different historical periods, and from various disciplinary vantage points through a critical feminist lens.

Our collection interlinks several conversations about GID in theoretically rich and empirically informed ways that foreground the interdisciplinary and intertextual nature of global girlhood studies and the relational imbrications of girls’ lives. We also hope this volume offers readers the opportunity to reflect on the growth and impact of the GID framework while exploring new theoretical directions, experiential realities, histories, and challenges to prevailing human capital investment logics. While the geographical scope (and therefore, to some degree, geopolitical scope) of the empirical work in the volume is not as varied or comprehensive

as we had hoped it might be from our initial call, we nonetheless assert that, taken together, the authors offer nuanced and timely explorations of “Girls in Development” as a significant knowledge/power paradigm of futurity with deep implications for the lives of girls today and tomorrow.

Notes

1. We refer here to Gilbert Rist’s (1997) notion of “faith.” Scholars use various conceptualizations for this idea. For example, Caron and Margolin (2015) operationalize a Žižekian notion of “fantasy” to explain investments in girls’ empowerment through education as a diversion from larger structural issues.
2. Examples include Bent (2015); Calkin (2017); Chant (2016); Desai (2016, 2020); Hayhurst (2011, 2014); Khoja-Moolji (2015, 2018); Kirk, Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh (2010); Koffman and Gill (2013a, 2013b); Purewal (2015); Moeller (2018); Moore (2016); Shain (2013); Switzer (2018); Tambe (2019).
3. For examples, see Kirchgasler and Desai (2020); Stambach (2000); and Vavrus (2003).
4. Despite the fact that, as Blakely-Bellows (forthcoming) argues, African feminist organizations had undertaken extensive research and documentation for UNICEF leading up to the conference, some of which contested claims that girls’ marginalization was seeded in cultural beliefs.

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