

Project and Learning Plan

I) Intellectual Merit: A primary objective of my scholarly agenda is the completion of an edited book manuscript entitled “A Turn to the African Girl: African Feminist Girlhood Studies,” which contributes significantly to the interdisciplinary field of Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Girlhood 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.

Over the last century, girls in Africa, long ignored as sources of knowledge, have, nevertheless, engaged vocally and publicly in activism and artistic endeavors to express their visions and aspirations for a future society inclusive of their needs. Only recently have scholars begun to examine the complicated nature of girlhood in relation to capacity, competence, and knowledge layered with vulnerability and inexperience. In the last decade, the flourishing of girls’ inventive acts of agency and their use of their own incisive voices have given impetus to the growing scholarship on girls’ vibrant historical and current political, economic, creative, and cultural pursuits. It is this gap in the scholarship and the harm created by such views of African girls that prompted this research project.

Specific Goals: For the duration of the 8-week MUSE project my student collaborator will work on writing a **book chapter** and, with me, a portion of the introduction of the manuscript. My collaborator’s chapter focuses on research *with* African girls, not just about them. My MUSE co-researcher, XXX, is currently conducting research on African girls, girlhoods, and the diaspora with another student. She is spending the spring semester learning about autoethnography, interviewing methods, feminist ethics, coding and transcription. By the end of the semester she will have collected ample data to code and analyze during the MUSE session. 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.

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 XXX gained from her participation in WGS 393: Independent Research course with me this spring. XXX will then thematically code her interview data (June 5 - 16). June 19 - 30 will be spent analyzing the themes and interview data; June 26 - July 1 will be spent organizing and drafting the chapter; July 3-14 will be spent editing the draft chapter -- ***all of this writing will be done jointly, with me.*** July 17- 28 will be spent finalizing all details for the chapter in preparation for peer review. 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. XXX and I will meet multiple times a week 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 116 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 XXX will have the ability to contribute to this volume in significant ways, and will get published recognition for her contributions. She will also present her research at the National Women's Studies Association Conference in Baltimore in mid-November.

II) Role of Students and Mentor: Marla Jaksch has developed multiple methods, pedagogy, and community-engaged learning courses over the last 12+ 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 XXX 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 in transcription and analysis. XXX 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 XXX to co-present her findings at regional and national conferences, in addition to the publication of her chapter in the edited collection.

XXX is WGSS and History double major, member of the Honors Program and WILL and on the executive board of the Black Student Union (BSU). She has been selected for this project due to her interest in African feminisms, gender and girlhood, and history. Further, XXX actively sought out this mentored research opportunity and is eager to learn new ways to bring her majors together. XXX will be responsible for transcribing and analyzing her interview data, as well as drafting a finished manuscript to be submitted for publication. This appropriate, yet newly acquired skill set will be especially beneficial for XXX in terms of her career interests such as social justice and women's rights law, as she hopes to go on to law school. Her interest and knowledge in WGSS, history, and African feminisms 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 at the end of the summer, therefore XXX's contribution to the project is key to achieving this goal. As a first generation college student of African descent and daughter of recent immigrants from Liberia, XXX seeks to make an impact in a field where she is so noticeably underrepresented. XXX will present some of her key findings at the European African Studies Association at the University of Cologne, Germany in late May. She will also present at the HSS COSA in SP 2024. Further, Diamond will submit an application to the prestigious National Women's Studies Association Conference for the research poster session. The conference will be held in Baltimore in November 2023, where I will travel to the conference with XXX. This fits into XXX's personal goals to learn more about conducting research to assist her with her future career.