



lower the voting age. ("Old enough to die, old enough to vote," was the slogan at the time.)

Using these variations in state law and judicial rulings, Lawrence F. Katz and I were able to look at their impact on the age at first marriage and on women's careers. We find that laws allowing for greater access were strongly and positively related to the age at first marriage and strongly and positively related to the fraction of women pursuing professional careers. The availability of the Pill to young, single women does appear to have been a substantial factor in the quiet revolution.

While the Pill was an important factor, it was only one contributing factor; and it functioned within a larger changing social and economic environment for young women. Labor force participation rates had already been rising for some time, although until the late 1960s young women had not built the increases into their educational investment calculus. The appearance of the Pill may have enabled young women to view early investments in time-intensive careers as less risky. The resurgence of feminism may have awakened young women to the social changes around them and also contributed to their use of the Pill. Antidiscrimination laws affecting hiring, promotion, and education may also have contributed, on the margin, to protect women workers and to encourage schools to admit them.

Other factors appear to have been less important. Abortion reform may have mattered somewhat; but in our statistical analysis, abortion reform runs a distant second to the Pill in explaining the changes discussed above. Similarly, because women tend to marry men who are somewhat older than they are, the Baby Boom created a sex ratio bulge. But this does not explain much of the increase in the age at first marriage for the group of women analyzed here, nor can it explain the enormous increase in professional degrees for women.

Whatever the precise reasons, a great divide in college-graduate women's lives and employment occurred about 35 years ago. Before this change, women who reached the peaks made solo climbs. They became symbols and tokens demonstrating that women could achieve greatness. But real change demanded a march by the masses from the valley to the summit. That march began with women born in the late 1940s. *

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by MARCIA BRUMIT KROPF

inspiring girls to be strong,



IRLS INCORPORATED, a nonprofit organization that serves girls aged 6 to 18, has been dramatically influenced by the transformation that Claudia Goldin describes. The group began in 1864 in Waterbury, Connecticut, as a place for girls to gather while their mothers worked in the factories. An early statement of purpose (1937) was explicit about its mission of preparing young women to be wives and mothers. "Little girls of today are the homemakers of the future,



smart, & bold

the mothers of the next generation of citizens. Opportunities given to them now for cultural background, for healthy minds and bodies, for training in homecraft and a basic knowledge of motherhood—these determine the standards of our future homes.” As late as the 1950s, the Girls Incorporated mission remained essentially unchanged. In 1952, it inaugurated a Homemaker of the Year Award. In 1955, with funding from a shampoo manufacturer, it published *The Handbook of Charm*. The book covered topics such as hair, skin, posture, and wardrobe, and offered pointers on manners including,

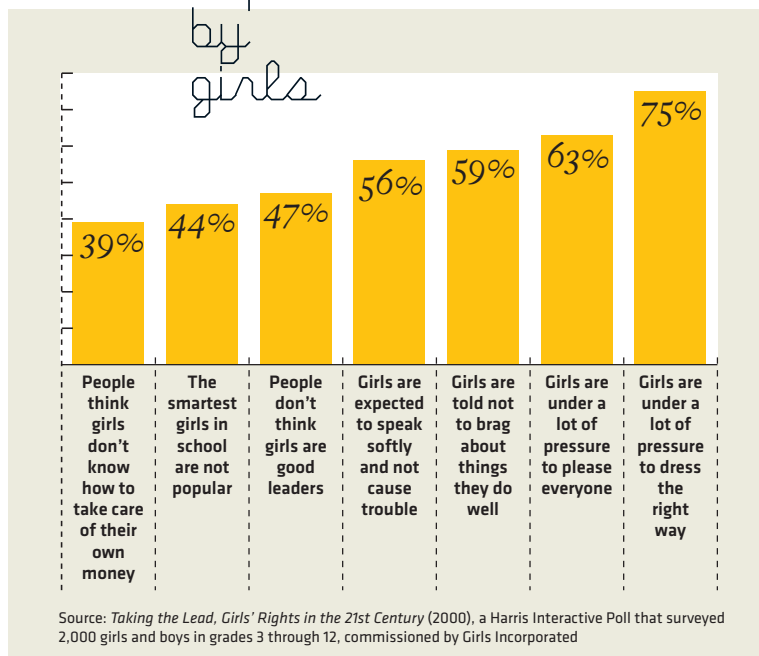
“Don’t monopolize a conversation. Don’t interrupt when others talk. When at any public gathering, conduct yourself in a ladylike, considerate manner . . . don’t be conspicuous and call a lot of unnecessary attention to yourself.”

During the 1960s and 1970s, Girls Incorporated completely rethought its mission and purpose. With changing times came a new focus on preparing girls for interesting work and economic independence. In 1984, its first identity program, focused on adolescent pregnancy prevention, was introduced. In 1998, the current mission statement was adopted: to inspire all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. Today seven additional identity programs are offered, including math and science education, media literacy, violence prevention, economic literacy, leadership development, substance abuse prevention, and sports participation, all designed to help girls think about themselves in new ways.

But while Girls Incorporated and other organizations have evolved with the changing times, many of the old problems remain, leaving Goldin’s revolution unfinished. A recent Girls Inc./Harris Interactive survey of 2,000 girls and boys in



Stereotypes experienced by girls



grades 3 through 12 found that three-quarters of the girls agreed that girls are under pressure to dress the right way; 63 percent agreed that girls are under pressure to please everyone; and 59 percent agreed that girls are told not to brag about things they do well. This raises troubling questions about the influences that girls face when they’re preparing for their futures. Boys recognized the stereotypes, too, but girls were twice as likely to be highly dissatisfied with them: 47 percent of girls compared to 23 percent of boys as measured by an index Harris created.

It’ll end with another thought-provoking Girls Inc./Harris study on the potential influence of “girls’ communities.” The study defined participation in a girls’ community very loosely, including playing on a girls’ sports team or being in a Girl Scout troop; it didn’t have to be as intensive as attending a girls’ school. Nonetheless, girls who participated in such groups were more likely to plan to attend college, more likely to feel safe, more likely to play sports, and more likely to read books than girls who did not. The study can’t explain exactly why these differences occurred, and it cannot sort out the extent to which girls who join girls’ communities are different—perhaps more motivated—to begin with. But it does raise interesting questions about what will most help girls make progress and to find a comfortable place in the economy and the world in the future. ✱

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