

Title: The Princess Industrial complex

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This article about the growth of 'girlie-girl' merchandising and market, focusing on the Disney Princess doll market, really made me think about the differences in attitudes about raising girls in America and New Zealand. Two main sources of information and opinion that Clifton uses are American researcher Peggy Orenstein and New Zealand psychologist Sue Jackson. Orenstein seemed to me to be over the top in her claim that parents and children had no power against the huge industry that has grown around presenting fairy princesses as innocent but helpless role models for girls. She says that the 'US\$4 billion Disney Princess franchise' deliberately targets little girls at a vulnerable age, 'four-year-olds, what are in what is called 'the inflexible stage''. I think that her claim that Disney deliberately exploit this age because it is 'the precise moment that girls need to prove they are girls' and so present them with really 'exaggerated images...to shore up their femininity' is over the top. I know that I had a Barbie Princess doll when I was a pre-schooler, but it wasn't the only type of toy that I had. Yes, pink was my favourite colour when I was little, but I don't think that I was confused or brainwashed. It was just a toy! I'm surprised that Orenstein seemed so hung up about the fights she had with her own daughter about what she calls 'girlie-whirly toys'. Surely a parent who knows so much about this would have some influence or even give her some non-girlie toys and experiences to make up for it? I like how Clifton balances Orenstein's quite extreme view of the total influence of these toys with some research from our own country. I learned that Jackson's findings were far more in line with my own ideas and experiences. She found that in NZ girls had more involvement with family, toy animals and lots of pet cats. Sounds like me!

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