

**What is a Girl? Producing Subjects in Feminist and Visual Culture Pedagogies**  
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Abstract (Summary)

This study is a theoretical investigation into the construction of "girl" subjects in educational and feminist discourses. In asking "What is a girl" this inquiry locates the question of the "girl" as integral to critically addressing normative understandings and definitions within feminist and educational discourses. This study suggests that the "girl" subject is not simply that which education and feminist researchers write about, but rather examines how the "girl" subject and the assumptions guiding what he/she is presumed to be are produced through educational and feminist research. In addition, questioning the production of subjects within feminist and educational theory simultaneously draws attention not only to the politics of language, but also to its critical and disruptive potentiality.

This dissertation locates the question "What is a girl?" in an atmosphere of increased research related to girl cultures in the 1990s. This study begins by examining the discursive construction of "girl" subjects within the intersections of multiple disciplines including the emerging discourse of Girls' Studies, research focused upon "girl" subjects in cultural studies, critical media studies and feminist educational theory and writing on feminist generations and waves. By questioning the normative hierarchies formed through the constitution of "girl" subjects as future women and future feminists reflected in feminist generational metaphors, this study examines the potential of alternative metaphors of becoming and examines their implications for art education and feminist research.

After first critiquing teleological constructions of coming of age and becoming reflected in Enlightenment subjectivity and the Bildungsroman genre, this study interprets the film *Ma Vie en Rose* and Post-Riot Grrrl zine networks as reflecting non-linear and rhizomatic metaphors of becoming that complicate sex/gender categories. This study concludes by tracing the implications of postmodern theories of subjectivity in art education research. This study emphasizes theorizing visual culture arts education as a theoretical shift necessitating a critical address of the means through which subjects and particularly student subjects are produced through the language of visual culture theory.

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