

STUDY GUIDE

Going on 13

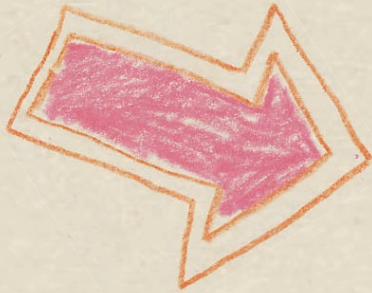
A Documentary Film



By Kristy Guevara-Flanagan
and Dawn Valadez



For Use With Girls,
Boys and Girls Together, Teachers, Family Members
and Everyone Who Cares About the Lives of Girls.



Note About the Format of This Study Guide

We created this guide to support screenings of this film in a variety of settings. We have created it to be viewed on a computer or printed in black & white or in color.

Feel free to print one, all, or none of the pages as suits your purposes and contact us if you have any questions.

Special Thanks!!

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Nancy Gruver and Lacey Louwagie of New Moon Girl Media developed and wrote the guide with guidance from Dawn Valadez and Kristy Guevara-Flanagan. The design and cover were created by Jenny DuPont.

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I. About the Film

In *GOING ON 13*, directors Kristy Guevera-Flanagan and Dawn Valadez follow four girls as they navigate their adolescence from age 9 to 13. **Rosie's** mother is Anglo-American and her father is Nicaraguan-American; we watch her stretch toward independence as she negotiates walking to school alone and landing her first job. **Esmeralda's** the youngest of three girls in her family; she faces prejudice for her weight and her Mexican ethnicity but she holds her own in class and is the first to have a boyfriend. **Ariana** lives with her mom who supports her when she stands up for herself and "fights back," and she looks forward to someday being a lawyer. **Isha's** family is Indian American, and as she grows she carefully balances her Indian and American identities.

GOING ON 13 looks candidly at the real struggles of pre-adolescent girls and their families and examines the crucial years between being a child and being a teen. The film also allows us to watch the girls triumph as they come out stronger and more resilient in the end.

Background

GOING ON 13 gives us a close-up look into the lives of four girls as they go through puberty. While adolescence is acknowledged as a key developmental stage, the landscape for girls going through puberty continues to change. Girls are physically developing at younger ages, with many girls showing signs of puberty by age 8. Earlier puberty has been linked to increased vulnerability to peer pressure, depression, obsessive behavior, and problems at school for girls.¹ It's crucial that girls feel connected to their families, other girls, and their inner voice during this time.

In 1993, Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan published their ground breaking study, *Meeting at the Crossroads*. In *Meeting at the Crossroads*, Brown and Gilligan tracked hundreds of girls from age 8 to age 18, noting a troubling pattern in which girls silenced their inner voices out of fear of losing their significant "relationships" with friends, romantic interests, parents, and teachers. In Peggy Orenstein's book, *School Girls*, she discovered a similar pattern, especially in girls from white and suburban communities; her experiences in black and urban communities found different strengths and challenges. *Meeting at the Crossroads* and *School Girls* stirred discussions about girls' needs, strengths, and challenges that continue today. This research sparked the inspiration for *GOING ON 13*, an addition to this discussion that follows girls through adolescence as they find and hold fast to their inner voices.

¹ Sonis, WA, Comite, F, Blue, J, et al., Behavior problems and social competence in girls with true precocious puberty, *Journal of Pediatrics*, 1985; 106: 156-160

II. Using the Study Guide



This study guide is meant to facilitate discussion between girls and the adults who care about them. This guide is divided into the following sections:

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How GOING ON 13 Facilitates Discussion

Girls going through adolescence are beginning to reason abstractly, allowing them to imagine how the rest of the world “sees them.” This can lead to feelings of self-consciousness that leave girls feeling isolated as they negotiate new bodies, new relationships, and new perceptions about themselves. *GOING ON 13* gives girls and adults an entry point for talking about difficult issues such as growing up, racism, and sexual education. Identifying with the girls in *GOING ON 13* can help girls feel less alone and give them permission to speak about where their own experiences are similar to or different from the girls in the film.

As an adult facilitator, you can prepare for these discussions by watching the film beforehand and noting the reactions you have: which points spark your interest? Which ones make you uncomfortable? Also, spend time remembering your own adolescence and what topics were hard for you to discuss.

Leading Safe and Respectful Discussions

Sensitive topics may come up in your discussion of *GOING ON 13*. To keep all participants feeling safe during the discussion, encourage your group to join you in creating group agreements for discussion. Ask them, “What do you need to feel comfortable being honest and talking about tough topics?” Go around in a circle and ask everyone to contribute what they need to feel safe. Some examples might be, “no one putting me down,” or “no eye-rolling.” Write these guidelines down on a whiteboard, large sheet of paper, or chalkboard so everyone can see them. After everyone has had a chance to speak, add guidelines that YOU feel are important, such as:

- * Pay attention to body language – rolling eyes or sneering is the same as a put-down.
- * Allow room for disagreement, but don't allow personal attacks.
- * Give hesitant speakers time and patience while they gather their thoughts; don't try to finish their ideas for them.
- * Listen to one person speak at a time; try not to interrupt.
- * No put-downs or name-calling during the discussion.

Never force someone to talk about a topic that makes her uncomfortable. If you're working with a group that is reluctant to open up, allow them to anonymously write down what they need to feel safe. You can then write their requests on the board. Additional tips for creating safe and productive conversation include:

- * Lead into sensitive discussions by focusing on the girls in the film first: for example, ask how girls felt when **Esmeralda** talked about the boy who "hates Mexicans" rather than asking girls directly if they've experienced prejudice. If the group is comfortable talking about the issues on a theoretical level, gradually bring the discussion to a more personal level: "Have you heard people say things like the boy **Esmeralda** knew?"
- * If members of your group interrupt frequently or don't take turns, consider using a "talking object," such as a rock or stick, which allows only the person holding the object to speak. The object can be passed to people who raise their hands or passed in a circle, giving participants the option to "pass" if they have nothing to say when the talking object comes to them.



How to View the Film

The film can be watched and discussed in different configurations to best fit your needs and schedule. Each of the activities in the study guide references the relevant chapters to allow you to focus on the areas of interest to you in the time you have.

* If you are in a school, set aside a double-period to watch the whole film and begin discussion, or watch the film in two class periods over two days.

* Watch the film over an entire week:

- **Monday:** Watch introduction, 4th and 5th grade segments (Chapters 1, 2, and 3)
- **Tuesday:** Watch 6th grade segment (Chapters 4 and 5)
- **Wednesday:** Watch 7th grade segment (Chapters 6 and 7)
- **Thursday:** Watch 13 segment and end (Chapters 8 and 9)
- **Friday:** Focus on continued discussion, reflection, or hot topics

* Watch the film focusing on certain subject matter:

- **Sex Education:**
Chapter 2 (**Esmeralda** talks about “puberty,” wants to wear “hootchie clothes,” and has her first boyfriend); Chapter 4 (**Ariana** says you should keep puberty “to yourself,” **Isha’s** mom says she’s not old enough to know how babies are born); Chapter 6 (sex ed at school and home); Chapter 8 (**Ariana** talks about pregnancy).
- **Immigration:**
Chapter 1 (**Esmeralda** talks about prejudice; **Rosie** talks about her family; **Isha’s** mom talks about being “totally Indian” at home); Chapter 3 (**Isha’s** mother talks about arranged marriage); Chapter 5 (**Esmeralda’s** sister has her Quinceañera; **Isha** goes to India)
- **Gender roles:**
Chapter 1 (**Ariana** talks about being a girl); Chapter 2 (**Ariana** gets upset about *Bring it On*); Chapter 5 (**Esmeralda’s** sister has her Quinceañera).

□ **Growing Up:**

Chapter 2 (**Esmeralda** talks about “puberty”); Chapter 3 (**Rosie** wants to walk to school alone; **Esmeralda** talks with her dad about growing up.); Chapter 4 (**Ariana** says she doesn’t “have any changes”; **Esmeralda** says she “can’t stay little.”); Chapter 5 (**Ariana** has a “big girl” party.); Chapter 6 (**Isha** argues with her mom about her hair; **Rosie** wants to go to college.); Chapter 8 (**Esmeralda** says you have to have “attitude;” **Isha** wonders, “Am I turning into a Goth?”)

Time Needed

The film is 73 minutes long, so we suggest setting aside at least two hours for viewing the film and beginning discussion. We would like viewers to see the film as a whole but understand that is not always possible given classroom and other constraints. For example, we appreciate that in a school setting, you may need to break the film up over two or more class periods. For that reason we have segmented the film into chapters and have suggestions for how to show the film in multiple screenings or how to show specific topic areas.



Settings in Which to Use This Study Guide

All questions can be used in a group setting or one-on-one, as discussion prompts or starting points for writing or other creative assignments. Sections III - V contain "reflection" exercises to cement the relationship between the content of the film and the viewers' lives. We recommend using this documentary and guide in:

- * Middle school, high school, or university classes. These exercises were designed with girls in grades 6 – 8 in mind, but can also be used in grades 9-12 or undergraduate and graduate university classes.
- * Girls' programs such as *Girls, Inc.*, *Girl Scouts*, or *Girls Talking Circles*.
- * Workshops for parents, teachers, counselors, youth leaders, and other adults who care about girls.
- * Parent/daughter book clubs, movie nights, or discussion groups.

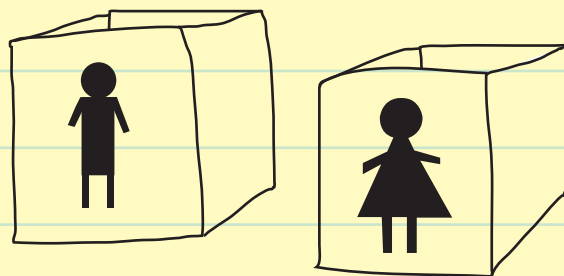
Using the Guide in a Mixed-Gender Setting

While this guide was created with girls in mind, discussions about gender and growing up are important for boys, too. Most of the questions in this guide can be answered by boys as well, but having the discussions in a mixed-gender setting may require more groundwork to create a space that feels safe. Follow the same guidelines for setting up a safe space outlined on page 4 of this guide. In addition, the exercise and discussion below can help set the stage for mixed-gender dialogue.

EXERCISE: *The Gender Box*

This exercise, originally created by the *Oakland Men's Project* in the early 1980s, has been widely adapted for work with males and gender issues. This version of the exercise is meant to be used with girls and boys who might be discussing gender issues for the first time.

On a chalkboard, whiteboard, or large piece of paper, draw two figures inside boxes and write "boy" and "girl" at the top of each of them. If you're working with kids who are fairly comfortable with one another, ask them to



name off things that the culture tells boys they should be to "be a man." Ask the same question about girls: What does the culture tell girls they "should" be? What do people tell boys and girls that they shouldn't be? How are these messages harmful? Are there any benefits to them? What do we miss out on if we stay stuck in one "box"? What traits do students in the room possess that don't fall into their "gender box"?

If the group is hesitant to discuss, ask them to answer the above questions in writing instead and to hand their answers in anonymously. Collect the lists and allow students a break while you write traits from the "girl" list in the girl box and the "boy" list in the boy box. Outside the boxes, write what each gender is told they "shouldn't" be. Once the boxes are filled in, ask the group if they'd like to add more. Ask any questions verbally that you didn't ask them to answer in writing, and talk about what you see on the board.

Talk about the difference between sex and gender: that sex is the body we're born with, but gender is the way people think we should act. Talk about where messages about how girls or boys should act come from. Focus on the "middle ground" as a way to stress that there are many things girls and boys have in common, far more than differences.

You may want to adapt this exercise to discuss cultural diversity as well: what are we told a Latino boy should be? What are we told a Black girl should be? What are we told a White girl should be?

You can use this as a starting point for watching the film: even though the film focuses on four girls, many of their experiences will be things everyone – girls and boys, adults and kids, can relate to.

You may want to adapt some of the questions in this study guide to be more inclusive to boys, but most of them can be asked of both sexes if properly framed

Additional Resources

We suggest checking out the resources for girls and adults who care about them at the end of this guide. You can find more information about the documentary at www.goingon13.com.

III. Discussion Among Girls With Adult Facilitators



In *GOING ON 13*, the girl subjects of the film shared intimate details of their lives with the filmmakers that they may not have shared with their parents or other adults. A discussion among girls with adult facilitators should create a safe place for girls to share their authentic selves with one another without judgment. Adult facilitators should let girls take the lead, while the adults' main role is to answer questions and make sure the dialogue remains safe and respectful. You may want to consider creating group agreements with the girls, such as:

- * committing to listen to one another
- * committing not to tease
- * committing not to interrupt
- * committing not to force girls to talk about subjects which make them uncomfortable



For more guidelines to creating a safe space for discussion with girls, see the guidelines on page 4 of this guide.

Discussion Questions:

Overall

1. Out of **Esmeralda**, **Rosie**, **Ariana**, and **Isha**, which girl do you relate to the most? Why do you relate to her?

Introduction and 4th Grade

2. **Ariana** says that everyone thinks girls can't play sports and should play with baby dolls. What do you think about girls playing sports? What do you enjoy that are considered "girl things"? What do you like that are considered "boy things"? What are some things that both boys and

girls are expected to do and like? Why do you think that is? How does it make you feel?

3. **Rosie** says that her “family is complicated.” Why does **Rosie** say her family is complicated? Do the other girls have complicated families? Do you think your family is complicated? Why or why not?

5th Grade

4. When **Isha** talks about her martial arts training, she says, “whatever you do, you have to scream as loud as you can.” Why do you think screaming loud was important to **Isha**? Have you ever been in a situation where it felt good to scream? What makes you need to scream?



5. **Ariana** gets upset when her teacher shows *Bring it On* because the boys just want to “see the little girls’ panties.” Why was this upsetting to **Ariana**? Have you ever seen a movie that made you upset the way *Bring it On* upset **Ariana**? Why did the movie upset you?

6th Grade

6. **Rosie** talks about music being an escape from reality. What books, movies, TV shows, or music do you enjoy? Do you see media as an escape? Do you think it’s good or bad to have ways to escape your life? What made you respond that way?
7. **Esmeralda**, **Rosie**, and **Ariana** all start to lose interest in school in sixth grade. Why do you think they lose interest? What makes you lose interest in school? What makes you want to do well?

7th Grade

8. In 7th grade, **Isha** says, “I’m happy being bad, and she [mother] knows it.” **Esmeralda** says, “I can’t be good for a whole day, no.” Why do you think **Esmeralda** and **Isha** said this? Have you ever thought being “bad” felt good?

9. When the girls get sex education, we see that **Isha's** mother won't allow her to watch the sex ed video at school. Later, we see **Ariana** having a conversation about sex with her mom and her aunts. What do you think about the way both parents approach sex education? How are their choices similar to or different from your parents' choices about your sex education? How do you feel about sex education? How do your parents feel?



10. **Isha** goes into a website called "chatpit" and tries out different names, such as "chocolate," "cutie pie," and "ghetto girl." Then she says that what she did was "wrong." Why do you think **Isha** felt that chatting online was wrong? Why do you think she chose the names she did? How do you choose your screennames? Have you ever said something online that you wouldn't say in a face-to-face conversation? Why is the internet good for learning about yourself and other people? Why is it bad? What are some things you need to do to stay safe online?

"13"

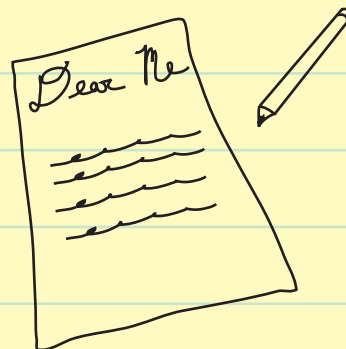
11. **Esmeralda** says, "You have to have attitude. You can't stay a little girl forever and not have attitude." Why do you think **Esmeralda** thinks "attitude" is so important? How do you feel about "attitude"?



12. When the interviewer asks **Isha** about turning 13, she says, "Yay!" and then grimaces. How do you think **Isha** really feels about turning 13? Why did she have a mixed reaction? How do you feel about becoming or being a teenager?

9 REFLECTION: *Write a Letter to Yourself*

For girls ages 11 and under: In the film, we see four years of four girls' lives in only a little over an hour. Did you think the girls mostly stayed the same or that they mostly were different by the time they were 13? When you think about becoming 13, what do you think will be different about yourself? What will be the same? Write a letter to your "older self" telling her what you want her to remember about being younger.



For girls ages 12 and up: In the film, we see four years of four girls' lives in only a little over an hour. Did you think the girls mostly stayed the same or that they mostly were different by the time they were 13? Think back to when you were nine years old. What about you was the same as now? What about you was different? Write a letter to your "younger self," or a younger relative or friend, about what you want her to know about growing up.

◇ RESEARCH: *Interview a Family Member*

Even though it sometimes seems like adults don't understand, every adult in the world has been your age. Most adults will be happy to talk with you about it. Interview a parent, grandparent, or aunt (or uncle) who is a woman if you're a girl (and a man if you're a boy). What about growing up was the same for the adult you interviewed? What was different? What surprised you?



IV. Discussion in a Group of Girls and Adults Together/ Parents and Guardians With Girls Together

Seeing *GOING ON 13* can serve as an opportunity for dialogue between girls and adults. In a mixed-age discussion, girls should always have the chance to speak first, but girls and adults can both answer all the following questions. The group may want to make group agreements for how the discussion will go: see suggestions below and on page 4 of this guide.

For parents/ guardians: If you are watching and discussing *GOING ON 13* with a group of other adults and girls, appoint one person as facilitator. If you are watching it with girls in a family or one-on-one setting, adopt a more intimate and informal style for discussion. Use these tips to get started:

- * Start out with a question that will bring you to the part of the film that interested your girl most, such as "what part stuck out most about the film for you?"
- * Share your honest thoughts about the film, but always give your girl the opportunity to share first.
- * Share comments about what in the film reminded you of your own adolescence and what was completely different from the way you grew up. Ask if these differences were foreign to your girl as well, or whether she's used to dealing with them in her life.
- * Draw comparisons between the film and your girl's life: did any of the girls remind you of your girl or her friends? Were the situations similar to things she'd encountered? Share these observations with your girl, but respect her if she disagrees with your assessment. Honor her expertise about her girlhood.

- * The conversation doesn't have to end after the film. If your girl isn't interested in discussion right away, that's OK; stay open to opportunities to talk about it in the future.

Discussion Questions For a Group of Girls and Adults Together



1. One of the first things we learn about **Esmeralda** is that people “call her fat” and that she faces prejudice for being Mexican-American (Chapter 1). The summer before 7th grade, she says, “I don't like nothing about myself” (Chapter 5). But when she's 13, she says, “I feel good about myself, even though people talk about me. I don't care what they think. I like the way I am” (Chapter 8). What do you think caused **Esmeralda's** attitude change? How did you feel when she talked about these three different ways of perceiving herself? Have you gone through different stages in the way you feel about yourself, like **Esmeralda** did? Which statement from **Esmeralda** best matches how you feel about yourself now?
2. **Esmeralda** says people “call her fat,” and she gets upset with her dad when he tells her she shouldn't eat a chocolate bar (Chapters 1 and 4). In the U.S., we have an alarming rate of obesity (32% of the population) and eating disorders (3% of the population). In the film, we saw girls and women with different body types, including heavier girls and women. Most girls and women we see on television or in movies are very thin. How did it feel to see girls and women with different body sizes? What kind of effect do you think body type has on a girl's life? What are some things girls can do to feel good about themselves, no matter what their body type?
3. After **Rosie's** mom starts therapy for her post traumatic stress disorder, **Rosie** says that she and her mom “take care of each other” (Chapter 5). Do you ever feel that the parent-child roles in your



family get switched so that kids “take care of” parents or other siblings? Is it good for roles to get reversed once in a while, or is it important for “adults to stay adults” and “kids to stay kids”?

4. This movie was about regular girls, like you and the girls you know. At one point, **Esmeralda** tells the film-makers not to tape her between classes (Chapter 6). How would you feel if you were part of a four-year documentary? Do you think you'd act differently when the documentary was being shot? Would you be completely honest when you answered interview questions? Do you think the girls and adults on this film were completely honest?
5. Most of the girls in the film have at least one immigrant parent. How are their experiences different from one another? How are they the same? How are their experiences different from or the same as your own?
6. At the beginning of the film, **Ariana** says that she wants to have children. She wants one child and to become a basketball star (Chapter 1). Later, she wants twins so she can “dress them alike” (Chapter 2). But when she's 12, she doesn't want any kids (Chapter 7). What do you think makes **Ariana** change her mind? Girls and adults: how many kids do you/ did you envision yourself having, if any? Has that changed? Do you think it will continue to change?
7. **Isha's** mother says that if **Isha** found a nice Indian boy, she would be in favor of **Isha** marrying him. But **Isha's** father expects to arrange a marriage for her (Chapter 3). Many cultures have match-making ceremonies or activities as part of their belief system. Do you know anyone who has had an arranged marriage? Do you think parents should have the right to arrange marriages for their kids? How would you feel if your parents arranged your marriage? What might be the benefit of match-making or an arranged marriage? Why is this appropriate in some cultures?

Definitions:

Arranged Marriage

When parents choose their child's spouse.

Quinceañera

A celebration in Latin American cultures which marks a girl's entry into adulthood when she turns 15.

8. At age 11, **Isha** says, "I don't want to get in trouble on my first day of school" (Chapter 4). But one year later, she says, "I'm happy being bad, and she [mother] knows it" (Chapter 6). What do you think made **Isha** change her attitude?
9. **Rosie** shows the filmmakers two sets of house rules. She points to one set of rules and said, "I didn't have any part in these rules!" (Chapter 5). Who makes the rules in your school, home, and clubs? Do you have rules at home, at school, or in other places that kids and adults have made together? Are the rules for girls different from the rules for boys? Why or why not? Are the rules different for children from different cultures? In what way? How are rules that kids and adults make together different from rules adults make on their own?
10. **Esmeralda** attends her older sister's Quinceañera, at which her sister is declared a woman "not as a sex symbol, but as part of society" (Chapter 5). Have you or anyone you know ever gone through a coming-of-age ceremony? If you could have a coming-of-age ceremony, what would it be like?



9 REFLECTION: *Letters to Adults and Girls*

For girls: Although the girls in the film were the focus, we also saw many interviews with adults in the girls' lives, such as parents and teachers. Did any of the adults in the film remind you of the adults in your life? How so? Write a letter to an adult in your life telling her / him what you want her / him to know about you, what you need from her / him, and what you think of her / him. (These letters can be shared or kept private).

For adults: While four years can seem like a long time for a girl, it can speed by for an adult. In this film, we got to see four girls grow up in just a little over an hour. Adults can often feel like the girls in their lives are growing up just as quickly. Write a letter to the girl in your life about what it's like to watch her grow up. How has she stayed the same? How has she changed? What are your hopes for her future? (These letters can be shared with girls or kept private).

◆ CREATE: *Coming of Age*



Many cultures have coming of age ceremonies for girls, such as the Quinceañera in Latin American culture and the Bat Mitzvah in Jewish culture. Yet in the U.S., there is no universal coming-of-age ceremony that all girls experience.

Girls: Think about what you'd like to do to celebrate "coming of age." What age would represent your entry into adulthood? Would you like a big bash or a quiet ceremony alone or with a few friends? If you'll have a Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, Quinceañera, or another coming-of-age ritual, what would you like to include in your ceremony? Using writing and art, create a plan for your ideal coming-of-age ceremony.

Adults: Did you have a coming of age ritual? Or was there an event in your life that marked your "transition" from childhood to adulthood? Write about how your own coming of age rituals or experiences shaped you.

V. Discussion Among Adults Who Work With and Care About Girls



GOING ON 13 can provide powerful insight into the lives of today's girls for parents, teachers, counselors, and other adults who care about girls. As adults who care about girls, talking to one another about the issues girls face and our concerns can aid our relationships with them. To create safe space for adult caregivers to have these types of courageous conversations we suggest that you create group agreements for how you will discuss the topics and your values and beliefs. The following questions are meant to open discussion about how we foster relationships with the girls in our lives.

Discussion Questions:



1. What in *GOING ON 13* was most surprising to you as an adult who cares about girls? How has the landscape of adolescence changed since you were a kid? Which issues are girls facing that you didn't have to face? How can you prepare yourself to help the girls you care about navigate these old and new challenges?
2. Although the film focused on the girls, we heard many adult voices as well. One teacher says, "Can we sit up in our seats, please? Like we're happy to be here?" (Chapter 2). **Isha's** mother says she won't tell her where babies come from "until she's 12" (Chapter 4). What were your personal responses to the adult voices in the film? How did you see these messages reflected in the lives of the girls? If your voice were in the film, what would it be saying?
3. At the beginning of the film, we see **Ariana** nearly in tears because she's so upset with her teacher's decision to play *Bring it On*. She insists the boys only voted for it to "see the little girls' panties" (Chapter 2). We don't see any adult response to **Ariana's** distress. As adults, how can we approach situations where "democracy" or "majority rules" has a damaging effect on girls?

4. What are some structural or policy changes that could happen if schools and programs were more “gender” conscious? How do race, class, and gender intersect in the film?
5. In *Meeting at the Crossroads*, Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan notice a troubling pattern of girls silencing their own needs to keep their “relationships.” *GOING ON 13* follows girls through the same definitive years. Do you feel the girls in *GOING ON 13* held on to their own voices as they got older? How did you feel as you watched them grow through adolescence?
6. Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan also talk about girls suffering under the “tyranny of nice,” the ethos by which girls feel compelled to accommodate others’ needs and/or not cause a ruckus. In direct contrast to the tyranny of nice, **Ariana’s** mother commends her for sticking up for herself, even though it meant she got suspended (Chapter 2). Did any of the girls in this film seem susceptible to the “tyranny of nice”? Did any of the adults perpetuate it? As adults, what messages can we give to help girls come through adolescence feeling strong, compassionate, and competent, rather than just “nice”?

9 REFLECTION: *Journaling*

Spend some time thinking about your own childhood. Did the film remind you of any incidents from your adolescence that you hadn't thought of in a long time? How does this affect the way you view the girls in your life?

Write down some of your memories, what you learned, and what you would want the same or different for the girls in your life.



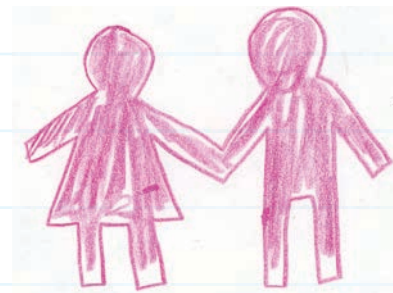
VI. GOING ON 13 and Hot Topics

In addition to exploring girlhood, *GOING ON 13* can be an effective catalyst for discussing hot topics, such as sex education and immigration reform. Below are some ideas for activities that can be done in classrooms or girl groups.

1. Sex Education (Chapter 6)

A whole segment of *GOING ON 13* is devoted to the girls' experience of sex education.

Isha's mother doesn't allow her to see the sex education video; later we see a male teacher answering questions about sex from female students. When **Ariana** gets home, she has a conversation about sex with her mom and aunts. Within the film, we see many different attitudes about sex. Like **Isha's** mother, many people believe kids should get their sex education at home. But others feel accurate sex education in school is important for every child.



Discuss:

Alongside debate about who should teach sex education, there's also disagreement about what sex education should teach. Right now, most schools in the U.S. teach abstinence-only sex education, which focuses on abstinence (not having sex) until marriage as the only way to avoid pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). But many people believe comprehensive sex education, which teaches about birth control, sexual orientation, and other sexual issues, as well as abstinence, is better. Discuss both viewpoints and why people might hold one viewpoint or the other.

Debate:

Begin by asking girls to write about which perspectives on sex education most closely match their own and why. Then have girls debate "parents only" sex education vs. school sex education and abstinence-only education vs. comprehensive sex education.

2. Immigration (Chapters 1, 3, 5)

Although we hear a lot about “immigration reform” in the news, we don’t often see stories about real immigrant families living in the U.S. In *GOING ON 13*, three of the four families were immigrant families, even though immigration wasn’t a focal point of the film.



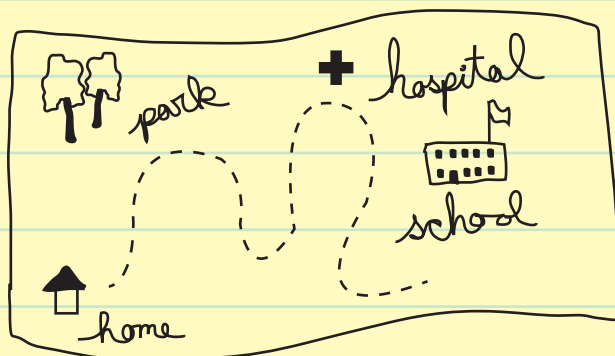
Discuss:

1. If you or someone close to you lives in an immigrant family, did you feel that *GOING ON 13* reflected your or your loved ones' experiences?
2. If you don't live in an immigrant family or know any immigrant families well, did *GOING ON 13* affect the perception you have of immigrant families?
3. Immigrant parents often do not know what “American” kids do for fun. What are ways in which immigrant children may be left out of social activities?
4. As an immigrant child, what are the challenges of fitting into American Society?
5. Are there ways that teachers/ youth workers could help navigate the gap between the home culture and the culture of the systems in the U.S.?
6. What would you tell people who don't know the unwritten “rules” about how to get along in middle school?

Introduce girls to HR447—which calls for a border along the U.S.-Mexican border and strict penalties for employers and others who help undocumented immigrants—or other bills or laws that deal with immigration.

CREATE:

- * Ask girls to draft a list of all the things they'd include if they were creating their own immigration bill.



- * Draw a map of your school or neighborhood for someone who is just arriving in the U.S. for the first time. What places would you make sure she knew how to find? (Bathrooms in a school, grocery stores in a neighborhood, etc.) Write a list of 10 tips about living in the U.S. (or your neighborhood) for someone who has just arrived. Share maps and tips with the group when finished.

3. Gender Roles (Chapter 1, 2, 4)

Ariana says she's not "the baby doll type" and gets upset when her teacher plays *Bring it On* because she thinks the boys just "want to see the little girls' panties," but later we see a collection of *Bratz* dolls in **Ariana's** room. **Esmeralda** says a pink room is her "wish." And **Isha** chooses feminine names such as "cutie pie" when she chats on the internet.



Discuss:

Did gender roles affect the girls in the film? How did they reject or embrace gender roles? How do gender roles affect you and your friends?

CREATE:

Cut images out of magazines or old books, calendars, or posters that perpetuate or challenge gender roles. Make two collages from the images you've cut: one that shows girls and women as strong and smart and one that shows girls and women in stereotyped ways. Share these collages with each other.





4. Mental Health (Chapter 5)

Rosie talks about how it stresses her out when her mother “curls up into a ball” because of her PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). PTSD is a mental illness that causes the sufferer to continue reliving a traumatic experience, such as abuse or war, in her mind. People who have PTSD may have feelings of sadness or depression about their trauma, but PTSD is different from depression. Besides PTSD, millions of people—adults and kids, females and males—are living with mental illness, including depression (overwhelming feelings of sadness or numbness), obsessive compulsive disorder (the need to perform certain “rituals” repeatedly to feel safe), and bipolar disorder (swinging between extreme feelings of happiness and extreme feelings of sadness). Mental illnesses can be triggered by something that happens in someone's life, but they're more than just a “feeling.”

A mental illness such as depression is as real as a physical illness, like diabetes. You can't “snap out” of a mental illness anymore than you can “snap out” of diabetes, but people with mental illness can cope with and overcome their mental illness through alternative and traditional therapies, medication, support, and/or lifestyle changes. Unfortunately, many people still don't take mental illness seriously and it can be harder to get treatment than for physical illness; for example, some health insurance companies will pay for physical therapy after a car accident, but not psychological therapy (“talk therapy”) after a traumatic experience. In addition, the social stigmas against mental illness often lead to a lack of public dialogue and thus a lack of or limited access to needed services.

Definition:

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder:

Called PTSD for short, post traumatic stress disorder is a mental illness caused by living through a traumatic experience, such as being abused or bullied or fighting in a war. People with PTSD often have flashbacks about their trauma, which can lead to nightmares or panic attacks. Not all people who suffer trauma develop PTSD, and those who do can often find help through therapy and other methods.

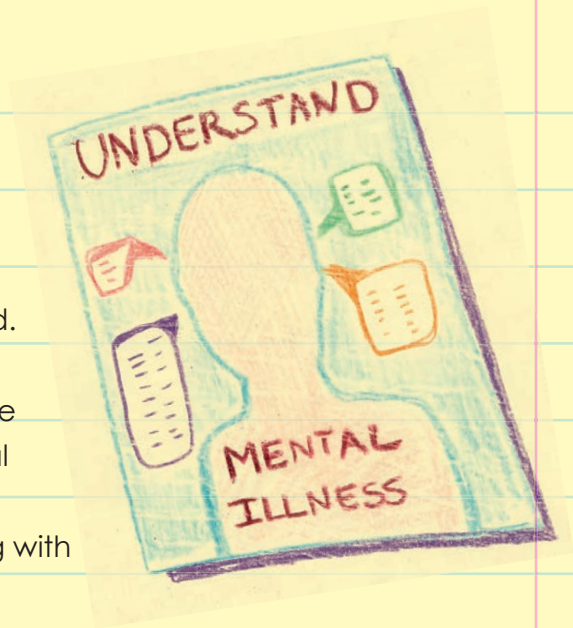
Almost half of all people in the U.S. will struggle with mental illness during their lifetime. So although mental illness can make someone feel very alone, in reality millions of people have experienced it. It's important to remember that someone with a mental illness is MORE than just her illness; a girl who has depression isn't just a "depressed girl," but a whole girl who has interests, dreams, relationships, and personality.

Discuss:

1. Why do you think people take mental health less seriously than physical health?
2. **Rosie** talks about her experiences with her mom's PTSD; she says that it sometimes stresses her out. How do you think having a mother who struggles with mental health affected **Rosie**? Have you been in a situation like hers, or do you know someone who has?

CREATE:

Sometimes, kids and adults with mental illness face cruel behavior or teasing because mental illness isn't well-understood. Imagine you work for a mental health clinic, and one of your jobs is to help people understand mental illness. Choose a mental illness to research and create posters, diagrams, and other visual aids to go along with a presentation for your classmates.



Often, kids and adults who struggle with mental illness don't get help because their health insurance doesn't cover mental health or because doctors and others don't take them seriously. Imagine that you're making a law that will help people struggling with mental illness. What would you include in the law?

VII. Resources



If you have resources, discussion questions, and/or activities to share based on your viewing of the film please post them on our website.

Check out www.goingon13.com and the following resources for further study on the topics from *GOING ON 13*.

For Adults:

Meeting at the Crossroads

by Lyn Mikel Brown and Carol Gilligan
One of the definitive works about girls' development, in which L.M. Brown and C. Gilligan conduct a series of interviews with one hundred girls as they navigate adolescence.

The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls

by Joan Jacobs Brumberg
An examination of how girls' bodies came to occupy so much of their time and resources.

Girls Will Be Girls

by JoAnn Deak
An accessible study of the neurobiology of girls.

How to Say it to Girls

by Nancy Gruver
A user-friendly guide for discussing tough topics with the girls in your life, regardless of their age.

Daughters of the Moon, Sisters of the Sun: Young Women and Mentors on the Transition to Womanhood

by K. Wind Hughes and Linda Wolf
Autobiographical stories from girls who participated in *Teen Talking Circles*. (www.teentalkingcircles.org)

So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids

by Jean Kilbourne and Diane E. Levin.
A practical guide for parents who are fed up with the sexualization of girlhood.

Packaging Girlhood

by Sharon Lamb and Lyn Mikel Brown
Guides adults who care about girls through the messages marketers send to girls.

Under Her Skin: How Girls Experience Race in America,

edited by Pooja Makhijani
A collection of essays about race and girlhood.

School Girls: Young Women, Self Esteem, and the Confidence Gap

by Peggy Orenstein
Oreinstein interviews 8th grade girls to discover what causes them to fall into traditional patterns of self-censorship and self-doubt.

Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls

by Mary Pipher
A close look at how the culture pressures girls to lose spark, voice, and confidence as they enter adolescence.

Ophelia Speaks

by Sarah Shandler
In response to *Reviving Ophelia*, Shandler has compiled this collection of girls' voices, addressing various topics in their own words.

Urban Girls: Resisting Stereotypes, Creating Identities

by Niobe Way
Explores what it's like to be a teen in an American city.

Big Brothers, Big Sisters

(www.bbbs.org)
Organization for adults to mentor kids and make a lasting difference in their lives.

Children NOW

(www.childrennow.org)
For people who care about making children a priority in public policy.

Girl Media Maven

(http://girlmediamaven.blogspot.com) Nancy Gruver's blog for adults who care about girls.

ShapingYouth

(www.shapingyouth.org)
A forum about the effect of media and marketing on kids.

The Power of Hope: Youth Empowerment Through the Arts

(www.powerofhope.org)
Camps that offer training for adults and expression through art and culture for youth.

For Girls:

All Made Up

by Audrey Brashich

A book that helps girls examine the hype associated with unrealistic beauty standards and celebrity culture.

Girls, Incorporated: Inspiring Girls to Be Strong, Smart, and Bold

(www.girlsinc.org) A non-profit organization dedicated to providing resources and support to girls everywhere.

Mitali's Fire Escape

(www.mitaliblog.com) Author Mitali Perkins' blog which examines "life between cultures."

New Moon Girl Media

(www.newmoon.org) The original girl-created magazine and online community bringing girls' voices to the world. *New Moon Girl Media* celebrates girls for what they do and think rather than how they look.

orb28

(<http://orb28.blogspot.com>)

New Moon Girl Media's blog for girls ages 13 – 15.

Teen Talking Circles

(www.teentalkingcircles.org)

Teen Talking Circles give youth a "safe space to tell the truth." Linda Wolf, founder/executive director of *Teen Talking Circles*, contributed her insights about working in a mixed gender setting to this guide.

Teen Voices

(www.teenvoices.com)

With the tagline, "because you're more than just a pretty face," *Teen Voices* hosts a website and publishes a bi-annual magazine for and by teen girls.



Other Films to Discuss With Girls:

Some of the films listed below contain mature content. Please research the film or watch it first before sharing it with the girls in your life.

New Day Films

For a complete list of educational, documentary titles please go to *New Day Films*. (www.newdayfilms.com)

Quinceañera

As Magdalena's 15th birthday approaches, her simple, blissful life is complicated by the discovery that she's pregnant. Kicked out of her house, she finds a new family with her great-granduncle and gay cousin.

Juno

A film about a 16-year-old girl dealing with an unexpected pregnancy. The movie received critical acclaim and has been lauded for its presentation of a fully developed girl character. It's also criticized for "glamorizing" teen pregnancy.

Real Women Have Curves

Teenage Ana is torn between her desire to go to college and her parents' insistence that she start working to help support the family.

Girls Like Us

A documentary following the lives of four teenage girls in Philadelphia, examining how class, sexism, and violence affect girls' dreams.

5 Girls

A documentary focusing on how five teenage girls find the resources they need to navigate adolescence.

Love and Basketball

Ariana's favorite film follows a girl and boy through their adolescence and the basketball and friendship that unites and divides them.

Bend it Like Beckham

A Sikh girl is caught between her desire to play soccer and her parents' plans for her to prepare to be a good Indian bride.

Ma Vie En Rose

A transgender boy fights to live his childhood as a girl.

"A Girl Like Me"

This short documentary examines how beauty standards affect Black girls' self image. You can view it online here:

www.mediathatmattersfest.org/6/a_girl_like_me/

Killing us Softly

Jean Kilbourne's *Killing us Softly* series examines images of women in the media over the past 20 years.

Tough Guise

Examines the construction of masculinity in the popular culture.

About New Moon Girl Media

This study guide was created by *New Moon Girl Media*, the original girl-centered media organization for girls ages 8 – 15+. The mission of *New Moon Girl Media* is to bring girls' voices to the world in ways that matter. We fulfill our mission by keeping girls at the center of our organization through our pioneering Share the Power method of integrating girls as decision-makers in all aspects of our decisions. *New Moon Girl Media* provides innovative, high-quality content in safe, respectful, advertising-free spaces online and in the magazine. *New Moon Girl Media* supports girls and the adults who care about them as they grow in self-confidence, creativity, and the courage to pursue their individual dreams.

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