



By Joan Jacobs Brumberg: The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls

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A hundred years ago, women were lacing themselves into corsets and teaching their daughters to do the same. The ideal of the day, however, was inner beauty: a focus on good deeds and a pure heart. Today American women have more social choices and personal freedom than ever before. But fifty-three percent of our girls are dissatisfied with their bodies by the age of thirteen, and many begin a pattern of weight obsession and dieting as early as eight or nine. Why? In *The Body Project*, historian Joan Jacobs Brumberg answers this question, drawing on diary excerpts and media images from 1830 to the present. Tracing girls' attitudes toward topics ranging from breast size and menstruation to hair, clothing, and cosmetics, she exposes the shift from the Victorian concern with inner beauty to our modern focus on outward appearance--in particular, the desire to be model-thin and sexy. Compassionate, insightful, and gracefully written, *The Body Project* explores the gains and losses adolescent girls have inherited since they shed the corset and the ideal of virginity for a new world of sexual freedom and consumerism--a world in which the body is their primary project.

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