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Smart Girls: Success, School, and the Myth of Post Feminism. By Shauna Pomerantz and Rebecca Raby. Oakland: University of California Press, 2017. Pp. xix+272. $85.00 (cloth); $24.95 (paper).

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The day I sat down to write this review, the Pew Research Center reported that women now make up more than half of the college educated workforce.

Having outnumbered men in college degree completion for the past several decades, women now appear poised to transfer academic achievement into greater attainment of high quality jobs. A seeming reversal of gender dis parity, such evidence of women's success has roiled debates over gender in equality in education for the past several years, helping spawn two popu lar tropes of gendered achievement: the "failing boy" and the "supergirl." The bulk of popular and academic discourse has focused on the failing boy: framing boys' underachievement as the result of feminist overreach or, al ternatively, toxic strictures of masculinity. But we have heard far less about girls' success, especially scholarly and feminist critiques of the assumption that girls now "rule the world." According to this postfeminist tale, girls to day prosper unencumbered by messy inconveniences such as institutional gender inequality or sexual harassment. The supergirl image projects a mod ern, eminently self confident (white, middle class, heterosexual) girl, who aces calculus, dominates on the soccer field, and volunteers at the local food pantry, all while leaving her languid male counterparts in the dust.

Smart Girls: Success, School, and the Myth of Post Feminism launches a valuable intervention into this facile girls versus boys debate, seeking to ex plode imagery of "alpha" girls who have supposedly reversed gender domi nance. Drawing from in depth interviews with 57 high achieving Canadian girls, all of whom described themselves as "smart," Pomerantz and Raby "delve into the lives of smart girls by offering multilayered portrayals that help to contextualize simplistic headlines, magazine covers, and popular sci entific accounts" (p. 7). The authors interview these girls multiple times and compare their accounts of gender and academic success to a smaller sam ple of 17 self described smart boys. What emerges is a textured and mean ingful account of gender in perceptions of intelligence, academic effort, and aspirations.

The first two chapters examine how popular culture has constructed gen dered images of achievement. This has produced a media image of the super girl who succeeds at just about everything: academics, sports, activities, so cial life. Yet the authors demonstrate that the emphasis on multifaceted uber achievement creates stress and anxiety for girls in everyday life. For exam ple, an interviewee named Janey revealed, "For me, [my stress] wasn't that exams were here, it was that I still have to commit myself to basketball, I still have to commit myself to dance, I still have to commit myself, like, there is a whole bunch of people I'd be letting down if I didn't go to practice or I didn't go to a council meeting" (p. 51). In addition to this drive for perfection, the supergirl myth furthers a neoliberal political philosophy, dismissing struc tural constraints to prioritize personal responsibility and accountability. Neo liberalism dovetails with the postfeminist assertion that sexism is moribund and girls enjoy unprecedented freedom—now more so than boys.

Chapters 3 and 4 delve into the gendered perceptions of the interviewees. The authors assert that girls and boys were influenced by notions of "pop ular femininity" and "popular masculinity" (p. 63), which emphasized being thin, nice, and demure for girls, while insisting on strength and rationality

for boys. Interestingly, academic success could compromise popularity for both boys and girls, unless managed through gendered strategies. Boys di verted aspersions on their masculinity by attempting to emphasize their nat ural intelligence over study habits, using humor, and participating in sports. Girls could demonstrate more studiousness but unfortunately also felt the need to "dumb down," especially in relation to boys. According to one girl, "[Boys] don't want to date smart girls! If they did I would have had a billion boyfriends by now!" (p. 58). Importantly, the authors reveal how gendered expectations can interfere with academic achievement for *both* boys and girls, and astutely note that for both groups "the judgments of boys held the most weight" (p. 92). Chapter 4 examines gender inequality more directly, describing myriad ways the girls continued to encounter sexism in their schools and lives. Despite the interviewees' personal exasperation with sex ist experiences, they did not tend to blame structural gender inequality but instead let "their early feelings of frustration and confusion melt into per sonal responsibility, accountability, and free choice" (p. 115).

The book explicates how race and class shape gendered perceptions and experiences of success (noting that the supergirl image is inherently raced and classed) in chapter 5. In chapter 6, the authors conclude by exploring girls' "microresistances" to inequality and how school culture can foster girls' success and well being. Ultimately, *Smart Girls* succeeds in its goal to "speak back to the dominant story that girls' skyrocketing success in school today means they are taking over the world" (p. 153). Yet this very goal may have also produced some of the book's drawbacks. The lucid writing and clear arguments certainly appeal to an audience beyond academicians—excellent for use in various sociology, gender, and education courses. But scholarly readers may find less to sink their teeth into. For example, theory and meth ods are not visibly discussed in the text, with the few details relegated to footnotes. The methods particularly raise some notable limitations. The data derive solely from interviews; some participant observation could enhance the analysis. Although a chapter is devoted to race and class, the sample is predominantly white (just one interviewee is black), which limits the ability to systematically compare racialized dimensions of gender and achievement. The authors offer an erudite analysis of class based resources and the myth of the Asian model minority, but neither line really breaks new ground. A more varied sample for both girls and boys could have opened a stronger intersectional inquiry, enriching the authors' otherwise compelling critique of the neoliberal gendered achievement ideology. Such quibbles notwith standing, *Smart Girls* is an engaging, highly readable book that I would rec ommend to anyone interested in childhood and gender. Ideally, it will help families and schools support girls by realizing that true success grows from identifying and challenging, not ignoring, gender inequality.