Packaging Girlhood

By Sharon Lamb, Ed.D., and Lyn Mikel Brown, Ed.D.

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About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about Packaging Girlhood are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach Packaging Girlhood.

About the Book

Sexy. Diva. Boy-crazy. Shopper. The image of girls and girlhood that is being packaged and sold to your daughter isn't pretty in pink. It's stereotypical, demeaning, limiting, and alarming. Girl Power has been co-opted by marketers of music, fashion, books, and television to mean the power to shop and attract boys. Girls are besieged by images in the media that encourage accessorizing over academics; sex appeal over sports; fashion over friends.

Packaging Girlhood exposes these stereotypes and the very limited choices presented of who girls are and what they can be. Lamb and Brown give parents guidance on how to talk with their daughters about these negative images and aid them with tools on how to help girls make more positive choices about the way they are in the world.

About the Author

Sharon Lamb is professor of psychology at Saint Michael's College in Vermont and the author of four books, including The Secret Lives of Girls. Her research on girls’ development, teenagers and sex, and abuse and victimization is widely cited. As a clinical psychologist, she often works
with girls, listening to their struggles and hearing their strengths, in her private practice in Shelburne, Vermont.

**Lyn Mikel Brown**, professor of education and human development at Colby College in Maine, is the author of three books on girls' development, including *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development* (with Carol Gilligan). She creates programs for girls at her nonprofit organization, Hardy Girls Healthy Women (www.hardygirlshealthywomen.org).

**Discussion Questions**

1. Packaging Girlhood begins with a simple message: Girl Power no longer means what it used to mean. Why were marketers and media able to steal that phrase and use it for their own purposes? What impact do you think this has had on girls and young women?

2. “Princesses” are everywhere in girl culture, from the most popular Halloween costumes and toys to the subject of their favorite movies. What is this image all about and why is it so desired by girls? How does the princess story impact girls? Discuss alternative images.

3. Once signifying little-girl innocence, pink is now used to sell everything from lingerie to cigarettes to caffeine-filled energy drinks. What else does pink sell today? Why is this marketing strategy so effective? How might parents respond?

4. Today’s pop stars receive unprecedented media coverage. Many girls consider them role models. What do you think they teach girls about becoming a teen? Discuss how they, too, are packaged and sold.

5. Sexualized dolls with party plans sipping drinks in hot tubs with boys or shopping for “hot to trot” accessories have become commonplace in toy stores. Are they really so different from Barbie or is there something more damaging today about their portrayal of the teen lifestyle to little girls?

6. Two “types” of girls surfaced across different forms of media: girls can either be “for the boys” or “one of the boys.” Where do you see these types in girl culture? What are the rewards and the drawbacks of being a “girly girl” vs. “one of the guys” in middle or high school? How do these choices impact girls’ relationships?

7. TV shows, movies, magazines, and books are more likely to show girls fighting and betraying one another than they are to show girls in loyal, lasting friendships. Why do you think this is? How do you think this representation of girls affects their relationships with one another?
8. Boys overpopulate G rated films, cereal box characters, board game cover winners, and TV show leads. Why? What impact does this have on girls?

9. Art, music, drama, sports. How are these activities good for girls and in what ways are they manipulated or changed to be “girl” activities?

10. Marketers use a range of strategies to sell to children, such as product placement, viral marketing, and immersive advertising. What strategies do you see working and why do you think they are successful with girls? Since parents can’t turn off the world, what do you think are the best ways to address or respond to these techniques?

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