



Spectacular Girls: Media Fascination and Celebrity Culture

Sarah Projansky

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Winner of the 2015 Bonnie Ritter Book Award from the National Communication Association

As an omnipresent figure of the media landscape, girls are spectacles. They are ubiquitous visual objects on display at which we are incessantly invited to look. Investigating our cultural obsession with both everyday and high-profile celebrity girls, Sarah Projansky uses a queer, anti-racist feminist approach to explore the diversity of girlhoods in contemporary popular culture. The book addresses two key themes: simultaneous adoration and disdain for girls and the pervasiveness of whiteness and heteronormativity. While acknowledging this context, Projansky pushes past the dichotomy of the “can-do” girl who has the world at her feet and the troubled girl who needs protection and regulation to focus on the variety of alternative figures who appear in media culture, including queer girls, girls of color, feminist girls, active girls, and sexual girls, all of whom are present if we choose to look for them.

Drawing on examples across film, television, mass-market magazines and newspapers, live sports TV, and the Internet, Projansky combines empirical analysis with careful, creative, feminist analysis intent on centering alternative girls. She undermines the pervasive “moral panic” argument that blames media itself for putting girls at risk by engaging multiple methodologies, including, for example, an ethnographic study of young girls who themselves critique media. Arguing that feminist media studies needs to understand the spectacularization of girlhood more fully, she places active, alternative girlhoods right in the heart of popular media culture.

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