

the dreams and choices
of five teenage girls
from New Orleans



Desire

a film by JULIE GUSTAFSON
with the Teenage Girls' Documentary Project

DISCUSSION GUIDE

For High Schools, Colleges/Universities, and Community Groups

Preview the entire film at DesireDocumentary.com

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DOCUMENTARY SYNOPSIS

Color/ 84 minutes – Theatrical, TV, and High School versions available

Completed just before Hurricane Katrina, *DESIRE* offers a poignant perspective on the complicated dynamics of gender, class, and race in New Orleans. Collaborating with filmmaker Julie Gustafson for five years – two girls from the Desire public housing project, a working-class single mother and two girls from a prestigious private high school - make intimate videos about their changing lives. Masterfully weaving these short films into a larger narrative, Gustafson creates a landmark portrait of young women whose desires and choices are profoundly shaped by their family, social, and economic backgrounds. *DESIRE* has been featured in numerous national film festivals and received the 2006 New Orleans Film Festival awards for Best Documentary, Best Louisiana Film, and the Grand Jury Prize. Additionally, *DESIRE* was awarded Al Gore's 'Reel Current Award' at the 2006 Nashville Film Festival.

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INTRODUCTION

...Teen Sexuality, Pregnancy, Motherhood, Marriage, Education & Career Aspirations...

Audiences & Settings

Colleges & Universities

High Schools

Community Centers

Faith-based Groups

YMCA & YWCAs

Health and Sex Education Classes

Teen Pregnancy & Parenting Programs

Guidance Counselors

Social Workers

School Boards

Youth Advocacy Groups

Legislators & Policymakers

What do teenage girls think about these issues? What choices do they make in their lives? What forces shape and limit those choices? What do young women really desire? The film *DESIRE* introduces us to five diverse teenage girls whose lives are buoyed by personal dreams and aspirations—yet fraught with conflicting expectations and limited opportunities.

Highlighting autobiographical videos made by the girls over five years, the documentary chronicles their growth and change from adolescence to young womanhood. Throughout the unique collaborative process, filmmaker Julie Gustafson and the teenage videomakers explore a range of teenage (coming of age) issues: sexuality, unplanned pregnancy, motherhood, contraception, body image, and sexual orientation. They also confront striking differences in educational and career opportunities.

Moving, authentic, and empowering, the film pivots around the intimacy and risk that the two generations of filmmakers share together and with the audience.



DESIRE provides an excellent opportunity for young women and men, parents, educators, and community leaders (from a variety of perspectives) to discuss some of the most difficult challenges faced by teenagers and society today. It raises enduring questions about the impact of gender, socio-economic environment, and racial/ethnic backgrounds on young women; as well as critical issues, which surround the social construction of desire and choice.

Issues & Applications

Teen Sex & Pregnancy

Teen Parenting

Education

Media Empowerment

Women's Studies

Gender Roles & Sexual Identity

Class, Race & Ethnicity

Eating Disorders & Body Image

Anthropology

Psychology

Social work

Film Production & Theory

BEFORE SCREENING

Running Time

Desire runs approximately 84 minutes, interweaving the life stories of five teenagers throughout. If there is not enough time to view the film in one sitting, we recommend dividing the screening into two parts, with a break between Years 2 and 3. The discussion question themes, while also running throughout the film, can be correlated with these segments as follows:

Years 1 & 2 (Approx. 45 mins)

Teen Sex & Pregnancy
Teen Parenthood and Relationships

Years 3, 4, & 5 (Approx. 36 mins)

Education & Careers
Gender Identity, Body Image & Expectations
Class, Race & Empowerment

Orienting the Audience

- ❖ Point out that while *Desire* focuses on the lives of teenage girls, there are important messages and characters that relate to general audiences, young men, parents, educators, and policy makers.
- ❖ People often want to know more about how the film was made. Many people also want to know what happened to the girls once the film was completed and after Hurricane Katrina devastated the region. The section entitled "From the Filmmaker" contains information relating to all of these topics.
- ❖ In "Background to Issues Raised by *DESIRE*" discussion facilitators and advanced students will find an essay on the historical, social, and cultural reasons that compelled the filmmaker to make *DESIRE* in the first place.
- ❖ Discuss some of the statistics about teenage girls found in the following "Did You Know?" section. The sources for these statistics follow immediately after in the section titled "Statistical Sources."
- ❖ The discussion questions are organized according to topic. Each topic is organized into a section with the earlier sections providing opportunities for more general and age-appropriate discussions, while the later topics allow for in-depth and/or theoretical dialogues.
- ❖ The film is designed for ages 12 and older, in regards to both language and subject matter. However, if you require an alternate age or language version, please contact us at DesireDocumentary@gmail.com. We can provide versions that meet your needs.
- ❖ You may download a grey scale version in order to save money on color ink. ENJOY!



"If you look at the street names in the project, you come up with so many ideas. Desire (that's a street) is like a wish to do something or a desire to go far. You want to have benefits and you want pleasure. You just want to feel good about yourself – the biggest thing you can do."

Cassandra Swaing, Teenage Video Maker

THE TEENAGE FILMMAKERS & THEIR STORIES

DESIRE begins in a large, run-down public housing development named Desire, which sits at the end of the former streetcar line made famous by Tennessee Williams. The camera pans over the rooftops of the sprawling development to reveal a courtyard where independent filmmaker, Julie Gustafson, and her video crew are teaching an excited group of African-American girls how to use camcorders to film their lives. Across the river in Belle Chasse, a working-class suburb, a white teenage mother sets up a camera to film her move into yet another trailer home. In an affluent New Orleans neighborhood, two teens – one Asian-American and one white – are making videos about life in elegant suburban homes. As the film progresses, we meet and follow these teenagers as they film the stories of their own dramatic and changing lives. Throughout the unprecedented five-year collaboration, Gustafson and her crew document this process and pose challenging questions to each of the girls about their desires and choices – their opportunities and obstacles.

CASSANDRA SWAING, 15, a vibrant African-American honor student from the Desire Public Housing Development, has ambitions to serve in the military, attend college, and become an engineer. But pressures from her peers and her environment pull on her. She creates a powerful video poem for the documentary, called *Boredom*, in which we learn she had unprotected sex with her boyfriend and is pregnant. She decides to have the baby. About having unprotected sex, she says, "I made a choice, but it was a bad choice." We learn that generations of women in her family have been poor, single, teenage mothers.

TIFFANIE JOHNSON, 17, is a teenage mother and wife from Belle Chasse, a New Orleans suburb across the Mississippi river where hidden pockets of poverty create high incidences of teenage pregnancy among white teenagers. In her video *My Side, Your Side and The Truth*, she points her camera at her young husband, Lee, who felt pressured by Tiffanie's family to marry her. A year later the marriage ends in divorce. Between

taking care of her child, part-time jobs, and college classes, she insists she will make something of her own life. She wants to be more than a mother and a wife.

PEGGY WANG, 16, is a first generation Asian-American student attending one of New Orleans' finest private high schools. In sharp contrast to her parents' assertion that the Chinese are conservative and "don't really talk about sex," the "Americanized" Peggy said that if she did have sex and got pregnant, she'd "have an abortion just like that." In *Advantage 24*, she spoofs her curiosity about birth control and sex. For Peggy, college and career opportunities are her most effective form of birth control.

TRACY MORTON, 16, is a white student attending the same prestigious high school as Peggy. The daughter of a homemaker mother and lawyer father, Tracy is expected to be a superwoman who combines both parents' achievements. She struggles with alcohol, smoking, self-esteem and her parents' high expectations. In her video piece *Still Life*, she reflects on her mother's financial and emotional dependence on her husband and children, as well as her father's stressful and time consuming career.

KIMECA ROGERS, 18, is an African-American mother of two who also lives in the Desire Housing Project. In her video piece, *Just Another Half Day In My Life*, we see her battle to finish high school and raise two sons, one of whom has special medical needs. In a poignant video piece called *Paw-Paw, The Miracle Child*, Kimeca tells the story of her disabled child and explains her reasons for not choosing adoption or abortion. "In my community," she says, "every child is a blessing."

DESIRE'S dramatic arc is provided by the girls' own development during the course of the project. As the girls grow more comfortable as collaborating filmmakers, they challenge Gustafson's premise that young women's choices are shaped by unseen forces in the complex family and social environments from which they emerge. Kimeca tells her peers: "Miss Julie asked my teacher the dumbest question. She said, 'Do teenage girls have choices?'" The question sets off a vigorous debate in which the young women move beyond the starting point of the film – teenage sexuality, early pregnancy, and motherhood. They begin to question the factors that influence their youthful desires and choices, as well as their achievements and mistakes. Were their hopes and dreams a product of what their families, teachers or peers found desirable, or even thinkable? Were their aspirations and, ultimately, their decisions and actions, a response to optimistic promises society made to them, or the reality of what society actually provided for them?

Epilogue

CASSANDRA tries the military, but when told that she must give up custody of her infant, she refuses to do so. Eventually she moves to Arizona in search of better opportunities. In order to provide for her daughter, Cassandra defers her own dreams.

TIFFANIE flourishes in college and uses the video-making process to come to grips with desires that she is afraid to reveal. In *Girlfriends*, she asks the audience to listen sympathetically as she reveals that she is bisexual. Later she enters into a relationship with another woman and together they raise her son.

PEGGY, growing into her own voice as an artist, makes *Clinic*, a video about young women with unplanned pregnancies who must decide whether or not to have an abortion. Her conclusion: it is not the easy choice she had originally thought it would be. She also creates *Secrets*, a poignant video about body image and eating disorders. By the end of the documentary, Peggy moves to New York City to start a career as a web designer.

TRACY resists her parent's overwhelming expectations for her by dropping out of college and taking a job at a video store in order to rethink her priorities. Ultimately, she decides to finish her B.A. As the film ends, she has graduated from college and is heading off to law school.

KIMECA drops out of high school for the third time. She dedicates herself to taking care of her children. Without a diploma or G.E.D, the only work she can find is a low paying job as a nursing home aide.

FROM THE FILMMAKER

Many people ask me how I came to film in Desire, once a huge public housing development in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans. In the mid-1990s, I started looking for experts to help me understand the decisions that teenagers of different backgrounds make about their developing sexuality and identity. Eventually, I spoke with New Orleans' anthropologist, Martha Ward. She told me she had done fieldwork with girls in a primarily African-American, low-income complex called Desire. At that moment, I knew I wanted to make the documentary in New Orleans, starting in Desire, a place that could serve as both a geographical and metaphorical starting place for the film.

I approached a determined group of women activists from this community. At first, they wouldn't hear of another government or foundation-funded project coming in without their input. After several trips to New Orleans and many conversations with the Desire women, we agreed that I would offer summer video workshops to teenage girls and pay them honorariums for their time and efforts. If any of the girls and their families wanted to participate in the actual film, we would all work together to honor the spirit of a fair and positive exchange between the teenagers and the community.

We began in 1995 with a small group of 15 and 16 year-old girls from the Desire housing project, each of whom made simple films about themselves and their families. Those who worked hard and passionately were the girls we eventually focused on in the film, including its major characters, Cassandra and Kimeca. The videos they produced were so honest and imaginative, I decided to use the same workshop technique with a number of teenagers from different backgrounds. Ultimately, we trained three girls from a low-income, white community across the Mississippi River from Desire. Tiffanie was in that group. We also worked with three girls from Isidore Newman High School, one of New Orleans' most diverse and prestigious, private schools. Two of these teens, Peggy and Tracy, appear in the final film.

One of my major objectives for the film was to compare teenage girls from different income and racial/ethnic backgrounds in order to make visible to audiences the way in which different family and social environments affect teenagers – their desires and choices, of course, but also the very different outcomes that usually occur in groups with sharply different educational and material opportunities. I also wanted to present, in the most authentic way possible, the teenagers' own views of the world (always a goal in my films). The videos that were emerging out of the training process were vivid and authentic; they provided an incomparable, but challenging, opportunity to foreground their visions and voices. The presence of the teenagers' own work would make it evident to audiences that my "film-voice" could not reproduce theirs as well as their own work could.

All nine girls from the three original neighborhood workshops opted to start working on the larger film project. A crew of professional filmmakers from New Orleans joined me in training the girls in camerawork and sound. They could choose to be in front of the camera or behind it; they could shoot videos themselves, or ask for camera or writing assistance from their film mentors. Ultimately, the teenagers directed their videos – they had full creative and editorial control over their own works. The professional crew also helped me document both the dramatic stories of the girls' changing lives and the dynamic process of our collaboration. The unusual span of time that we worked together (most documentaries of this type only shoot for a year or two) allowed us to show the girls' crucial transition from early adolescence to young adulthood.

We worked together on almost every aspect of the production – writing, shooting, editing, re-editing, and screening the film to preview audiences. As I had promised before we began, we showed excerpts from the footage to parents and community members throughout the production process. I did not ask the girls or families for releases until we had finished shooting and editing the film. By then the girls were all at least 21 years-old, mature enough to give 'informed consent' on the very personal subject matter of the documentary. The only significant images to which the girls objected were those in which they were crying - they didn't want to appear vulnerable on screen. In the end, though, the preview screenings convinced them that such shots were powerful and necessary. For the most part, the girls and their families never asked for any other major changes to the film.

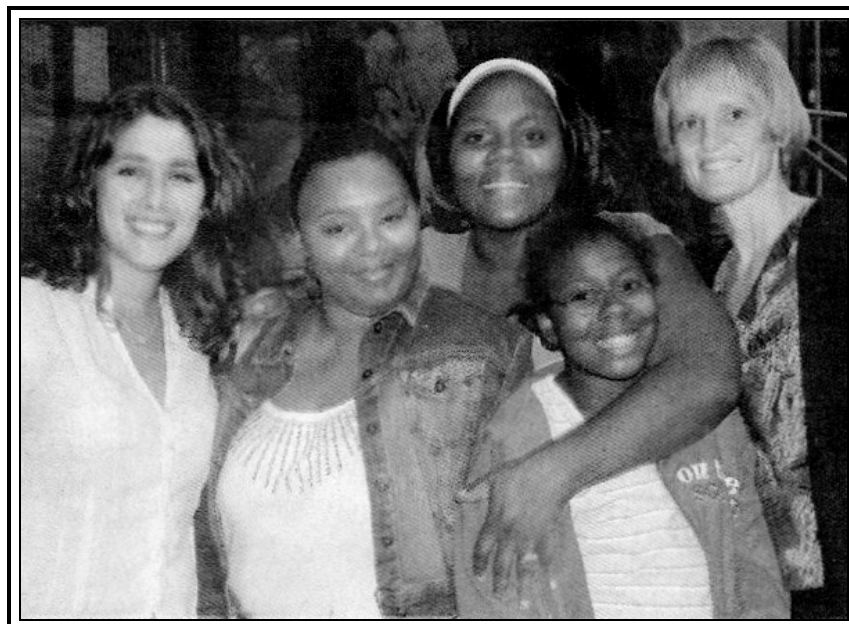
My only regret about the final film is that audiences will miss the excellent work from Della Tomassie, Natalie Shannon and Tai Collins – the three girls who did not appear in the final film because of length issues. I especially miss Tai, an African-American teen from the private Isidore Newman High School. At the end of her junior year, she went to a northeastern college preparatory school, so we didn't have enough of her video work or story footage to include her. Daughter of professional parents, Tai's coming of age issues were more closely parallel to those of Peggy and Tracy than to those of Cassandra and Kimeca. For Tai, racial discrimination was significant, but not a life defining issue. However, for the girls from Desire, racial discrimination linked with poverty had a profound impact on their lives and choices.

As this collaborative project moves out into the wider world, I believe audiences will be engaged by the girls and their stories as well as the documentary's multi-dimensional themes. I would especially like viewers to consider the issues of free-will and self-determination, versus the social construction of desire, opportunity and choice raised by the film. Most of all, I want viewers to factor-in their own life experiences and opinions, ask new questions, and formulate responses and solutions directly from their hearts and minds.

Hurricane Katrina, 2005

Shortly before Hurricane Katrina, the Desire Housing Development was torn down by the Federal Government and rebuilt to modern standards. Unfortunately, the massive flood waters that followed the hurricane and devastated much of New Orleans, also washed away the new Desire housing complex. By then, the teenage video makers seen in the film were in their mid-twenties. Of these women, Cassandra and Peggy had already left New Orleans for wider opportunities. Kimeca and Tiffanie were forced to evacuate (to Jackson, MS and Atlanta, GA respectively) and did not return. Tracy evacuated, but came back in an effort to rebuild her life and city. I evacuated with the edited copies of the completed documentary. Luckily, the original 700 hours of footage archived at the Newcomb College Institute of Tulane University were spared.

Just prior to Katrina, the New Orleans Film Festival notified us that we had swept their awards for 2005. But the Festival was cancelled because of the city's catastrophe. In 2006, after *DESIRE* had been featured at numerous national film festivals, the New Orleans Film Festival premiered the film for the city and people who had nurtured the project from the beginning. Several of the original teen videomakers joined me in accepting the long-delayed prizes. With that, the circle of our collaboration was complete.



2006 New Orleans Film Festival Awards Ceremony: Tracy Morton, Kimeca Rodgers, Cassandra & Dajonna Swaing (ten years old!), and Julie Gustafson

BACKGROUND TO ISSUES RAISED BY *DESIRE*

For Teachers, Community Leaders and Advanced Students

“Desire,” the word itself, is not just an expression of one’s sexuality or physical drives, but also the sense of what a person truly wants in all aspects of life, as a measure of one’s humanity. For young women, sexual desire- both feelings and behavior- are still thought of as something that should be kept private. Equally hidden from discussion are the larger forces that shape girls’ hopes, dreams, decisions and future lives. Americans, outspoken in so many things, rarely speak of the influences of larger social and cultural factors: gender, class, race, or ethnicity. It is our individuality, our freedoms, our belief in free will and self determination that dominate our individual and cultural conversations.

Nevertheless, both the concept of personal choice and autonomy along with its ideological opposite are deeply embedded in Western political debate and public policy. The influence of these viewpoints swings back and forth like the pendulum of an antique clock - sometimes in the direction of social conservatism, favoring individual rights and less government involvement in people’s lives; at other times, towards liberal concepts of social responsibility and the common good. It has only been fairly recent that this debate has made its way into discussion of the lives of young women.

Progress for Women

In the early twentieth century, a nascent feminist movement in America had profound effects on women’s lives. By 1900, every state had adopted a law giving married women the right to own property. The year 1920 brought the long sought after right to vote to women. The ensuing roaring twenties celebrated liberated women; enduring changes for women seemed imminent until the Great Depression came along and plunged the country into survival only mode. The lives of most teenage girls centered around romance, marriage, motherhood and home. Tight knit webs of family, community, and social mores provided considerable scrutiny, and thus, security for young females.

Women's lives changed dramatically during WWII as they were called into the workforce to take the place of soldiers fighting overseas. Once the war was over, the United States enjoyed an era of substantial economic growth, and many women elected to remain in the labor force. In the 1950s, the birth control pill was followed by the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court decision, which legalized abortion, giving women more control over whether and when to have children. The subsequent sexual revolution (at first of more benefit to men), eventually allowed women to explore their sexuality for themselves. Women were able to structure relationships (including the timing or gender of their partners) according to their own desires and needs. At the same time, the civil rights movement led by African-Americans inspired other political and cultural shifts, including a second and more enduring wave of feminism. A growing number of women and men, of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, espoused goals of equality for women at home and in the workplace.

By the end of the twentieth century, more than half of American women worked at least part time outside the home. Many of the jobs they filled were traditional women’s work: teachers, nurses, secretaries and service workers. Public and private child care initiatives followed at a rapid pace. Government sponsored affirmative action legislation opened up new educational opportunities, including college scholarships for low-income girls. Many young women, especially those of means, went after post-graduate degrees and jobs in non-traditional areas of medicine, law, finance, and small business. Women demonstrated excellence in the typically male dominated fields of mathematics, science and athletics.

Issues of Class and Race

As well as progress for women, there have been key advances over the last 60 years for poor people and racial and ethnic groups. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal, followed more than 30 years later by John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, brought hope and new financial, educational, health and retirement benefits to low income and elderly Americans. Building upon Veterans Administration’s

education and home ownership programs, public housing, as well as affirmative action legislation, African Americans created a substantial working and middle class. Racism and xenophobia persist today, especially towards poor urban blacks and new or longtime immigrant families - primarily Latino, Asian and Middle Eastern. Still, there have been stunning shifts in American race and gender consciousness. The campaigns of Hillary Clinton and Barak Obama as candidates for the 2008 presidential election say it all.

If one were to make a balance sheet comparing the social gains and the setbacks, the sacrifices and the milestones, one would face several glaring and disturbing realities. The first is that there remains a persistent problem of poverty in America, and women and children are among the poorest of all groups. Additionally, the majority of them are young mothers and children from urban African-American and Latino communities or low-income white rural areas. Unfortunately, the characteristic American responses of either blaming the victims or trying to fix the problem by treating the symptoms, continues in the face of generations of hardship and scarcity.

These ongoing problems have their roots in the legacy of slavery and the massive urban migrations from the South to the North that rearranged America's demographics; they also stem from the more recent flight of the white middle-class from the cities to the suburbs - followed by that of the black middle class. Despite massive community and government efforts, many poor African Americans still live in isolated and racially segregated urban ghettos with inadequate education and health care, limited transportation, job opportunities, and routine violence.

A Rise in Teenage Sexuality, Early Pregnancy, and Motherhood

The second disturbing issue - which particularly affects young people, both female and male - is the overall rise in teenage sexual activity. New studies indicate that the percentage of teenagers between the ages of 14 and 17 years old who have had sexual intercourse may be as high as 50%. The percentage rise for girls over the last three decades is particularly dramatic. There are many reasons for these changes, including a popular culture and media increasingly obsessed with sexuality and the fact that girls reach puberty much earlier than they did a half-century ago. Today, while the age of first marriage has steadily risen, the age of first intercourse has fallen. In addition, one in five adolescent girls in grades 8 to 11 is subjected to sexual harassment, while 74% of girls under age 14 who have had sex are victims of rape or incest. Either through choice, persuasion or force, more and more girls are having sex, some as early as age ten or eleven.

While the 1990s saw a peak - and then a hopeful decline - in the United States rate of teen pregnancies and associated costs to teens and society, there remains an intensely racialized view of teen sexuality, pregnancy and early childrearing. The prevailing view is that African American and Latino unwed teenage mothers, and more recently, young 'gangsta' males are the problem. The reality is that a very high number of all teenage girls are having sex. Percentage wise, poor white girls have as many teenage pregnancies as poor African-American girls. Regardless of ethnicity, it is the economically disadvantaged who are becoming unwed teen mothers. In other words, having sex does not sort out by class - having babies does.

For poor girls who are nearing adulthood, having a child - even without a husband - is often the most appealing option available. According to researchers, these girls view motherhood as one of the few palatable options they have. They are, as Kristin Luker, author of Dubious Conceptions points out, "making reasoned choices - attempting to maximize options in a society that offers uneducated or economically disadvantaged women limited alternatives." Recent studies show that more upwardly mobile African-American women attain college and post college degrees, than do black men. Like their poorer counterparts, some of these young women, are choosing to raise children on their own. They don't see many men in their communities as potential marriage partners. This makes sense when you consider that unemployment rates for African American men are twice that of all other men. To add to that, roughly 30% of black males between the ages of 18 and 34 (mostly poor and urban) are under the active supervision of the criminal justice system.

At the same time, more affluent girls of all racial and ethnic backgrounds, despite their greater resources, face very difficult choices as well. Like all girls, they are inundated with messages from advertising and the popular culture "to be sexy". And, while they commonly have access to birth control and abortion, many experience great conflict over whether or not to have sex, use contraception, and, if they do become pregnant, what to do. Although their economic stability may influence their decisions to postpone childbirth, girls of greater means are faced with a different set of problems than their poorer counterparts. These include a high rate of eating disorders, alcohol and drug problems, sexual abuse and other identity disturbances.

Re-thinking Revolutions

The sexual, gender, and work revolutions of the past fifty years have had a particularly potent impact on teenage girls. Advances in reproductive technology, changing definitions of what it means to be female, as well as changes in the workforce, represent an exhilarating but confusing challenge. On the one hand, a teenage girl expects a first-rate education and hopes to function as an equal to achieve her own place and responsibilities in the world. At the same time, girls see and hear much about "women achievers"; some of what they perceive is decidedly mixed. For example, many see the double burden of working women, who shoulder most family obligations – children and their elderly parents - as well as their jobs. And they see much evidence that if things go badly in the marriage, they will likely end up bearing the brunt of long-term financial and custodial care of their dependants - alone.

A recent report by Girls, Inc., [The Supergirl's Dilemma](#), says that most young girls enter adolescence, at ages 12 or 13 years old, with a high degree of self-assurance and optimism about their futures. But by age 16 or 17, whether they are straight-A students, first-rate athletes or viable candidates for movie or modeling careers, most report a significant drop in confidence and an increase in feelings of powerlessness. Over twenty-five years ago, Carol Gilligan published a groundbreaking book, [In a Different Voice](#). She argued that for centuries girls approaching womanhood lost agency - were taught to lower their voices, to suppress what was on their minds, and to abandon cherished ambitions. She also wrote that the psychology of women and their moral reasoning (oriented towards maintaining relationships and an ethics of caring) were entirely misunderstood. Gilligan advocated that young girls be continuously encouraged to directly express their voices and views in family and peer relationships, educational environments, and even in academic and scientific research methodology. Her work and advice was widely embraced and implemented in these arenas.

Paradoxically, as the world careens towards the second decade of the twenty-first century, there is much to be desired in the lives of young women. Today's teenage girls are still being shaped by difficult to eradicate gender-bias in language, academic training and career tracking. To most girls, it is evident that a large majority of working women are "ghettoized" in low-paying, pink collar or service industry jobs, making only 74 cents on the dollar, compared to the average man's wage. They can see that many women – whether by choice or necessity – are working so strenuously that their health and lifestyles are threatened by higher death rates from heart attacks, cancers, and strokes.

Moreover, violence against women is a continuing issue. Young women still face the threat of sexual abuse from close relatives or dates, fatalities from drunk driving or drug overdose, growing tendencies towards depression and suicide, and, in impoverished urban neighborhoods, high levels of street crime. While some gains have been made over the last thirty years in public acceptance of non-heterosexual lifestyles, some teenagers who openly explore same-sex relationships face severe stigma and social isolation. The culture doesn't always encourage women to speak their mind directly and honestly or listen to young women as much as it should; and no one can claim that the female gender is fully understood psychologically, morally, or in terms of its varying and diverse desires.

All of these trends prompt even feminists to ask, "Is this what the sexual and gender revolutions are about?" As Project Advisor Martha Ward has commented, "We see all girls today struggling with a play and script they didn't write, on a stage of someone else's making."

DID YOU KNOW?

Statistics About the Issues Raised by The Film

Teen Sexuality

- ❖ Nearly half of all high school students say they have had sexual intercourse. Of teenage girls, one in three has engaged in sex by age 16; boys are slightly more likely than girls to have sex by the age of 14.
- ❖ One quarter of sexually active girls between the ages of 15-19 had first sexual partners who were 4 or more years older.
- ❖ Many young teens (girls and boys) claim they feel pressured to have sex and do not feel competent to handle these situations effectively or appropriately.
- ❖ New studies suggest that a lack of brain development in teenagers younger than 15 or 16 is linked to an inability to make reasoned sexual choices and register future consequences.
- ❖ Parents often say they talk to their children "a moderate amount about sex." Only about one-third of parents of sexually experienced 14-year-olds believe that their child has had sex.
- ❖ Despite social disapproval of teenage sexuality, most young people begin having sex in their mid-to-late-teens, about 8 years before they marry.

Teen Pregnancy & Motherhood

- ❖ Every year 757,000 teenage girls become pregnant; more than half of them are 17 or younger when they have their first pregnancy.
 - ❖ Approximately a third of the girls who get pregnant have their babies and keep them; another third have abortions; and the remaining third have spontaneous miscarriages. Less than five percent of pregnant girls put their babies up for adoption.
- ❖ During the last decade, both teen pregnancy and birth rates have declined nation-wide, in all states, and among all racial/ethnic groups primarily because of decreased sexual activity and better contraception use.
 - ❖ Despite the continuous declines, the U.S. has double the adolescent pregnancy and birth rates of any other industrialized country.
 - ❖ The poorer the young woman, the more likely she will become a young mother. Teen pregnancy and parenting is also disproportionate among minority youths in poor urban areas as well as in white rural communities.
 - ❖ Less than one third of teens who have babies before the age of 18 finish high school. Children of teen mothers are more likely to become teen parents themselves.
 - ❖ The vast majority (80%) of fathers of children born to teen mothers do not marry the child's mother, and pay an average of less than \$800 in child support annually.
 - ❖ Despite romantic notions of "happily-ever-after," divorce rates in America have increased to more than half of all marriages.

Contraceptive Use

- ❖ Over the last decade, sexually active teens between the ages of 15-19 have increased their use of contraception. The most common methods were condoms (94%) and birth control pills (61%).
- ❖ Nevertheless, nearly one-fifth of sexually active females ages 15-19 and one-tenth of males the same age said they used no method of contraception the last time they had sex.
- ❖ More than half of girls ages 12-17 say it is "embarrassing to go to a store to buy condoms." Many of those agree that it is "unhealthy for girls (possible side-effects) to use birth control pills."

- ❖ One quarter of teens between 15-17 have not had discussions with a parent or guardian about how to say no to sex, or to use birth control, condoms, or to avoid STDs.
- ❖ Teens with high self-esteem are more likely to seek information about contraception, have a positive view about birth control, and use contraception when needed.

Abstinence

- ❖ The most common reason for abstaining from sex for teen girls and boys was a concern about pregnancy. Other reasons include concern about HIV/AIDS, other STDs and feeling “too young”.
- ❖ Thirty-nine percent (39%) of teens say that morals, values, and/or religious beliefs affect decisions about sex more than any other factor.
- ❖ Girls who have high self-esteem are more likely to delay sex. Alternately, girls with low self-esteem or who are depressed may engage in sexual activity as a way of making themselves feel better.
- ❖ Adolescents whose parents openly discuss sex with them are likely to delay onset of sexual relationships, as are teens who expect to go to college.

Abortion

- ❖ The vast majority of teenage pregnancies are unintended; and on the average, a third of those unintended pregnancies (29%) end in abortion. There is significant variation by state in these figures (11% in Kentucky and 53% in New Jersey).
- ❖ The abortion rates of girls 15 - 19 years old hit a peak in the mid-1990s at 40% before dropping to 29% in 2000. Women 20 – 24 years old remain the age group that accounts for the highest proportion of abortions.
- ❖ African-American and Hispanic teens have higher abortion rates than Euro-American teens. These rates are likely correlated to lower income and higher rates of teen pregnancy rather than race or ethnicity.

- ❖ Teens mention several reasons for deciding on abortion: the pregnancy was unintended, they have financial problems and concerns about completing their education, or they feel they are not mature enough for parenthood.
- ❖ Studies have found that young people face a host of barriers to reproductive health care and counseling, including limited access to transportation, lack of confidentiality, and lack of information about available services.

Education & Career Opportunities

- ❖ During most of the 20th century, the majority of women’s lives centered around home and family. Slowly the percentage of women who worked for pay in the labor force increased, growing from 24% in the 1930s, to 34% in the 1950s, to 46% in 2006.
- ❖ Progress has been made in leadership positions. In 2007, there are 16 woman U.S. senators, 70 congresswomen, 9 state governors and 456 city mayors.
- ❖ Nearly half of small businesses are owned by women - employing more than 12.8 million people, and generating \$1.9 trillion in sales.
- ❖ Women are also entering higher paying professions. In 2006, women held half of all management, professional, and related occupations; although, their share of specific occupations varied widely by gender.
- ❖ Despite these gains, gender segregation limits many women to occupations such as nurses, secretaries, and service industry workers. It also hinders their access to higher paying non-traditional jobs, such as firefighters, electricians, and carpenters. Less than 3% of highest paying executive corporate jobs are held by women.
- ❖ Women’s earnings relative to men’s have increased over the past few decades; however, recent reports indicate that women’s median annual earnings were only \$.74 for every \$1.00 earned by men. For women of color, the gap is even worse - only \$.71 for African American women and only \$.58 for Latinas.

- ❖ More women are pursuing higher educations. In 2004, 3 in 10 women in the labor force held a college degree compared to 1 in 10 in 1970. Recent female high school graduates were more likely than their male counterparts to enter college (72% vs. 61%).
- ❖ Mothers with older children are more likely to work than mothers with younger children (under 6 years old). Unmarried mothers are more likely to work than married mothers.
- ❖ Research shows that the more education a woman has, the less likely she is to be unemployed. Median weekly earnings for women with a bachelor's degree are 2.5 times those of women who have not finished high school.

Disparities by Income and Race

- ❖ While poverty rates have improved in the last 50 years, the percentage of people living in extreme poverty has increased. In 2005, 12.6% of the population fell below the poverty line, approximately \$19,000 for a family of four.
- ❖ 1 in 4 of U.S. households are headed by single mothers, and they are by far the poorest demographic group (30% in 2004). Children account for 35% of the poor, yet they comprise only 25% of the U.S. population.
- ❖ In 2005, overall poverty rates were highest in black households (24.9%), followed by families of Hispanic origin (21.8%), Asian households (11.1%), and white families (8.3%). Black and Hispanic women were more likely (33%) than white or Asian women to work in sales, office, or service occupations. Unemployment rates show a similar racial and ethnic disparity.
- ❖ In low-income and minority schools, students are frequently taught by teachers without certification or advanced degrees. Often, educators must work with inadequate textbooks and teaching materials, take on larger classes, and teach with outdated computers and science equipment.

- ❖ In addition to substandard schools, poor families struggle with a lack of health insurance, job opportunities, violence in their communities, and expensive or insufficient transportation.
- ❖ Black and Latino students are half as likely to be placed in gifted and talented or advanced math and science classes as Euro and Asian-American students.
- ❖ White Americans were 27% more likely to own a home in 2004 than black Americans.
- ❖ More affluent girls face challenges related to their income status as well, including low self esteem, higher rates of smoking, and substance abuse. They also experience pressures to be "super-women"- independent and career driven, beautiful, thin, as well as perfect wives and mothers.

Substance Abuse

- ❖ A growing body of evidence indicates that teenage girls are overtaking boys in substance abuse including alcohol, prescription drugs, marijuana, and cigarettes.
- ❖ Young females use alcohol or drugs to improve mood, increase confidence, reduce tension, cope with problems, lose inhibitions, or lose weight.
- ❖ One study found that girls, who were low in self-esteem, were nearly two and a half times more likely to engage in heavy alcohol use than those with higher self-esteem. Teenage girls are especially susceptible to peer pressure when it comes to drinking.
- ❖ Diet pill use among girls has tended to run two-and-a-half times to four times as high as among boys.
- ❖ Among young women who currently smoke, most (92.3%), believe people can get addicted to cigarettes, yet nearly a quarter (23.8%) think it safe to smoke one or two years and then quit.

- ❖ Substance abuse may also be related to higher rates of unintended pregnancy because drug and alcohol use is associated with decreased condom use and increased casual sexual activity during which contraceptives of any kind are less likely to be used.
- ❖ Parental disapproval of substance abuse plays a strong role in reversing drug use. Rates of substance use among youths are lower among those whose parents disapprove of substance use than those whose parents do not disapprove.

Body Image & Eating Disorders

- ❖ One author reports that at age 13 more than half of American girls are “unhappy with their bodies”. This disturbance grows to 78% by the time the girls reach age 17.
- ❖ More than half of teenage girls in the U.S. are trying to lose weight. An estimated one to four percent of young women will go so far in trying to control their body image that they will develop a serious eating disorder in their lifetime.
- ❖ Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa, and Binge-Eating Disorder can be devastating, leading, in some instances, to death. These diseases involve patterns of limiting food intake to the point of starvation, or bingeing and purging, as a way of controlling weight.
- ❖ With treatment, about sixty percent (60%) of people with eating disorders recover. They maintain healthy weight and eat a varied diet; they create families and careers.
- ❖ Teenage girls who view commercials, TV shows, music videos, and magazines that depict women as unrealistically thin idealized beauties are less confident, more angry, and dissatisfied with their weight and appearance compared to girls who don't.
- ❖ African-American girls are far more confident about their weight and body shape than are Caucasian or Asian-American girls; however, they have significant concerns about the darkness or lightness of their skin color and hair texture. Many girls of Asian descent also report dissatisfaction with their skin color.
- ❖ Girls who are involved in sports are less likely to consider themselves overweight; however, girls are significantly less likely than boys to participate in vigorous physical activity and sports teams.

Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Teens

- ❖ Lesbians and gay youths often feel “different” as early as grade school. Studies indicate that these young people first become aware of homosexual attraction around age 10 for females and 9 for males.
- ❖ The average gay person now comes out just before or after graduating from high school. This is much earlier than it was for previous generations. Perhaps this is because 54% of Americans found homosexuality acceptable in 2006 compared to only 34% in 1982.
- ❖ Gay, lesbian, and bisexual teens represent a disproportionate share of the homeless youth in the U.S because of negative parental response to their homosexuality. They are often the victims of bullying and teasing by their peers. Gay teen suicide attempts are four times greater than that of heterosexual youth.
- ❖ In later life, equally qualified lesbians will earn 14% less than their straight female counterparts due to bias.
- ❖ Homosexual teens are growing up in more positive environments. 1 in 10 high schools has a Gay-Straight Alliance (school club that is gay-friendly). National support groups can also be found on various internet sites. Studies show that exposure to positive portrayals of homosexual characters in the media is reducing levels of prejudice among viewers.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions are designed for a range of different audiences.
Allow at least 5 minutes to discuss each question that you select.

Initial Reactions

- ❖ What was the most memorable part of the film for you? What part touched you the most? Was there one girl or boy you identified with more than the others? Were there parts that you found frustrating? What questions were you left with?
- ❖ What overall message did you get from this documentary? What new things did you learn about teenage girls and sexuality, early pregnancy and motherhood, marriage, education and careers? Did you learn anything new about teenage boys?
- ❖ The theme of “desire” is often connected to “choice” in the film. Where do you see these two concepts connected to each other? How do the girls, their parents, their partners, and their teachers portray choice?
- ❖ What do you think the filmmaker most wanted to convey? Why do you think Kimeca and Cassandra disagree with the filmmaker’s analysis of their opportunities and decisions? What do you think Tracy, Peggy, and Tiffanie thought about these issues?
- ❖ This film also explores the lives of several young men: Delvin, Lee, and Jason. Discuss their impact on the girls in the film. In what ways were the desires and choices of these boys shaped or limited by their circumstances?

Teen Sex & Pregnancy

- ❖ What are some of the differences in the ways young men and women view sex? Do you think these differences are connected to physical or psychological developmental differences? To social and economic circumstances? To gender roles and expectations?
- ❖ At the beginning of the film, Cassandra says she will never get pregnant as a teenager; and Peggy says the same thing. Why do you think Cassandra gets pregnant and chooses to

keep her child? Why do you think Peggy avoids pregnancy and early motherhood? Discuss the role sex education, family values and/or socio-economic backgrounds may have played in their decisions and experiences?

- ❖ Tiffanie and Lee’s unexpected pregnancy leads to a short-lived marriage. Do you think their decision to get married was a good idea? As a teenager, have you thought about what you would do if you or your partner got pregnant? As an adult, what would the young women of your generation do if they got pregnant outside of marriage?
- ❖ Recall Peggy’s visit to the abortion clinic. What were some of the reasons the women at the clinic gave for choosing to terminate their pregnancies? Were any of these issues similar to those faced by the teenage video makers, such as education or career aspirations? What accounts for women’s choices to either continue or terminate unplanned pregnancies?
- ❖ How does your peer culture, family or community view premarital sex and teen pregnancy? Why are teen sex, pregnancy and early motherhood more acceptable in some American communities and foreign cultures? Do you think these values and norms change over time?
- ❖ To what extent do you think teens should receive education about sex, birth control or abstinence? Beginning at what age? Who should provide this education? Peers? Schools? Parents? Physicians? Faith-based organizations?

Teen Parenthood & Relationships

- ❖ Cassandra, Kimeca, and Tiffanie have great difficulty continuing their educations, enjoying their teenage years and achieving their dreams. Is this a realistic portrayal of teenage motherhood? What school or government programs might have made their lives easier?

- ❖ Delvin and Lee play limited roles in the upbringing of their children. What role should teen fathers play in their offspring's lives? In the lives of teen mothers? What circumstances contribute to the presence or absence of teen fathers in their children's lives?
- ❖ Tiffanie's marriage ends in divorce, and eventually, she finds a new partner. Cassandra and Kimeca never marry their children's fathers (though Cassandra marries several years later). Tracy's parents divorce after the film is completed. Discuss current patterns of marriage and divorce and how they influence the girls in the film.
- ❖ Like Cassandra, her mother was an unwed teenage mother; and Tracy's mother married and had children before she was twenty years-old. How much do you think their mothers' choices influenced them?

Education & Careers

- ❖ Think about the scene where all the girls meet for the first time. How were their educational and career opportunities similar or different? What do you think the filmmaker most wanted to convey about these differences? Why do Cassandra and Kimeca disagree with the filmmaker's analysis of their opportunities and obstacles?
- ❖ In many cases, teen mothers transfer their own aspirations for education and careers to their children, creating a cyclical pattern across multiple generations. Why do you think this occurs? What prevents teenage mothers from moving beyond their parents' educational attainments to achieving their own goals?
- ❖ Tracy comes from an upper-middle class, white background, with a strong educational foundation. How do her own aspirations conflict with the academic expectations of her parents and community? How did the gender roles her parents chose for themselves affect Tracy's future family and career goals? Why does she insist she will never be a single mother?

- ❖ Data shows that women are entering leadership and higher paying positions; however, their occupations and salaries are frequently limited by gender segregation, and they are often paid lower wages than men for the same job. The impact of these factors is even greater for African-American & Latino women. Is this fair? What do you think should be done about these inequities?

- ❖ How do the girls in the film respond to statistics about the relationship between teen pregnancy, early motherhood, and class (socio-economic) factors such as income or where they grew up? Discuss whether or not statistics are accurate and useful tools in considering these issues.

Body Image, Substance Abuse, & Sexual Orientations

- ❖ At 16, Tracy's friends frequent bars, drink alcohol, and smoke cigarettes. Do you think this is a normal teenage rite of passage or a social problem? Later in the film, she struggles with quitting smoking. Why does she have so much trouble? Beyond physical addiction, what emotional issues are tied to smoking for her?
- ❖ Peggy and her friend Susannah seem most affected by ideals of body image. How does their affluence and race or ethnicity affect their self-perceptions? Discuss the role of popular culture (e.g. fashion, Hollywood, MTV) in shaping women's body image. Do you think this leads directly to eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia? How does body image relate to gender expectations?
- ❖ Studies show that African-American young women are far more confident about their weight and body shapes than girls of other ethnicities; however, they frequently feel conflicted about the color of their skin. Why are weight and body shape less important than color issues to these girls? Discuss multiple ways that body image issues vary by class, race or ethnicity.

- ❖ Why did Tiffanie feel it was important for her to reveal that she is bisexual? In what ways did her experiences as a young wife and mother conflict with her changing sexual identity? Do you think her sexuality was a product of family upbringing, media influences, peer relationships and genetic make-up; or a personal “lifestyle” choice?

Disparities by Income and Race

- ❖ The participants in *DESIRE* come from a variety of socio-economic, racial and ethnic backgrounds. Which of these factors is most effectively explored in the film? How are poverty and race linked in the film? Why do you think the filmmaker focused on this aspect?
- ❖ Do you think that the poverty that Cassandra, Kimeca and Tiffanie faced was a result of family and personal inadequacies or of social inequities and prejudices of others? How did these factors influence their aspirations and abilities to achieve their goals? Discuss the impact of class, race or ethnicity in the lives of Tracy and Peggy.
- ❖ Peggy seems to have very different views on contraception, pregnancy, teen motherhood and abortion than Kimeca does. Do you think judgments about these issues are entirely individual or are related to class or cultural values? How so?
- ❖ At the beginning of the film, 15 year old Cassandra is hopeful that her relationship with Delvin will work out. A few years later she insists she doesn't need a man in her life, especially to support her or her child. What long term impact do you think this will have on Cassandra's daughter Dajonna and on Delvin as the father?
- ❖ In general, African American women seem to be more confident in raising children as single mothers and less optimistic about finding suitable life partners. What historical and socio-economic factors account for this?
- ❖ Tracy and Peggy discuss the barrage of family, peer and media pressures they feel to be beautiful, thin, accomplished in the work

world, and nurturing at home. How harmful do you think these pressures are? Whose responsibility is it to battle these forces? The girls? Their parents or teachers? Governmental agencies?

- ❖ What obligations do we have as a society to improve education and to provide financial support or health care to teen mothers living in poor communities? Do we have the same responsibility to provide educational subsidies, substance abuse or health resources for children from more affluent backgrounds?

Video Collaboration & Empowerment

- ❖ How can media, such as film, empower individuals, educate communities, and effect social change? According to the girls, how did making this film influence their lives?
- ❖ What issues are raised by the race, class, and generational status of the filmmaker in relation to her working with teenagers from various communities?
- ❖ How did the backgrounds of the teenagers in the documentary influence the videos they made about themselves and their outcomes by the end of the film?
- ❖ How does the filmmaker's involvement in the film influence the girls' perspectives or willingness to open up? Does it add to the content? Did you want to know more about the director? Would you have preferred she stayed out of the film? Why or why not?
- ❖ What are some other documentaries or fiction films where the directors appear on-screen in their work? What are some examples where you never see or hear the director? What impact do you think these choices have on the power or “truthfulness” of the film?
- ❖ What obligation do documentary makers have to protect the people they film or to share credit and/or financial rewards with them? In this project, the teenage video-makers were artistic collaborators as well as filmed participants. Why do many news organizations object to paid journalism, (e.g. providing fees to their sources)?

CLASSROOM/COMMUNITY GROUP ACTIVITIES FOR TEENS

❖ **Diary Assignment** (Completed by the teenage videomakers during the making of *DESIRE*)

Ask students if they keep diaries. Briefly, describe the art and history of diary making. Invite the class/group to do the exercise below using a home video camera, audio recorder or written journal. Tell them they may keep all or part of it private if they choose.

"Who am I?" Tell students to look in a mirror and describe what they see. Ask them to read aloud and answer the following: Do I like what I see? Why or why not? What do I hope to see in a few years? Does being a girl or a boy make a difference in who I am becoming? Does my skin color or the language my family speaks affect my growing up? Would I be different if I lived in a fancier neighborhood or my family had more money? What pivotal experiences have shaped who I am?

When students have completed their diaries, provide an opportunity for those who feel comfortable, to share excerpts with their peers and discuss what they learned. Consider compiling the students' work in a scrapbook or documentary for the school community. (See *The New Diary: How to Use a Journal for Self-Guidance and Expanded Creativity* by Tristine Rainer)

❖ **Media and Me?**

Re-screen and discuss Peggy's video, *Secrets* in Year Four of the documentary (Approx. 5:30 mins into the film; Sequence length 4:30 mins). Have students explore and collect messages on sexuality, body image and sexual orientation in popular media, such as print advertisements, television, and music. They can also include self studies or interviews with family or friends.

After the research is complete, have them create a visual and/or audio collage from their collected images and interviews. Then, ask students to write and present a position paper on whether the media has a positive or negative influence on people's views of their sexuality, bodies, and self-esteem. If so, what should be done about it?

❖ **Making Healthy Choices about Sex, Parenting and The Future**

Ask students if they would like to have a frank and non-judgmental classroom discussion about "the birds and the bees". Replay Year One of the documentary (Approx. 3:30 mins into the film; Sequence length 27:30 mins). Discuss what Cassandra, Delvin, Peggy and the other teens in the film say about their developing sexualities, values and decision making. Ask students whether they believe teenagers ought to have sex or abstain. If young people do have sex, should they use contraception and/or protection against STDs? What would they do if they or a girlfriend became pregnant? What do they think it would be like to become a parent at an early age?

Draw out how they have learned about these issues - from "kid to kid" talk and behavior, family and religious figures, school or health information, and/or the media. In addition, have the students consider the possible reasons young women and men from different economic, racial or ethnic backgrounds are more or less likely to postpone sexuality and parenthood until they are older. (For additional information and discussion strategies see "Discussion Questions", the "Did You Know" section or the diverse health and sexuality resources in the "Book," "Film," & "Website Recommendations.")

FOR COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES AND GENERAL ADULT AUDIENCES

❖ **Desire and Choice: Is Education the Bottom Line?**

Re-play the scene in Year Three of *DESIRE* in which all of the girls in the film discuss their obstacles and educational choices, as well as the sequences in which Cassandra's and Kimeca's school experiences are contrasted with those of Tracy. (Approx. 46:30 mins into the film; Sequence length 12 mins). Have the students discuss why Cassandra and Kimeca object to the filmmaker's description of their lives as "disadvantaged." Why do they maintain throughout the film that they have all the choices in the world, and can become anything they want? In contrast, why does Tracy, who seems to have so many educational and material opportunities, describe her choices as limited? Why do you think that Tiffanie was the only teenage mother to make it through high school and college?

Ask the students to research and write a paper exploring the impact of inadequate educational options and lack of role models on poor teenagers' motivation and ability to complete high school and find steady, "above-the-poverty-line" work. Have them assess the advantages and challenges facing those students who do have access to quality educations. Advantages might include significantly higher lifetime earnings, meaningful work, better housing, health and longevity. Challenges could be the need to repay huge college loans, hectic work schedules, less time with families, dislocation to other parts of the country, higher divorce rates, and chronic stress. Finally, ask students to weigh in on the question of whether a person's achievements and shortcomings are due to his/her own efforts and determination, to invisible and extraneous forces, or both. (See Discussion Guide sections "Did you Know?", Background to the Issues Raised by *DESIRE*" and the "Book, Film, and Website Recommendations.")

❖ **Women in History**

"Ordinary" women have only been written about as important subjects of history within the last 50 years. Have the students read a biography or social history of a woman and write a paper discussing how her socio-economic background, her race/ethnicity and ideas of the times about gender roles affected her in categories such as romance, marriage, motherhood, careers, education and "voice". Have them devote one page to comparing the woman they studied to themselves or to a significant woman in their own lives. Below are possible book selections:

- +Founding Mothers: The Women Who Raised Our Nation by Cokie Roberts
- +Triangle: The Fire that Changed America by David Von Drehle
- +Sojourner Truth, A Life, A Symbol by Nell Irvin Painter
- +Yearnings: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics by Bell Hooks

(This assignment could also be applied to other neglected groups in history.)

❖ **Affirmative Action: Yeah! or Nay?**

Ask students to research historical and recent legal precedents for this contested American equalizing strategy. Using their results, have the students form groups, choose sides and design a case based on issues framed by a modern Supreme Court decision. Assign a mock trial, hearing or debate, so that students may argue their points. Afterwards, ask them to write up their trial or debate notes and analyze the interplay of gender, class and race in case law and in the lives of real people. Possible case studies for this assignment include the 1984 Grove City vs. Bell decision restricting Title IX & equality for girls in sports, or the recent June 2007 Supreme Court decision restricting voluntary school busing as a means of addressing school segregation caused by population patterns. For guidelines and instructions on performing a mock trial/debate visit: <http://library.thinkquest.org/J0113061/mock.htm> or <http://www.psyking.net/id171.htm>.

TAKING ACTION

The issues raised by the film are so complex - the problems are so large.
It's hard to imagine what to do at first. So, start small and your influence will grow.
Pick one or two small activities that you can do as a start, or join organizations
that already work in your community. Get your friends involved.
Use the Internet, it's making our world smaller.
Act local, think global!

For Students and Teachers

Students: Is there a friend in your own life in trouble? Kids your own age are facing difficult decisions everyday. Listen and help them seek out information and adult mentors. Be an example for your peers.

Teachers: Think hard! Are there teens you know who need advice? There are girls all around you who are facing difficult questions about education, careers, and daily life. Listen, spend time, and discuss openly their issues and options. Help seek out information and resources appropriate to your teen. Seek to improve guidance counseling. Stay in touch and be reliable.

Use *DESIRE!* Contact orders@wmm.com for the Home Video version and show it to friends and colleagues through living rooms or other small, no-charge screenings. Let the film be a tool for opening up discussion and awareness in your community. Women Make Movies offers small non-profits low-cost rates for larger public or benefit screenings (See "Ordering Information").

If your friends or groups have limited funding sources, you may also contact DesireDocumentary@gmail.com. We have discount options for eligible users. Show other films about teenage girls and women (See "Film Recommendations").

Connect with local adult groups that volunteer or work with teens: You may find these organizations through your church, local chapters of Girls Inc, NOW, YWCA, Big Brother, or Big Sister. Find out what programs they have that you or your family members and friends can join. Join a Work Day or chaperone an outing. Make a small donation to a cause you care about.

Ask your school or university to host women speakers and films. Visit history and social studies teachers; ask them to consider teaching more about gender, class and race.

Visit an organization, neighborhood or school that you have never been to. Widen your circle of acquaintances and friends. Fundraise for girls' causes, or attend sports events and other activities for girls.

Do research, and collect images and oral histories to create a video, book, or poetry project in school. Make a documentary or produce a play. Set up an information table at a dance, club, or sports event that promotes girl power and teaches teens about body image, self-esteem, etc. Design bracelets, pins, and T-shirts that show that teens care. Affirm and empower young women (and men) around you!

Use the Internet: Create a website or join a blog that relates to teen issues. Use our "Discussion Questions" section as a starting point for conversations and debates.

For Community Groups & Parents

For busy organizations and parents, find simple ways to incorporate these issues into your family lives and existing work and organizations.

Talk to your teens and pre-teens about sex, pregnancy, and other life choices. Listen to what they have to say, and advise them. There are many resources available on-line and in print for advice on opening such a dialogue.

Organize a small, age diverse, group discussion (one-time meeting or on-going) about how home life, parental support, and economic circumstances impact classroom performance. Explore creative ways for single mothers to continue their education and be supported by the peers and families.

Contact the school board members and principals of your middle and/or high schools. Open a dialogue about the scope and perspective of the school's health and sex education curriculum, guidance and psychological counseling programs. Discuss how career aspirations in your school community are proscribed by teachers and administrators for students of different economic classes and racial backgrounds.

Collaborate with the PTA. Join a Work Day or chaperone an outing. Arrange visits to workplaces of successful women, job fairs, and school forums. Stay in touch with other people who care about teens. Make an email list of concerned parents, and forward interesting articles and links. Sponsor living room conversations or phone trees with your friends and neighbors. Create a short list of what each participant can do. (Copy this Section of Study guide and email it to your contact list.)

Arrange conversations on topics raised by the film with your church, teen organizations, women's organizations, or other professional clubs. Ask for speakers or teen symposiums. Also ask local schools, medical facilities, or religious organizations to participate or advise. Set up support services and meetings for teen parents; ranging from baby-sitting services to career counseling and parenting discussions. Widen your circle of acquaintance and friendship.

Organize film screenings of *DESIRE* and other related films (See "*Film Recommendations*"). Contact www.WMM.com or www.DesireDocumentary.com to arrange low-cost use of the film for eligible users. Organize follow-up discussions and/or arrange additional screenings (See *previous page and "Ordering Information"*).

Use the Internet (See "*Website Recommendations*") to explore national organizations. Learn about their research and fact sheets. Discover their legislative initiatives, conference events, and other links. Choose one to join, go to a conference, and find or start a local chapter. Spread the news!



BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

Worth, Sol, and John Adair. Through Navajo Eyes: an Exploration in Film Communication and Anthropology. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1975.

Originally published in 1972, this groundbreaking book has become a classic in visual anthropology. Authors Worth and Adair set out to teach six Navajo students from Pinetree, Arizona how to make films, and to find out if this would impact a cultural group which had never made or used motion pictures. Through Navajo Eyes explains the process, the clear differences in the Navajo view of reality documented in the films, and how the anthropologists and new filmmakers analyzed the films and cultural implications. Seven of the short documentary films are rare, but available.

Gilligan, Carol. In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982 & 1993 (with a new introduction).

This is the little book that started a revolution. First published over twenty years ago, it advocated that philosophers, social scientists, and practitioners listen to women's voices in their own right and with their own views of the world. In a Different Voice inspired new research, educational initiatives and political debate that helped many women and men to see themselves and each other in a different light. Among Gilligan's contributions was her theory that most women see moral problems in light of human relationships and an ethic of caring – an attribute too often dismissed as weak. She also presented powerful evidence that young women's voices shift from confidence to self doubt as they approach adulthood – primarily because they must enter a world “psychologically rooted and historically anchored in the experiences of powerful men.”

Pipher, Mary. Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls. New York: Ballantine Books, 1994.

According to Dr. Mary Pipher, a clinical psychologist who has treated girls for more than twenty years, we live in a looks-obsessed, media-saturated, “girl-poisoning” culture. Despite the advances of feminism, escalating levels of sexism and violence - from undervalued intelligence to sexual harassment in elementary schools - cause girls to stifle their creative spirit and natural impulse, which, ultimately, destroys their self-esteem. Unfortunately, girls often blame themselves or their families for this “problem with no name” instead of looking at the world around them. In this must-read book, Pipher delivers painfully honest, unmuted voices of girls from the front lines of adolescence.

Brumberg, Joan J. The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls. New York: Vintage Books, 1998.

The Body Project provides a lively and engaging story of how growing up as a girl has changed over the past one hundred years, and why the pressures on girls are now so intense. A fascinating photo essay comprised of photographs, advertisements and postcards shows how adolescent girls and their bodies have changed since the nineteenth century. From corsets to body piercing, The Body Project demonstrates how the preoccupation with the body has intensified and why girls and their bodies have borne the brunt of social change in the twentieth century. Brumberg's classic is a "must" read, because she puts so many contemporary adolescent issues in historical perspective.

Kaplan, Elaine B. Not Our Kind of Girl: Unraveling the Myths of Black Teenage Motherhood. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Elaine Bell Kaplan's affecting and insightful book dispels common perceptions of young African American mothers. Her interviews with teenagers provide a vivid picture of lives caught in the intersection of race, class, and gender. Kaplan challenges the stereotype that the African-American community condones teen pregnancy, single parenting, and reliance on welfare. Especially telling are the feelings of frustration, anger, and disappointment expressed by mothers and grandmothers of the girls' she studied. Kaplan's own experience as an African-American teenage mother adds a personal

dimension to this book. She offers substantial proposals for rethinking and responding to the class factors, gender relations, and racism that influence black teenagers to become mothers.

Ponton, Lynn. The Sex Lives of Teenagers: Revealing the Secret World of Adolescent Boys and Girls. New York: Dutton, 2000.

One chapter in this book contains "food for thought" that enlightens both adolescents who are dealing with their emerging sexual feelings and parents who are trying to handle their own feelings about what is happening in the lives of their child. Dr. Ponton's skills as a psychoanalyst and a facilitator of dialogue between her teenaged patients and their parents provide valuable insights for the participants and the reader.

Kenny, Lorraine D. Daughters of Suburbia: Growing Up White, Middle Class and Female. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000.

Part ethnography, part cultural study, Daughters of Suburbia focuses on the lives of white, privileged teenage girls from the author's former middle school in Long Island, New York. This book examines how standards of normalcy define gender, exercise power, and reinforce the cultural practices and 'invisibility' of those who hold white, middle-class status. Kenny highlights both the experiences of the average student and those of three notoriously "bad" white and middle-class teenage girls: Amy Fisher, the teenager who tried to kill the wife of her middle-aged lover, Cheryl Pierson, who hired a classmate to murder her father, and Emily Heinrichs, a teenaged mother and former white supremacist.

Tolman, Deborah L. Dilemmas of Desire: Teenage Girls Talk about Sexuality. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Sometimes disturbing, often inspiring, Tolman offers a picture of how society mediates, shapes, and distorts female adolescent sexuality. In extensive interviews, we listen as girls, both urban and suburban, both heterosexual and homosexual, speak candidly of their curiosity and confusion, their pleasure and disappointment. Most striking are their statements of fear, defiance, or capitulation in the face of a seemingly imperishable double standard that smiles upon burgeoning sexuality in boys yet frowns, even panics, at its equivalent in girls.

Hilfiker, David. Urban Injustice: How the Ghettos Happen. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002.

In this book, the author shares what he has learned about the history of the inner city and the social structures that keep people impoverished. Hilfiker offers clear thinking and finds there are plenty of ways we as a society can do better. In Urban Injustice: How the Ghettos Happen, he presents a surprising history of the inner city, an analysis of the social forces that made it inevitable, and a description of poverty programs since the New Deal that contrary to popular opinion were quite successful in attaining their stated goals - modest ones for the poor, more ambitious ones for the middle class and wealthy.

Huegel, Kelly. GLBTQ: The Survival Guide for Queer & Questioning Teens. Minneapolis: Free Spirit, 2003.

A great choice for teens who are gay or exploring their sexual identities, or even those who would like to know more about what it's like to be "queer". Using hip language and style, the book covers the basics, as well as, the primary issues and questions such as coming out, dating and sexuality, family and religion, and life at school and work. Each chapter contains sidebar quotes from gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning teens, as well as, descriptions of resources such as books, organizations, and Web sites.

Gray, Heather M., and Samantha Phillips. Real Girl, Real World: A Guide to Finding Your True Self. Emeryville: Seal Press, 2005.

Teen girls are continuously bombarded by mixed messages from society about who they should be, what they should look like, and how they should deal with everyday pressure and choices. In this essential guide, real girls share their experiences, showing that there's no one "right" way to navigate the road of adolescence. The authors explore a wide range of topics central to young women's lives, including beauty and the media; body image and self-esteem; eating disorders and good nutrition; sexuality; as well as, feminism and today's new activists.

Ward, Martha C., and Monica Edelstein. A World Full of Women. 4th ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2005.

Cultural anthropologists Martha Ward and Monica Edelstein have delivered an essential ethnographic resource with two goals: to explore and validate woman-centered experiences, and to illuminate the common grounds of being female in today's world. A World Full of Women highlights the lives of women across the globe, exploring some secret parts of their lives, while also zeroing in on strategies, negotiations, and maneuvering rather than unvarying static social structures. This book is both well written and rich with teaching resources, including, case studies ranging from micro-banks and successful small businesses in India, gang rape at the University of Pennsylvania, to the one child policy in China.

Ehrlich, Shoshanna. Who Decides? The Abortion Rights of Teens. Westport: Praeger, 2006.

The question of whether a young woman should be allowed to terminate a pregnancy without her parents' knowledge has been one of the most contentious issues of the post Roe vs. Wade era. Integrating a wealth of social science literature, including in-depth interviews with twenty-six young women, this is the first book to thoroughly examine recent parental involvement laws and the decision-making experiences of teens considering abortion. The author evaluates the Supreme Court's efforts to reconcile the historically based understanding of teens as dependent persons in need of protection with a more contemporary understanding of them as autonomous individuals with adult-like claims to constitutional recognition.

*The book summaries above were compiled from
the books' publishers' descriptions and independent reviewers.*



FILM RECOMMENDATIONS

Dear Lisa: A Letter to My Sister. Dir. J Clements. Videocassette. New Day Films, 1990.

"Remember how our parents told us we could do or be anything we wanted? Well that was fine, but what if I wanted to be Tonto or Sky King?" In *Dear Lisa: A Letter to My Sister*, the filmmaker questions her sister, herself and others about the dreams and hopes they had growing up as girls in contrast to the reality they face as women. The film's topics include play, sports, careers, motherhood, body image, sexual assault and self-esteem.

http://www.newday.com/films/Dear_Lisa.html

Casting the First Stone. Dir. Julie Gustafson. Videocassette. First Run Icarus Films, 1991.

Casting the First Stone focuses on six women who confront each other from opposite sides of a police barricade. Three believe that abortion is an inalienable right; three consider it murder. Shelley Miller, director of the Women's Suburban Clinic in Paoli, Pennsylvania, endures constant harassment from anti-abortion groups camped outside her doors. Joan Scalia, a Catholic mother of six, defies her husband to join Operation Rescue's efforts. Sharon Owens is a clinic counselor and adoptive mother of three, whose values are closer to the middle. She cannot decide when human life begins, but feels required - as a Christian - to serve others who must. The filmmaker also chronicles anti-abortion blockades, counseling sessions, the struggles of a young mother who decided against abortion, emergency Planned Parenthood meetings, as well as press conferences after the Supreme Court's historic Webster v. Missouri decision.

http://www.frif.com/cat97/a-e/casting_.html

Gay Youth. Dir. Pam Walton. DVD. New Day Films, 1992.

Gay Youth was nominated for the Young Adult Library Association's 2006 Selected DVD/Video List and continues to be one of the most widely used educational tools about gay and lesbian young people. *Gay Youth* is a powerful and accessible educational video that breaks the silence surrounding adolescent homosexuality. By contrasting the tragic death of 20-year old Bobby Griffith, a gay teen who could not find acceptance, with the remarkable life of 17-year old Gina Gutierrez, this important video shows us that information, acceptance, and support make enormous differences in the lives of these young people. Across the nation, educators and youth-oriented organizations are using this award-winning video and its 16-page study guide.

http://www.newday.com/films/Gay_Youth.html

Beyond Black and White. Dir. Nisma Zaman. Videocassette. Women Make Movies, 1994.

Beyond Black and White is a personal exploration of the filmmaker's bicultural heritage (Caucasian and Asian/Bengali) which explores her experiences with five other women from various biracial backgrounds. In lively interviews and group discussions these women reveal how they have been influenced by images of women in American media, how racism has affected them, and how their families and environments have shaped their racial identities. Their experiences are placed within the context of history, including miscegenation laws and governmental racial classifications. *Beyond Black and White* is a remarkable celebration of diversity in American society.

<http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c106.shtml>

It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School. Dir. Debra Chasnoff and Helen S. Cohen. DVD. New Day Films, 1996.

It's Elementary takes cameras into classrooms across the U.S. to look at one of today's most controversial topics: whether or not gay issues should be discussed in schools. It portrays schools where (mainly heterosexual) teachers are challenging the censoring of dialogue in schools about gay individuals. Starting at the first grade level, the film portrays the views of the students themselves. [The LA Reader](#) says the film is, "funny, touching, and fascinating." [The San Francisco Examiner](#) says *It's Elementary* "could become one of the most important films ever devoted to lesbian and gay issues."

http://www.newday.com/films/Its_Elementary.html

Love & Diane. Dir. Jennifer Dworkin. DVD. Women Make Movies, 2002.

The groundbreaking documentary *Love & Diane* presents an honest and moving examination of poverty, welfare and drug rehabilitation in the United States today. Filmed in New York City over a five-year period, Dworkin documents the story of a mother and daughter searching for love, redemption, and hope for a new future. While caught in a devastating cycle of teen pregnancy and the bureaucracy of an overburdened welfare system, the Hazzard family demonstrates an inspiring resiliency and ability to find strength during the most desperate times. *Love & Diane* casts a non-judgmental eye on those struggling with welfare and drug addiction, presenting a hidden, but very real, side of the American experience.

<http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c603.shtml>

Ferry Tales. Dir. Katja Esson. DVD. Women Make Movies, 2003.

Academy Award Nominee for Best Documentary Short, *Ferry Tales* exposes a secret world that exists in the powder room of the Staten Island Ferry. During the daily 30 minute ride, working women (whether suburban moms, urban dwellers, white and blue-collar workers, sisters, or socialites) gather around mirrors to put on their makeup. They talk, not as wives, mothers, or professionals, but just as themselves. Dishing on everything from sex scandals to stilettos, family problems to September 11th, they surprise us with a rare and honest look at the intersection of race and class.

<http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c647.shtml>

Born Into Brothels. Dir. Zana Briski & Ross Kaufman. DVD. Think Film, 2005.

Born into Brothels, an Academy Award winning documentary, chronicles a young filmmaker's experiment in training children of local prostitutes to photograph their own world. The photographs taken by the children are not merely examples of remarkable observation and talent. They are both morally encouraging and politically volatile. For several of these children, art becomes an immensely liberating and empowering force.

<http://www.bornintobrothels.com>

Far From Home. Dir. Rachel Tsutsumi. DVD. Women Make Movies, 2005.

Far From Home spotlights Kandice, a delightful and precocious African-American teenager participating in a voluntary Boston school integration program. Kandice's grandfather, a civil rights activist murdered in 1968, helped found the busing program and her mother was among the first black students bused to the suburbs in the late 1960s. Living up to her family's activist traditions, Kandice serves as the first black class president, plays the college admissions game, and defies continuing racial stereotypes.

<http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c683.shtml>

Breakin' In: The Making of a Hip Hop Dancer. Dir. Elizabeth St. Phillip. DVD. Third World Newsreel, 2005.

This edgy documentary goes behind the scenes of the Hip Hop world as it follows Linda, Michelle, and Tracy, three young women competing for roles in music videos. What drives these women to risk everything for a chance at fame? What role do these images play in shaping young women's goals and identities? Through their personal accounts, we see how this world has impacted their personal values, career ambitions, and concepts of beauty and self-image.

http://www.thirdworldnewsreel.org/about_twn.html

By Invitation Only. Dir. Rebecca Snedeker. DVD. New Day Films, 2006.

This documentary explores the insular world of the elite, white Carnival and debutante balls of Mardi Gras in New Orleans society. Questioning its racial exclusivity, filmmaker Rebecca Snedeker decides to forego the debutante tradition that was a birthright of women in her family. She follows another young woman's ascension to her throne as a Mardi Gras queen, along the way revealing the tension between family and social status in tradition-bound New Orleans. As Hurricane Katrina laid the cultural and racial complexities of the Crescent City bare, this film offers a probing and highly personal view into one of its oldest and most controversial traditions. *By Invitation Only* is ideal for courses in gender studies, sociology, anthropology, American studies, multicultural studies, Southern history and psychology.

<http://www.byinvitationonlythefilm.com>

Something to Think About. DVD. Community Healthcare Network, 2007.

Something to Think About is a four-part video series produced by teens, for teens, about teens, which utilizes street interviews, theater improvisation, and an original soundtrack to deliver comprehensive sexuality education. "Taken Care Of" addresses teen pregnancy, condom use, and partner communication. One episode, "Movies & Sex," explores sexual values around casual sexual relationships and the consequences of inconsistent use of protection. "Whatcha Gonna Do" discusses "the condom broke" situation and emergency contraception. "The Little Things" examines the healthy and unhealthy aspects of teen relationships.

<http://chnnyc.org/services/pact/video.php>

Thin. Dir. Lauren Greenfield. DVD. HBO Documentary Films, 2007.

Seeking to put a human face on the sobering statistics of eating disorders, acclaimed photographer Lauren Greenfield went inside Renfrew, a Florida treatment center, to capture the stories of anorexic women. The camera follows women between the ages of 15 and 30 who are literally dying to be thin, taking us to early-morning weight checks, emotionally draining mealtimes, tearful therapy sessions, as well as tense encounters with staff and family members. *Thin* also chronicles the efforts of Renfrew's therapists, counselors and nurses to save their patients' lives. Unflinching and heartbreaking, *Thin* is a film journey which provides a greater understanding of the complex personal, familial, cultural and mental health dimensions of this disease.

<http://thindocumentary.com>

Go to www.WMM.com > Film Catalog > Special Collections
for *The Girls Project*, an impressive selection of films about young women.

WEBSITE RECOMMENDATIONS

Girls, Incorporated
www.girlsinc.org

Girls, Inc. is a national nonprofit youth organization dedicated to inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. With roots dating to 1864, Girls, Inc. has provided vital educational programs to millions of American girls of all economic, racial and ethnic backgrounds, but especially to those from high risk, underserved areas. With 100 local chapters in as many cities, they design and help implement innovative programs that assist girls in confronting subtle societal messages about their value and potential, and prepare them to lead successful, independent, and fulfilling lives. Their recent E-book, [The Super Girl Dilemma](#), provides important insight into the lives of today's girls and features firsthand accounts of the extreme pressures they face. Their site also provides information on a wide range of girl-centered topics such as alcoholism, body image, and self-esteem. A special section "Just For Girls" contains games quizzes, and book suggestions.

Planned Parenthood Federation of America
www.plannedparenthood.org

Founded in 1916, Planned Parenthood is the nation's leading sexual/reproductive health care advocate and provider with 111 affiliates and over 860 health centers nationwide. They believe that everyone has the right to choose when or whether to have a child, that every child should be loved, and that women should be in charge of their own destinies. Local affiliates from across the country supply sexual/reproductive health care and information, including contraception and, in some areas, abortion services. Their website provides simple and comprehensive links such as sexuality, abortion, emergency contraception, and STIs/STDs for quick answers to tough questions.

Healthy Teen Network
www.healthyteenetwork.org

Healthy Teen Network is a national organization founded in 1979 and based in Washington D.C. It comprises individuals, students and organizations from across the country whom are devoted to making a difference in the lives of teens and young families. Their focus is on adolescent health and well-being with an emphasis on teen pregnancy, pregnancy prevention, and parenting. The website offers numerous resources and links providing helpful information on adolescent health topics ranging from sex education and relationships to youth development and family involvement. Several advocacy research guides can also be found online for people looking to make a difference in the lives of teens and young families in their own communities. One example is the Comprehensive Sexual Education research guide.

PFLAG: Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
www.pflag.org

PFLAG is a national non profit organization established in 1973. PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, and their families and friends. It offers support in coping with an adverse society; education to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. It provides opportunities to discuss sexual orientation and gender identity, and to help create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity. PFLAG.org is a comprehensive site providing useful links to find local chapters as well as various educational resources, including scholarship programs. These resources include answers to frequently asked questions; personal stories; tips on how to create a safe space for a loved one to "come out"; tools for responding to harassment and bullying in schools; and lobbying programs that teach everyday citizens to become agents of change in their own communities.

Abstinence Clearinghouse

www.abstinenceclearinghouse.org

The Abstinence Clearinghouse is a non-profit educational organization established in 1997 that promotes the value and practice of sexual abstinence until marriage through the distribution of age-appropriate, factual and medically referenced materials. It was founded in 1997 to provide a central location where character, relationship, abstinence programs, curricula, speakers, and materials could be accessed. It serves agencies and individuals on national, state and local levels. The Clearinghouse provides an online comprehensive resource library consisting of articles, commentaries, studies, statistics, and news releases, covering topics such as abstinence, STDs, contraceptives, and marriage.

Children's Defense Fund

www.childrensdefense.org

The Children's Defense Fund grew out of the Civil Rights Movement under the leadership of Marian Wright Edelman. It has become the nation's strongest voice for children and families since its founding in 1973. The Children's Defense Fund (CDF) studies the lives of American children and the challenges they face. Their Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a "Healthy Start" (through healthcare), a "Head Start" (through pre-kindergarten education), a "Fair Start" (by addressing the issues low-income families face), a "Safe Start" (through safe childcare so parents can work), and a "Moral Start" (through faith-based advocates for the well-being of children). They have local offices in nine states from California to Louisiana. Their website provides links to featured publications, such as "Katrina's Children: Still Waiting" and "The State of America's Children."

The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

www.teenpregnancy.org

The National Campaign, founded in 1996, is a nonprofit, nonpartisan initiative supported almost entirely by private donations. Their mission is to promote values, behavior, and policies that reduce both teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy among young adults. They are working to change the way the public views teen pregnancy, to help parents, and educate policymakers in order to reduce teen pregnancy. Their website provides information on teen pregnancy rates in different states, foster care, marriage, youth development and The National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (which is the first Wednesday in May).

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

www.naacp.org

The mission of the NAACP is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination. The NAACP was founded in 1909 by a multiracial group of activists. Initially, they called themselves the National Negro Committee. Since then the organization has started programs in economic development, education, health, civic engagement, criminal justice and youth development. Their Youth and College Division, created in 1936, helps young adults become activists in their own cause as well as the world around them. They facilitate a Back to School/Stay in School program to financially and socially support education from elementary to high school levels. The Youth Entrepreneurial Institute is committed to providing young people with the necessary skills to become full stakeholders in the economic and social revitalization of their community. The organization's website provides information on various activism and charitable opportunities, employment opportunities and scholarships.

The Kaiser Family Foundation

www.kff.org

A leader in health policy and communications, the Kaiser Family Foundation is a non-profit, private foundation focusing on the major health care issues facing the U.S., with a growing role in global health. Unlike grant-making foundations, Kaiser develops and runs its own research and communications programs, sometimes in partnership with other non-profit research organizations or major media companies. They serve as a non-partisan source of facts, information, and analysis for policymakers, the media, the health care community, and the public. They are currently focusing on HIV/AIDS, with an emphasis on reaching young people. Their website features up-to-date research information regarding HIV/AIDS in different minority groups and in different parts of the world. It is also a source for information on Medicaid, Medicare, prescription drugs, minority health, and women's health.

Annie E. Casey Foundation

www.aecf.org

Founded in 1948, the primary mission of the Annie E. Casey Foundation is to foster public policy, human-service reforms, and community support systems that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. They facilitate several programs to help children and their families, such as the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, which helps foster kids with education, employment, housing, healthcare and most importantly, permanent adult support. Their website contains a Knowledge Center with information regarding Child Welfare, Economic Security, Education, Health, and Juvenile Justice.

National Institute on Media and the Family

www.mediawise.org

Since 1996, the National Institute on Media and the Family has worked to help parents and communities "watch what our kids watch." The National Institute on Media and the Family is the world's leading and most respected research-based organization on the positive and harmful effects of media on children and youth. The National Institute on Media and the Family is an independent, nonpartisan, nonsectarian, and nonprofit organization that is based on research, education, and advocacy. The Institute is an international resource for information and training tools that parents and professionals need to make informed and proactive media choices. Their website is a resource for information on video games, television, internet, music, and internet predators. It contains quizzes, activities, and valuable information to help parents make informed decisions about their children's exposure to the media.

National Organization for Women

www.now.org

The National Organization for Women (NOW) is the largest organization of feminist activists in the United States. NOW has 500,000 contributing members and 550 chapters in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Since its founding in 1966, NOW's goal has been to take action to bring about equality for all women. NOW works to eliminate discrimination and harassment in the workplace, schools, the justice system, and all other sectors of society; secure abortion, birth control and reproductive rights for all women; end all forms of violence against women; eradicate racism, sexism and homophobia; and promote equality and justice in our society. Their website provides up to date information on "Current Alerts" which concern women's rights. They provide easy access to important issues and ways to get involved in activism.

Organizational synopses were excerpted from the information on the specific websites cited.

FILMMAKER'S BIO

Julie M. Gustafson is an independent documentary filmmaker whose work explores the intersection of public policy and individual lives. A recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, many of her works have been aired on PBS and exhibited in festivals, museums and schools in the U.S. and abroad. Between 1975 and 1989, Gustafson was Co-Director of Global Village, a non-profit, media arts center based in New York City. She also co-directed The Global Village Annual Documentary Festival, hosted in its later years by Joseph Papp's Public Theater and The Museum of Modern Art.

An educator as well as an artist and curator, Gustafson taught for many years at The New School for Social Research in New York City. She was a member of the graduate and undergraduate faculties of The Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania and Temple University, both in Philadelphia. Currently, she is an Artist in Residence at the University of New Orleans, Department of Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts.

ADDITIONAL WORK

CASTING THE FIRST STONE - 1991

Producer/Director/Videographer

Video, 58 minutes, Point of View Series (P.O.V.), PBS

Set against the background of the Supreme Court's historic decisions, this documentary looks at the abortion controversy through the eyes of six women activists on both sides of the barricades in Paoli, PA.

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS - 1983

Co-Producer (with John Reilly) & Director/Videographer

Video, 58 minutes, PBS & Museum of Modern Art 1984

A video exploration of the meaning of "the good life" in the lives of six ordinary people whose paths intersect at a maximum security prison, including an anti-nuclear activist, the Warden and his wife, and two inmates.

HOME - 1979

Co-Producer (with John Reilly) & Director/Videographer

Video, 90 minutes, PBS 1979

The milestones of birth, marriage, aging and death are set against the increasing institutionalization and depersonalization of modern life.

GIVING BIRTH - 1976

Co-Producer (with John Reilly) & Director/Videographer

Video, 58 minutes, PBS 1976

An examination of American birthing traditions, through portraits of the experiences of four contemporary couples.

THE POLITICS OF INTIMACY - 1973

Producer/Director/Videographer

Video, 58 minutes, The Berlin Film Festival, 1974; Manhattan Cable,

1975; Revival National Tour: "Video: The Early Years", Video Data Bank, mid-1990's

Ten women address the camera and seemingly each other in a wide-ranging exploration of such previously taboo subjects as women's sexuality, power, and fears about intimacy.

DESIRE CREDITS & FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Co-Producer

Tim Watson

Co-Director

Isaac Webb

Field Producers

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Monica Kronfel, Miriam Rizzo, Joan Fairbanks, Susan Banks

Discussion Guide Thanks

Carol Brandt, Philip Karnell, Sara Fanelli

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Sarah McKnight

QUOTES ABOUT THE FILM

"A touching and fully textured collective portrait. Gustafson's understated compassion makes DESIRE an affecting coming-of-age portrait, offering an intimate look into the minor tragedies and triumphs in the lives of a handful of young women. Highly recommended."

Video Librarian

"...far surpassed my expectations...a very real look into the lives of modern teenage girls. The insights provided by DESIRE can be used at many levels. Highly recommended for high schools, colleges, and adults who deal with teens."

Educational Media Reviews Online

"Presents the most insightful portrayal of teenaged girls' decision-making and sexuality ever available in film or print. Gustafson and the young ladies (her teenage collaborators) together capture moments that brilliantly speak to American understanding of race and class, as well as the whole process of growing – up. Poignant and touching, the film is suitable for women's studies, sociology, American & cultural history, urban and rural history.

Susan Tucker Tulane University

"Reaches across all racial, ethnic and class lines to discuss teens, girls, sex, early parenthood-- and above all--choice. This is a "must see" for teens and those who love and support them."

Pat Pauozzi, CNM, PhD Healthy Teen Network

"DESIRE casts an illuminating light on the inner world, the dilemmas, the evolving sexual identities of teenage girls. Freud didn't know what women want – Gustafson gives us an insightful, sometimes disturbing idea of what teenage girls desire – whether it's about going to college versus having a job, stopping to smoke, liking women instead of men, or deciding between having a baby or finishing high school."

Berenice Reynaud Senses of Cinema

"A very moving, bittersweet, and intimate look at the impact of culture, class, race, and family values on young women determined to take charge of their own lives."

Booklist

"A vibrant portrait of teenage life. Viewers will identify with the young women...a valuable discussion starter for high school collections."

Meghann R. Matwichuk School Library Journal

"A film so full of spirit and life you don't want it to end."

Barbara Kopple Academy Award-winning Documentary Filmmaker

ORDERING INFORMATION

Women Make Movies

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