

MUSE 2021 Cover Page

Faculty:

Email:

Professional Title and Rank: **Professor**

Number of Years at TCNJ: **11**

Department: **Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies**

Title of Project: **(Re)Turn to the African Girl: East African Girlhood**

Studies Student Collaborator:

Student Email:

Requested Amount: **\$4750.00**

Project and Learning Plan

I) Intellectual Merit: A primary objective of my scholarly agenda is the completion of a book manuscript entitled “Re-Turn to the African Girl: African Girlhood Studies and Development”, which contributes significantly to the interdisciplinary field of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in a global context. The book is under contract with Palgrave MacMillan in their regional politics and development series. I specifically sought out a publisher that offers global open access (OA) publishing and Palgrave is one of the few scholarly publishers offering this option. Currently the book entails an introduction, six chapters, and a concluding chapter.

A confounding problem of the twenty-first century is the disadvantaged position girls and women continue to hold relative to boys and men in politics, economy, and society. Girls in Africa — caught between exercises of power created by way of elders in communities and western development practitioners — have collectively become positioned as both targets of *and* the solution to the most pressing global problems. Yet African girls in the twenty-first century hold less power, wealth, and voice in the public sphere than almost any group globally. Girlhood Studies is a new discipline that has

emerged to counter the historical tendency for feminist scholarship to center adult women and ignore or marginalize girls. However, the primary focus of the discipline is primarily on the Global North and white girls' lives, and as such, there has been a neglect of the experiences of non-white, Global South girls. African girls' voices remain marginal or absent in Girlhood Studies and Development paradigms. As an intervention into these discourses and locations, I argue that an African feminist lens is necessary to make visible and understandable, through African girls' own collaborative and creative production, the problems and possible solutions to issues that girls face.

Specific Goals: For the duration of the 8-week MUSE project my student collaborator and me will work on **two of the book chapters** (2 and 3) and a portion of the introduction of the manuscript. Both of these chapters include a focus on conceptions of law and how they apply to girls, which of specific interest to my collaborator. The introduction will provide an historical and contemporary overview as well as a theoretical framing of the emergence of girlhood as a discipline, examining major contours, contributors, and contestations. The introduction explains the transdisciplinary approach and the mixed methods employed in the research for the book.

In chapter 2, *Girlhoods in Pre-Colonial History: The Past as a Constraint or Model?* I explore historical constructions of girlhoods in Africa and provide context for contemporary cases to suggest approaches that center adolescent girls as agents of change while also discussing how societies differently centered adolescence as a critical life stage. With four examples from eastern Africa the chapter will provide insights into the models and constraints of historical imaginings of girlhoods during the first half of MUSE. In chapter 3, *The Historical Turn to the African Girl*, I contend that the turn to the global girl, and African girls in particular, as a target of intervention and as saviors of families and communities is in fact not a new approach. African children, especially girls, were used in the production and legitimization of both national and international social development initiatives in colonial times. While girls may not want to be portrayed as hapless victims of patriarchy, they have long been tools of government agendas, legal practices, and development policies. This is significant because it shows a longer historical trajectory of girls as objects of policies with little voice in the construction of the agendas that result. Specifically, we will work on situating the collected narratives and data - alert to histories of normative concepts that are presented as ahistorical, universal and neutral, including "human rights," "children's rights," "race," "gender," "family," and the "law."

Feasibility: Feminist research approaches value multi-vocality and co-authoring. Therefore, the first two weeks of the MUSE will be dedicated to exposure to feminist research literature, building upon the knowledge _____ gained from her participation in my *WGS 326: Intersectional Qualitative Feminist Methods* course. She will then contribute to building a bibliography, using the on-line resource *Zotero*, for chapter 2 (June 3 - 14). June 17 - 21 will be spent on developing literature review for chapter 2; June 24 - July 5 will be spent on building a robust bibliography for chapter 3; July 8-12 will be spent synthesizing the bibliography into a coherent literature review for chapter 3 -- ***all of this writing will be done jointly, with me.*** July 15- 26 will be spent learning content, discourse, and visual analysis of selected materials. This timeline is suitable for the goals of this aspect of the project. The timeline can easily be adjusted as needed, and this approach and timeline is informed by my past co-researching experiences. _____ and I will meet weekly for organized discussion and skill demonstrations, and more often for co-working time (2-3 days a week). She will have a dedicated working space in my office in 236 Bliss Hall, with access to the internet, photocopies, and texts in my office library.

Importance to the discipline: This will be the first text of this kind focusing on African girlhoods from an African feminist theoretical perspectives and centralizing the experiences, desires, and visions of girls. This research extends the traditional focus of feminist research and action to more seriously consider girlhood studies as its own field of inquiry. This research into African girls' empowerment addresses systemic inequalities partly by rejecting essentialized understandings of identity based on race, gender, class, age, religion, and geography. This project will provide an important critique to Girlhood Studies, and Development studies. It will also make a unique contribution to the burgeoning literature on African Girlhoods. By introducing an African feminist lens to study African girls, this interdisciplinary

project combines historical research, qualitative research methods, and African feminist theories to Girlhood Studies.

Potential for high quality outcomes: The book already has a contract and therefore _____ will have the ability to contribute to this volume in significant ways, and will get published recognition for her contributions.

II) Role of Students and Mentor: Professor _____ has developed multiple methods, pedagogy, and community-engaged learning courses over the last 10+ years at TCNJ. I have successfully led three past MUSE projects. Those projects resulted in national and international presentations, workshops, and publications. My role in this project is to provide a comprehensive overview of qualitative, intersectional research methods through one-on-one training and preparatory readings. Personally, I seek to embody attributes of feminist mentoring: valuing the contributions of the mentee, valuing diversity, and valuing subjective ways of knowing. As such, I will work with _____ in each facet of the project such as providing theoretical frameworks to understand the complexity of the African feminist theories and girlhood studies, providing the necessary training for Zotero, as well as training in transcription and analysis. _____ will learn how to put theory into practice, further develop her existing skills, and will serve as a crucial contributor to the project as well as to co-constructing knowledge about the topics we will explore. In addition to mentoring, I will lead the way in finding additional outlets for the collaborators to co-present their findings at regional and national conferences, as the publication of the manuscript.

_____ is WGSS and International Studies double major and minor in Spanish. She has been selected for this project due to her interest in gender, international development, and international law. Further, _____ actively sought out this mentored research opportunity and is eager to learn new ways to bring her majors together. _____ will be responsible for co-creating extensive bibliographies using Zotero, co-producing two literature reviews, and to assist in transcribing and analyzing data. This appropriate, yet newly acquired skill set will be especially beneficial for _____ in terms of her career interests, as she hopes to go on to law school, focusing on international and immigration law. Her interest and expertise in international studies, development, gender, economics, and language will provide her with some of the contextual background necessary to be successful with this project.

III) Broader Impacts: I plan to submit the manuscript in December 2022, therefore _____'s contribution to the project is key to achieving this goal. Furthermore, I will use this opportunity to strengthen my research methods mentoring. As a first generation college student of Latina/Chicana descent and daughter of recent immigrants from Mexico, _____ seeks to make an impact in a field where she is so noticeably underrepresented. _____ will present some of her key findings at the HSS COSA in FA 2021. Further, _____ will submit an application to the prestigious National Women's Studies Association Conference for the research poster session. The conference will be held in Detroit in November 2022, where I will travel to the conference with _____. This fits into _____'s personal goals to learn more about conducting research to assist her with her future career and law studies.

II. Budget

a. Student Collaborator Stipend	\$3000.00
b. Faculty Mentor Stipend	\$1250.00
c. Project Supplies*	\$500.00 (\$503)
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Total	\$4750.00

* Project expenses details = **\$503.00**

1. Research books \$263.00

- *Muddying the Waters: Coauthoring feminisms across scholarship and activism* (2014) by Richa Nagar \$30 x 2
- *Understanding Critical Race Research Methods & Methodologies* (2018) \$47 x 2
- *This Bridge We Call Communication: Anzaldúan Approaches to Theory, Method, and Praxis* (2019) \$109.87

2. Visit to Princeton University Toni Morrison Archives; Princeton Library Tour \$70

I would like to take _____ to the Princeton Libraries/archives for the day; would include mileage (\$14.), parking (\$16.), and lunch (\$40).

3. DropBox yearly fee \$100.00

DropBox provides the space we need for the amount of data we are managing; allows sharing access

4. External hard drive \$54.00

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B079H8PZPV/ref=cm_sw_r_cp_api_i_-YzvCbQACN3H5

5. USB adapters x 2 \$16.00:

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0749Q9Y4N/ref=cm_sw_r_cp_api_i_A1zvCbHBPQQT7