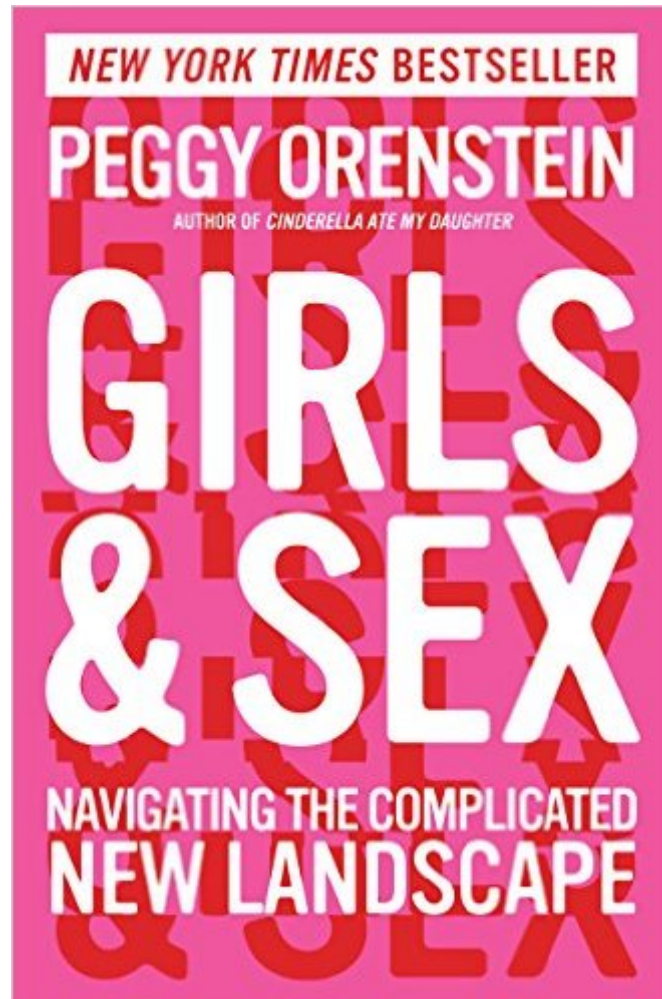


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# Girls & Sex: Navigating The Complicated New Landscape



## Synopsis

**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER**The author of the New York Times bestseller *Cinderella Ate My Daughter* offers a clear-eyed picture of the new sexual landscape girls face in the post-princess stage—high school through college—and reveals how they are negotiating it. A generation gap has emerged between parents and their girls. Even in this age of helicopter parenting, the mothers and fathers of tomorrow's women have little idea what their daughters are up to sexually or how they feel about it. Drawing on in-depth interviews with over seventy young women and a wide range of psychologists, academics, and experts, renowned journalist Peggy Orenstein goes where most others fear to tread, pulling back the curtain on the hidden truths, hard lessons, and important possibilities of girls' sex lives in the modern world. While the media has focused—often to sensational effect—on the rise of casual sex and the prevalence of rape on campus, in *Girls and Sex* Peggy Orenstein brings much more to the table. She examines the ways in which porn and all its sexual myths have seeped into young people's lives; what it means to be the "perfect slut" and why many girls scorn virginity; the complicated terrain of hookup culture and the unfortunate realities surrounding assault. In Orenstein's hands these issues are never reduced to simplistic "truths"; rather, her powerful reporting opens up a dialogue on a potent, often silent, subtext of American life today—giving readers comprehensive and in-depth information with which to understand, and navigate, this complicated new world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As a grandfather, totally out of touch with the world of girls today, I read this book to find out what

sort of world my three granddaughters are getting themselves into. It's a nightmare world. 10% of girls get violently raped, 25% get taken advantage of while drunk. Possibly even worse is that love and care seem almost to have disappeared as concepts. Sex is mostly about "hooking up." I trust my grandkids and their wonderful parents to manage this wilderness somehow, but I have some major questions for society. First, I certainly agree with the author that the most immediate and important thing is to give girls more control of their lives and feelings. The awful old pressures to conform, go along, do what boys/men want, and be passive and docile appear to be actually worse than in the 1950s when I was this age. They certainly aren't any better. Second, I also agree that one very important thing is to teach girls how to do sex right--to make it safe, enjoyable, and emotionally satisfying--which it apparently almost never is, today. We in the 1950s were utterly unprepared for sex and didn't have a clue how to enjoy it when we finally managed--it was supposed to be "fun," that was all. Apparently things are actually even worse now: the kids learn from porn, which is truly worse than nothing, for reasons covered with great explicitness in this book. Third, and this is not really stressed enough in the book, we have to do something about pop culture and the pressures on kids to conform to it and take all their standards and orientations from it. It is teaching the worst possible lessons--and not just the porn.

So many books on this subject tend to gloss over or sanitize the reality in order to make it more palatable to parents or the readers. With *Girls and Sex*, author Orenstein lays it all down on the table: countless interviews with girls from teens to college age, getting honest answers about their experiences. While she does tend to provide a lot of her own personal viewpoints interspersed with her findings, there are very sound principles as well as blunt, eye opening perspectives. Readers are given both sides to many stories, from abstinence, to drinking, hooking up, and sexting. The book break down as follows: Chapter 1: girls as objects; Chapter 2: do girls enjoy sex as much as they should?; Chapter 3: what exactly is a virgin?; chapter 4: hook ups and hang ups; chapter 5: online and IRL; Chapter 6: substance abuse/rape; Chapter 7: telling them the truth. The above are my condensation of the chapter topics and not the actual chapter titles. The main discussion areas of the book are: presenting the truth about sex to girls, the problem with objectification/low self esteem/a male driven porn industry that prioritizes male satisfaction while ignoring a woman's, how drinking and substance abuse contribute to date rape the problem with reporting/policing it, what exactly does virginity mean these days when there is so much variety in sexual acts, and abstinence vs exploration. All of the topics are discussed in detail and various viewpoints and actual experiences are given. Orenstein is careful to not only provide factual backup but to also discuss the

problems with the facts and how they can/are distorted, misinterpreted, or completely ignored. So yes, although she does interpose her opinions frequently, this does not feel like a one-sided discussion.

The book examines an important topic, and as a parent of two teenage girls, I was looking forward to reading it. There are both pros and cons of the book, but cons generally outweigh the pros. The author takes an important and volatile topic, and alternates between some thoughtful and insightful commentary (such as the changes in attitude toward oral sex) and flippant and superficial analysis (such as cringe-worthy commentary on virginity). Pros:- Covers an important topic.- Talks about new trends in teenage sex such as new and different definitions of "bases" (at least to those of us who are a generation older)- Based on interviews with real live teenagers Cons:- The interviews that the book is based on are with teenagers who answered ads for girls willing to talk with a complete stranger (the author) about their intimate sex lives. Clearly a biased sample. The book makes it sound like every college girl parties 4 nights a week, does multiple shots before the parties, only has sex when she's drunk, never enjoys sex but rather only does it to please guys. My guess is that this is not applicable to all the girls, probably not even most girls. But, perhaps I'm kidding myself. I don't know. And neither does the author, who made no attempt to get an unbiased sample.- The author really struggles with her own PC beliefs versus her instinctive maternal urge, and comes off as really conflicted and unsure. She doesn't want to say that girls shouldn't dress provocatively nor does she want to say girls shouldn't get blackout drunk at frat parties--because obviously it is not PC to say that and it implies that girls can't do what they want. But clearly she wants to say exactly that, and she waffles.

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