

## *Contents*

PREFACE	XIII
INTRODUCTION: GOOD GIRLS VERSUS REAL GIRLS	1
<b><i>Part I: The Sexual Lives of Girls</i></b>	<b>11</b>
Chapter 1: "I'll Show You Mine If You Show Me Yours"	15
<i>Zeroing In On: Play. What is Play? What is Sexual Play?</i>	25
Chapter 2: Just Practicing: It's in Her Kiss	27
Chapter 3: Feminine Ideals: Make-up, Midriffs, and the Pleasures of Being Objectified	39
Chapter 4: Naked Barbies	48
<i>Zeroing In On: Childhood Innocence and the Shaming of Sexuality</i>	54
Chapter 5: Bodies and Pleasure: If It Feels Good, Why Is It so Bad?	59
Chapter 6: Playing Dead but Feeling Tingly	66
Chapter 7: Wanting It and Not Wanting It	70
Chapter 8: Two Kinds of Guilty Pleasure	77
Chapter 9: African-American Girls and Their Secrets	85
Chapter 10: Periods, Pubic Hair, Boobies, and Bodily Torture	96
Chapter 11: Guilty Minds and Sexual Obsessions	104
Chapter 12: Too Sexual Too Soon	116

Chapter 13: Unwelcome Intrusions: Sexual Coercion in the Lives of Girls	123
Chapter 14: Raising Sexual Girls: A Few Words to Parents	134

## **Part II: Aggression, Destruction, and Being Mean**

Chapter 15: Aggression in Girls	141
Chapter 16: A Good Girl Doesn't Do That	147

### *Zeroing In On: Tomboys* 155

Chapter 17: Dear Diary, I Hate Her! Secret Anger in Girls	159
Chapter 18: The Aggressive Acts of Good Girls	166

### *Zeroing In On: Pranks, Mischief, and Little Meannesses* 173

Chapter 19: Feeling the Power	178
Chapter 20: Getting Physical: Girl Athletes	189
Chapter 21: Class, Clothes, and Cutting Her Down to Size	198

### *Zeroing in On: Language and Loudness* 204

Chapter 22: "I'm No Sucker": Fighting and Fighting Back	209
Chapter 23: Raising Aggressive Girls?	221

## **Conclusion**

Chapter 24: Welcoming Sex, Power, and Aggression into the Lives of Girls	227
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NOTES	231
INDEX	249

## *Preface*

This book celebrates two aspects of girls' lives that they try hard to keep secret: sex and aggression. After years of studying girls' reactions to victimization and women's memories of both sexual victimization and sexual play at Harvard, Children's, and Massachusetts General hospitals in Boston, Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, and now Saint Michael's College in Vermont, I've learned that girls and women have amazing strengths and clever, if hidden, ways of acknowledging feelings of sexual agency as well as anger and aggression. Although I have learned to welcome these forces in the lives of girls, I haven't always felt this way. I initially came to this work with a guilty conscience.

When I was a child I had played sexual games with other girls and was deeply concerned for many years after about what I had done. I had even had sexual feelings during these games. For many years I believed I had seduced another girl into playing with me, although years later I found out that she didn't see it that way at all. The games I played were delightful games of heterosexual romance where a handsome young "man" would seduce or trap a young "woman" into sharing his bed and rubbing up against him. But I felt so terribly guilty for years about these games that I sought out therapists and social workers in high school to tell me if there was something wrong with me.

By the time I began working on this book, however, I had sufficiently dealt with those issues in my life, through coursework as I trained to become a psychologist, through therapy in my twenties and thirties, and through my