

# What Interventionists Should Know from Research on Girls

Lecia J. Barker  
ATLAS Institute  
University of Colorado  
National Center for Women & IT



# Fighting the System

- No Child Left Behind: testing, narrow range
- Colleges don't require CS
- Computing focused on IT literacy/fluency

*U.S. educational policies undermine achievement of national priorities*



# Recruitment is More Than “Interesting” Girls

- Communication intended to induce someone to join a group
- Conceptions of social identity, belonging, in-group/out-group
- Target must see that one can have an appropriate identity in that group



# Competing Identities, Goals

- {Gender, race, ethnic, class, etc.} identity varies across dimensions, relationships, situations
- Student, daughter, Latina, friend, girlfriend, tennis player, sister, cool kid...
- Trying to fit into these situations
  - Especially middle school



# Recruiters' Implicit Assumptions

- Kids are free and rational choosers, planners
- Maximize satisfaction of prioritized interests
- Individuals isolated from the conflicts between commitments, personal values, social forces



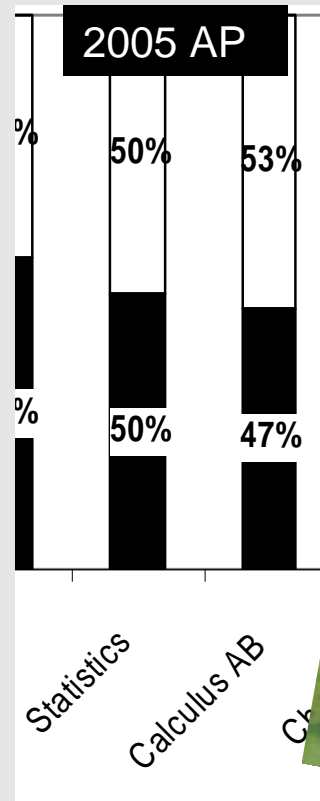
# Interest, Career Overestimated

- Focus on an individual's existing interest in computers or likes/dislikes
  - “If you like computers” “If you are creative”
- Attempts to create individual interest
  - Often gender-stereotyped images
- Talk about “career” and money



# Reinforcing Expectations

- Show belief in myths/stereotypes
  - Girls don't like competition
  - Girls don't like math or science
  - Liking math is required/desired



# Reinforcing Expectations

- Reinforce beliefs one is trying to overcome by stating them
  - “I see a lot of young ladies here...but in general people think it’s kind of a guy thing...I’m gonna show you that there are things for girls to do too.”



# HS Students Would Tell Kids...

- Safe community
- Non-lecture, collaborative learning environment
- Education you can use
- Expressive, creative
- Family values it



# What do you want to do when you grow up?

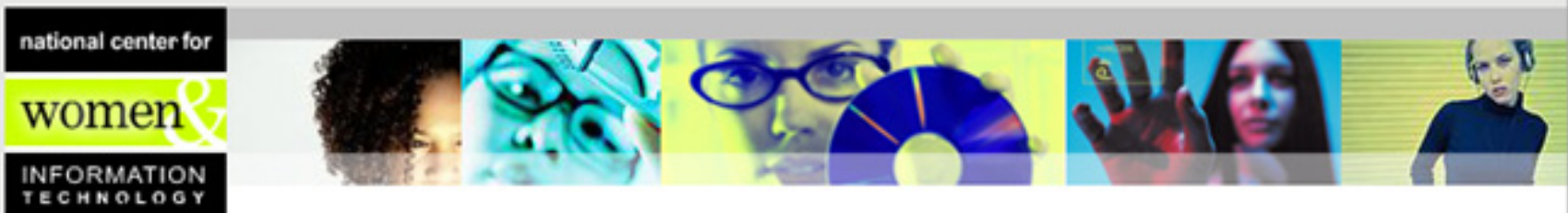
Surveys 1,300 middle school girls

	N/1300	%
Medicine	193	15%
Veterinarian	119	9%
Science	106	8%
Law	73	6%
Arts	73	6%
Engineer	59	5%
Teacher	51	4%
Law enforcement	35	3%
Sports	33	3%
Tech work	31	2%
Architect	25	2%



# Interest *and* Community

- Hook girls into IT through current interests
- Half of girls don't want to be path breakers
- Show them they can belong



# What About Role Modeling?

- Snapshot approach can backfire
  - Foster intimidation of the audience
  - Foster conflict of personal & social expectations
- Must be relevant to current lives, projected future
- Realistically attainable
- Unclear how you “do” it

