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# Promiscuities: The Secret Struggle For Womanhood



## Synopsis

In this provocative and highly personal book, bestselling author Naomi Wolf explores a subject that has long been taboo in our society: women's sexual coming-of-age. *Promiscuities* brazenly exposes the truths behind the conflicting messages directed at young women during and after the sexual revolution. Drawing on surprising examples from the ancient and recent past, along with vivid recollections of her own youth, Wolf shows how our "liberated" culture still fears and distorts female passion. She also shares fascinating true stories that illustrate the fantasies and sometimes crippling realities women pass through on their way toward erotic and emotional discovery. A landmark book, *Promiscuities* is a call to women of all ages to reclaim and celebrate their sexuality.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Part memoir, part exposé, *Promiscuities* is Naomi Wolf's (author of *The Beauty Myth* and *Fire with Fire*) perspective on the confusion surrounding female sexuality. According to Wolf, promiscuous is "a word that holds within it the mixed message girls today are given about sex: 'You're promiscuous if you do anything, but you are a prude if you do nothing.'" Thus, still polarized on the spectrum between virgin and whore, adolescent girls are allowed little information and even fewer healthy outlets for their normal sexual desires. Wolf shatters the illusion that good girls and professional women are not sexual, and boldly embarks on redefining female sexuality outside of men's experience and assumptions. Wolf's own coming of age in the post-sexual revolution of Haight-Ashbury, serves as an evocative tool for revealing the naked and admirable truth of female sexuality. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Wolf has written passionately about the effects of popular culture on female self-image in numerous articles and books (The Beauty Myth, LJ 4/1/91). Her newest work centers on the way American culture of the late Sixties and Seventies created a generation of females torn between the need to express their sensuality and the desire to meet society's behavioral expectations. To illustrate her position, Wolf relies almost exclusively on the coming-of-age experiences of herself, her friends, and acquaintances in her hometown, San Francisco. Overgeneralization abounds as she attempts to apply the microcosmic events of this mostly white, middle-class, liberal milieu to a whole generation. A new stereotype is presented in which all girls wanted to be Barbie and all teenagers viewed loss of virginity as the key to attaining "womanhood." There is a desperate defensiveness in the tone of this book, which, in spite of references to other sociological and anthropological studies, diminishes the force of Wolf's argument. Fans of the author as well as expected talk-show appearances will nevertheless generate demand for this work. Libraries should purchase accordingly.-?Rose M. Cichy, Osterhout Free Lib., Wilkes-Barre, Pa.Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

The book is partly a memoir about growing up in San Francisco in the early 1970,s and partly a set of ideas about sexual liberation. Wolf and her friends had no restrictions set by adults and yet imposed a rigid set of rules on each other. They respected parents who were more traditional. She suggests that women became victims of sexual permissiveness. The double standard persisted, she thinks, in ways that made life more difficult for girls. The story is told so well that it is worth reading for its own sake as entertainment. Wolf is a superb writer but not in the first rank as a social theorist. She is a master of the ability to set a scene with a single memorable phrase, such as describing a shabby building with walls of "stucco the color of dirty erasers." Her theories may be valid but the evidence that she adduces to support them is very subjective. Primarily she relies upon her own intuition and the reports of a small group of friends she grew up with. She does quote from the literature but does so uncritically. Some of the anthropologists' reports she cites about coming of age rituals and so forth are of dubious authenticity. There are almost no reports of statistics or surveys

The cover is not sticking to the original cover; it seems not original. I hoped if I found it with Kindle though

It was okay but not outstanding.

Great book. Delivered on time.

Fast trade and great quality Naomi Woolf famous for previous feminine texts. This examines how females have had to re frame themselves in the light of a patriarchal and consumerist economy.

I bought this book because of the author's work "Vagina

Naomi R. Wolf (born 1962) is an author and journalist, who has written books such as *The Beauty Myth*, *Misconceptions: Truth, Lies and the Unexpected on the Journey to Motherhood*, *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How It Will Change the 21st Century*, *The Treehouse: Eccentric Wisdom from My Father on How to Live, Love, and See*, etc. [NOTE: page numbers below refer to the 287-page hardcover edition.] She wrote in the Introduction to this 1997 book, "How do we turn girls into women?... What ordinary contemporary girls can choose to do, and what is done to them, is very different, a much more intense drama, than it has ever been before. I wanted to retrieve this secret struggle for womanhood that now characterizes female coming of age—the following is not a polemic but a set of confessions, a subjective exploration based on a collection of real-life stories." Another reason I felt the need to tell these stories has to do with history. Women my age and younger have inherited a sexual script, derived from both the feminist and the sexual revolutions, that is by now out-of-date—or, rather, that requires a new ending. These ordinary secrets of female adolescence are the ones you will read about in this book. (Pg. xv-xix) She explains, "Some of these tales are drawn from memory. Others are drawn from conversations I had with the women whom I sought out in 1996 in my hometown. The lives that follow are not representative. All the women whose stories I recount are white and more or less middle class with certain clothing, language patterns, and belief systems. This book is about one subset of that tribe. I write about this tribe because it is the one I know best." (Pg. xxvi-xxvii) Later, she adds, "I hope what remains intact is the essence of a group of girls coming of age in a particular set of circumstances in late twentieth-century urban America. This is how we grew. And this is how it felt." (Pg. xxx) She states, "I think that we who were small in the early sixties were perhaps the last generation of Americans who actually had a childhood, in the sense of childhood as a space distinct in its roles and customs from the world of adults, oriented around children's own needs and culture rather

than around the needs and culture of adults. (Pg. 13) She recalls that she and a friend read magazines as teenagers: "The books lied to us: they equated youth with liberty. The magazines told the truth: they offered rules. With the books, our vision of the future would expand; with the magazines it would contract." (Pg. 87) She comments, "When I told my parents that Ben had struck me---I lied, and said it was just once---they immediately made me stop seeing him. I have no doubt that the fact that the women's community was raising consciousness about domestic violence at the time helped them to be so quick to intervene. I was glad they made me. At that point, I could not have made myself. (I would like to describe that intervention to everyone who has ever dared to assert that feminism failed. For all I know, it saved me from real harm.)" (Pg. 94-95) She observes that Simone de Beauvoir wrote in *The Second Sex* that "one is not born a woman, one becomes one." The irony is that our culture does not make women very well. It scarcely notices, let alone values, the tests girls desperately set themselves. No one expects teenage girls to identify with the grandiose struggles for self-creation of male adolescence---to want to forge in the smithies of their souls the uncreated conscience of anything much at all. (Pg. 134) A friend told her, "[Sex] felt very controlled compared to all the other things in my life. The script was written, the costumes were set, the roles were there---and you could just step into it and know what to expect. Whereas all that other stuff was breaking down." (Pg. 176) She says about being a young woman, "It wasn't true, what they promised us---that we could go where we wanted to go and lie down and yield our bodies to strangers, take our pleasure and put on our lipstick in the morning and call a cab. It was not true. It had been one long, inveigling dream. The slits got nailed, just as they always been, just as we always, beneath our bravado, feared." (Pg. 207) She wonders, "[Emma] Goldman was in this way no different from so many women: a feminist with genuine ideals waging an internal war with [her] feelings for a man. Or a woman with a living mind and a living body. Can we make room for so much vitality in ourselves, in the world, in other women?" (Pg. 220) She suggests, "Obviously, girls need better rites of passage in our culture. Such rituals, we have seen, require rigor, separation from males and from the daily environment, and the exchange of privileged information. It is important, for such rituals, for grown women outside the family to be part of that initiation." (Pg. 230) She asks, "What would our culture---and our divorce rate---look like if we dared to teach men the skills that could keep women's bodies happy in monogamous lives?... What would our violent landscape look like if men believed that true masculinity meant becoming an extraordinary

love to a life partner? What would we get if we let women's passion truly enter and dwell in our social world? Above all else that would accrue to us, we would have our girls enter into womanhood fully alive. (Pg. 232-233) This book is much more personal than it is political; it will be of keen interest to anyone interested in the psychology of young women (and girls!) in modern society.

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