

THEORIZING AMERICAN GIRL

A Thesis presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
VERONICA E. MEDINA

Dr. David L. Brunsmas, Thesis Advisor

MAY 2007

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

THEORIZING AMERICAN GIRL

Presented by Veronica E. Medina

A candidate for the degree of Master of Arts,

And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor David L. Brunsmma

Professor Mary Jo Neitz

Professor Lisa Y. Flores

DEDICATION

My journey to and through the master's program has never been a solitary one. My family has accompanied me every step of the way, encouraging and supporting me: materially and financially, emotionally and spiritually, and academically. From KU to MU, you all loved me and believed in me throughout every endeavor. This thesis is dedicated to my family, and most especially, to my parents Alicia and Francisco Medina.

Mom and Dad: As a child, I often did not recognize and, far too often, took for granted the sacrifices that you made for me. Sitting and writing a thesis is a difficult task, but it is not as difficult as any of the tasks you two undertook to ensure my well-being, security, and happiness and to see me through to this goal. For all of the times you went without (and now, as an adult, I know that there were many) so that we would not, thank you. I love and respect both of you more than you can know.

To my brother Frank: Because you are the voice inside of my head asking "Why? What does that mean? Why does it matter?," I am a better writer (I hope). Thank you for challenging me to say what I need to say in the best way possible. Thank you, too, for encouraging me to develop as a scholar by sending me all of the best books and pointing me to all of the right thinkers. It paid off, I think.

To my sister Missy: Your passion for learning and loving is not lost on me. You have always challenged me to be a better person, to myself and to others.

You are, by far, my best friend in the world and an inspiration to me. Because I am now taking root in another city, I am thankful that you and Jim (thank you, Jimmy!) have allowed me to “come home” whenever I have needed to and you have never once complained. On so many occasions your home has been a much needed refuge. Thank you!

To Joseph and John Paul: I am blessed to have two fantastic little brothers who remind me of the importance of having fun and enjoying life, even when times are tough. Thank you for reminding me that there is more to life than just books.

I love each and every one of you very much. This final product is yours, too.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis came to fruition under the supervision and support of my advisor Dr. David L. Brunσμα. Simply saying supervision and support, however, does not fully capture the dynamics within our advisor-advisee relationship and within the thesis writing process. I can admit that I was not often (an understatement!) the easiest advisee to work with (a stubborn procrastinator who was-- and in some ways, remains-- fearful of failure and overwhelmingly busy), but Dr. Brunσμα's infinite patience, keen ability to troubleshoot, and his unwavering encouragement were crucial for this project's completion. I am exceptionally grateful for Dave's continued faith in my abilities and capabilities when others might have lost their religion.

I am very much indebted to Dr. Mary Jo Neitz. Dr. Neitz provided incredible support and feedback on this project throughout all of its stages and forms. Never in my academic career have I felt so challenged by coursework and projects; it is a wonderful feeling to be pushed to one's intellectual limits and Mary Jo is an amazing guide on this journey of intellectual discovery. I would also like to thank her for extending an invitation to me to join FRG. I extend a special note of appreciation to members of FRG (Ann Breidenbach, Cherith Moore, Kendra Yoder, and Steve Kehnel) for showing me the ropes of feminist scholarship and activism and for engaging me in very fruitful dialogue with regards to this particular venture.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Tola Pearce and Dr. Magdalena Garcia-Pinto for their significant contributions to this project by way of the graduate seminar in post-colonial feminist theory. It was an academically invigorating course and provided me with a chance to expand upon my project in previously unimagined ways. A word of appreciation goes out to Dr. Joan Hermsen for the academic and personal support she extended to me through all stages of my thesis research, including the times of “topical uncertainty.”

Dr. Lisa Flores deserves special recognition for all she has done to foster in me the skills and confidence needed to persevere in the academy; she is a mentor extraordinaire! I am very appreciative of having the opportunity to find an “adoptive” academic home in Education, School, and Counseling Psychology. The opportunities and experiences provided to me by Dr. Flores (as well as the members of her research team-- thank you, ladies! -- and those individuals associated with the Center for Multicultural Research, Training, and Consultation) are allowing me to develop into the interdisciplinary scholar to which I aspire. Thank you, Lisa, for taking me under your wings and teaching me to fly.

Aside from the support and encouragement I received from my thesis committee and other faculty, I would also like to acknowledge some of my graduate student colleagues who have shaped this project in direct and indirect ways. Matt Lammers and Diane Rodgers can now confidently say, “We told you so.” Thank you for enduring countless conversations about this project, for pointing me to invaluable references, and for your friendship and mentorship. Priya Dua provided brilliant feedback and commentary on earlier drafts of this

thesis which has significantly strengthened the arguments presented. Finally, I cannot overlook the importance of being able to nourish my body and soul during this process so I would be remiss to leave out my Friday night dinner dates.

Kuo-yang Tang does indeed have “the best Chinese restaurant in Columbia” and it is in this space that I have been able to share my joys, sorrows, frustrations, fears and, on occasion, silliness, with him, Amy Lane, Maksim Kokushkin and Jennifer Correa. Without these dinners I would not have been able to maintain my health, my sanity or my sense of humor so I am extremely grateful. Thank you all for your friendship and encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
ABSTRACT.....	ix
Section	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Meet American Girl	
<i>The American Girls Collection</i> and the Production of “Static Ethnicities”	
Locating Kaya and Josefina	
2. THEORIZING INTERNAL COLONIZATION.....	15
What is Internal Colonization?	
Native American Internal Colonization: The Nez Perce Case	
Latino Internal Colonization: The Mexican American Case	
Internal Colonization from a Feminist Postcolonial Perspective	
Problematizing Native Informants and Oppositional Consciousness	
3. THEORIZING AN “AMERICAN GIRL-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX”.....	33
4. CONCLUSION.....	43
“Static Ethnicities” Revisited	
Implications of a Critical Approach to American Girl	
APPENDIX	
Table A1: <i>The American Girls Collection</i> Chronology by Introduction	
Date.....	52

Table A2: *The American Girls* Collection Chronology by Year

Represented.....	53
REFERENCES.....	54

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
A1. <i>The American Girls Collection</i> Chronology by Introduction Date.....	52
A2. <i>The American Girls Collection</i> Chronology by Year Represented.....	53

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Conceptual Model of the “American Girl-Industrial Complex”.....	35
2. Conceptual Model of the American Girl Cultural Universe.....	40

THEORIZING AMERICAN GIRL

Veronica E. Medina

Dr. David L. Brunsmas, Thesis Advisor

ABSTRACT

Pleasant T. Rowland designed *The American Girls Collection* with the goal of providing a line of toys and books to “enrich the lives of American girls by fostering pride in traditions of growing up female in America and celebrating the lifestyle of girls today.” However, American Girl presents a *whitewashed* version of girlhood *and* nationhood. This project addresses how American Girl constructs constrained, yet commercially profitable, Native American and Latina racial and ethnic identities for its consumers through the characters Kaya and Josefina.

Historical omissions and misrepresentations contribute to perpetuating the myth that the legacies of internal colonization experienced by Native Americans and Latinos are individual problems, rather than structural ones. Additionally, theorizing internal colonization in *The American Girls Collection* cannot take place outside of addressing how American Girl creates self-reinforcing cultural industries to produce and market its products and a particular set of “American” ideologies and values for consumption by young girls.

Introduction

American Girl is, as evidenced by its impressive sales figures, exponential growth and ever-increasing name recognition, “one of the nation’s top direct marketers, children’s publishers, and experiential retailers” whose mission is to provide “books and playthings to foster girls’ individuality, intellectual curiosity, and imagination” (American Girl 2006 “About our Company”).¹ American Girl’s mission is honorable, but, in all actuality, the company and its products are becoming their own “American Girl-industrial complex” worthy of sociological analysis.² Many real-life girls seem to relish in all that American Girl has to offer and the potential consequences of girls’ participation in this complex should not be overlooked or underestimated.

In addition to marketing consumable commodities, American Girl is in the business of marketing particular ideologies about the meanings of girlhood, nationhood, and “American” identity.³ American Girl’s proponents, who include educators and parents, suggest that the company’s characters and products inspire girls to realize their own integrity, courage, and ingenuity. Parents’

¹ In January 2004, Pleasant Company officially changed its name to American Girl (American Girl 2006, “Press Releases:” January 9, 2004). Research conducted before 2004 contains references to the company’s old name (i.e. Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel 2002, Acosta-Alzuru 1999).

² See Chrys Ingraham (1999) and Amy Best (2000) for discussions on the interrelatedness and interdependence of multiple industries in the production, marketing, and consumption practices involved in weddings and proms, respectively. Their discussions influenced conceptualizing the production, marketing, and consumption practices involved in girls’ construction of an “American” identity (Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel 2002) through American Girl products as such a complex.

³ American Girl appears to uncritically employ the terms *America* or *American* to refer to the territories and people (contemporarily) identified with(in) the political and geographical boundaries of the United States. In my analysis, I will utilize *United States* or *US-American* to recognize that the United States is only one portion of two continents identified as *America*.

glowing testimonials for the “educational aspects of the collection, the realism of its characters, the presentation of positive role models, and the overall wholesomeness of the concept” have made their way into popular press outlets (Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel 2002:140; Acosta-Alzuru 1999:3). Some *critics* even commend American Girl for their attempts to address some of the most uncomfortable episodes in US-American history (such as slavery and war) and for providing opportunities for girls to see themselves in exciting and active main character roles (Talbot 2005; Nielsen 2002).

American Girl’s representation of girlhood is not accessible to all girls; the products and services offered by American Girl are cost-prohibitive and generally only attainable through exclusive outlets. Perhaps most importantly, the “American” identity constructed by American Girl is not a very inclusive category and is predicated on economic and racial privilege (Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel 2002). This project seeks to address how American Girl constructs (*and constrains*) Native American and Latina racial and ethnic identities for its consumers. I apply several framings of internal colonization to an analysis of the stories of Kaya and Josefina Montoya, two characters in *The American Girls Collection*. However, theorizing internal colonization in *The American Girls Collection* cannot take place outside of a discussion about the processes of production, marketing and consumption of American Girl branded products.

Meet American Girl

Pleasant Rowland, a former teacher and textbook author, is the founder of American Girl. According to Rowland, she developed *The American Girls*

Collection in response to two particular events. First, when shopping for dolls to present to her nieces at Christmas in 1983, Rowland was disappointed in the lack of aesthetic appeal, quality, and intellectual substance offered through products such as Cabbage Patch Kids and Barbie. She recalled that these dolls “didn’t say anything about what it meant to be a girl growing up in America” (Morgenson 1997, as quoted in Nielsen 2002:85). More importantly, Barbie and other doll lines “celebrated being a teen queen or a mommy” but did not provide girls with “uplifting” or empowering role models and presented a stifling vision of “girl culture” (Talbot 2005). The following year, Rowland visited colonial Williamsburg, Virginia. As Talbot (2005) tells it, “[Rowland] loved the material culture of history, the stuff you could touch... and wondered whether there was a new way to market this tangible history to children” when she hit upon the idea of creating a doll line to represent girls in various periods of American history (Talbot 2005).⁴ By 1986, Rowland’s vision became a reality and her company released the first three dolls in *The American Girls Collection*.⁵ Having celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2006, *The American Girls Collection* now boasts a total of eleven “nine-year old fictional heroines [who] live during important times in America’s past, providing ‘girl-sized’ views of significant events

⁴ The exact order of these events is uncertainly recorded. Nielsen (2002) lists Rowland’s trip to Williamsburg first and her Christmas shopping experience second, in 1983, but Talbot (2005) suggests both the trip and shopping experience occurred in the same year, 1984.

⁵ The Appendix features two useful chronologies. Table A1 provides, in ascending order, the years in which characters were introduced into *The American Girls Collection* and Table A2 features, in ascending order, the eras the characters represent.

that helped shape our country, and [they] bring history alive for millions of children” (American Girl 2006 “Brand Overview”).⁶

The American Girls Collection is the company’s signature book and doll line. Since its founding in 1986, American Girl has sold over 111 million books and 12 million dolls (American Girl 2006 “Fast Facts”). In 2001, several *New York Times* articles suggested that titles from *The American Girls Collection* had outsold J. K. Rowling’s Harry Potter novels (Nielsen 2002).⁷ According to their introductions on the American Girls website the girls represented in *The American Girls Collection* are: daring (Kaya); spirited (Felicity and Elizabeth); hopeful (Josefina); brave (Kirsten); courageous (Addy); compassionate (Samantha); resourceful (Kit); and patriotic (Molly and Emily).⁸ These characters defy girls’ stereotypical portrayals in textbooks and children’s literature as inactive, being reliant upon boys for help, waiting on boys to fix things, using things boys invent, and just generally being available and expected to wait on and serve boys (Sadker and Sadker 1994). This has important positive implications for improving perceptions about women and girls in US American society. Myra and David Sadker (1994) assert, “When children read about

⁶ American Girl’s “Brand Overview” webpage features only the names of the characters in *The American Girls Collection* introduced prior to 2002. Between 2004 and 2006, American Girl introduced three new historical characters who are not mentioned in a description for this line.

⁷ Nielsen (2002:92, n1) writes, “It is fair to point out that there are many more American Girl books than Harry Potter novels, and that the first were published in 1986, a decade before the first Harry Potter appeared... The essential point remains, however: the American Girl books, works of historical fiction, have sold very well.”

⁸ For these abbreviated descriptions, see: <http://store.americangirl.com/agshop/static/character.jsf/title/Historical+Characters/saleGroupId/0/uniqueId/4/nodId/11/webMenuId/5/LeftMenu/TRUE>. More detailed descriptions are provided by clicking on the links for each character.

people in nontraditional gender roles, they are less likely to limit themselves to stereotypes” (p. 69).

Since its inception, American Girl has continually responded to the growing demand for new American Girl dolls and books. In addition to *The American Girls Collection*, American Girl offers doll lines for younger children (*Bitty Baby* and *Bitty Baby Twins*). The “Just Like You” doll line, which debuted in 1995, allows girls to “customize” dolls to reflect their unique personal features such as skin tone, eye shape and color, and hair texture, length and color.⁹ And, to keep up with a changing society and reflect modern-day girls’ “diverse range of personalities and backgrounds,” American Girl created the “Girl of Today” doll and book line in 2001 (American Girl 2006 “Brand Background”). Compared to *The American Girls Collection* in which all the characters are Christian,¹⁰ “The Girl of Today” line features Lindsey, a Jewish character (Atkinson 2001). It also features a character whose parents come from two different cultural backgrounds; Jess’s maternal great-great grandparents are from Kyoto, Japan, and her paternal great-grandparents are Irish and Scottish (Casanova 2006). Of course, for each doll line available, American Girl offers an attendant line of character-specific accessories (clothing, hair accoutrements, shoes, furniture, etc.). From American Girl’s depictions, no girl is able to fully identify with her

⁹ For a critique on the cost-prohibitive nature of producing “difference” in doll lines, see Ann duCille (1994). While the “Just Like You” dolls can be customized, the forms of modification are constrained by production capabilities and cost.

¹⁰ Fred Nielsen remarks, “As long as each six-book series includes a Christmas book (the _____’s *Surprise* volume for each Girl), the religious homogeneity will continue” (2002: 92, n5). Kaya is not a Christian but she was not introduced to *The American Girls Collection* until after Nielsen’s article made it to print. Christian missionaries Henry and Eliza Spalding did not arrive in Nez Perce territory until 1831 (Raymer 2003).

chosen doll (and best friend!), however, without the availability of child-sized versions of the doll's various outfits.

Within the last few years, American Girl began to cross-market its products with other large name-branded companies. In 2005, American Girl partnered with Bath & Body Works and released “**Real**beauty Inside and Out” and “Truly Me,” a personal care product line and signature fragrance, respectively (American Girl 2006 “Press Releases:” July 27, 2005 and August 3, 2005). Hallmark, a major greeting card and collectibles distributor, offered American Girl-branded products through its retail outlets and website. In October 2005, items for sale included “*The American Girls Collection* Samantha’s Tea Set,” “The American Girls Deluxe Stationery Set,” and “The American Girls Address Book with Pen.”¹¹

American Girl merchandise (dolls’ and girls’ clothing and accessories, books, and branded products) is available through the company’s mail order catalog or website but these avenues of acquisition pale in comparison to purchasing a doll on-site, or participating in services and events, at one of three American Girl’s retail outlets.¹² As Talbot (2005) aptly notes, each American Girl Place is meant to be more than just a store; “they [are] destinations for families, safe harbors for innocent girlishness and mother-daughter bonding.” Each of the three American Girl Place locations features a hair salon (for dolls only), a doll

¹¹ As of 2007, the Hallmark website is no longer featuring American Girl-branded products.

¹² American Girl Place-Chicago (off Michigan Avenue) is the company’s flagship location and opened in 1998. American Girl Place-New York (on Fifth Avenue) opened in 2003 and the third American Girl Place (Los Angeles, in The Grove shopping district) opened in early 2006.

hospital to rectify unfortunate mishaps, a café (girls and mothers receive real brunch, lunch and dinner options and dolls receive imaginary treats), and a theater (where girls can screen *American Girl* feature films or a Broadway-style musical revue). Finally, girls can commemorate their visit to American Girl Place with a photo shoot in which they will appear on mock *American Girl Magazine* covers with their dolls (Talbot 2005). The three American Girl Place locations have been so successful for the company that American Girl announced it would open two spin-off franchises, American Girl Boutique and Bistro, in the summer of 2007 in Dallas and Atlanta. Much like the Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles locations of American Girl Place, these new stores are locating in premier locations for select markets (American Girl 2006, "Press Releases:" January 16, 2007).

How internal colonization is represented through *The American Girls Collection*, and why that matters, must be located within the context of a complex of exploitive industries that produce and market American Girl-branded products to a socially-privileged consumer base. Pleasant Rowland sold her company to Mattel, Inc., the toy mega-corporation that manufactures Barbie, in a \$700 million deal, in June of 1998. After the sale, Rowland sat as Mattel's vice chair until her retirement in 2000 (Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel 2002). She retained full control of the American Girls line and the company remained an independent subsidiary of Mattel. However, by 2005, American Girl became a *wholly-owned* subsidiary of Mattel (American Girl 2006 "Brand Overview").

Beryl Langer (2004) contends that the construction of childhood as an innocent time “rests on children’s ignorance of how their toys and treats are made” (p. 262). As with other corporations connected to the culture (and cultural industries) of childhood like Disney and Hasbro, Mattel is implicated in the “ironic contradictions and disjunctions” of global capitalism (Langer 2004:263). The features of global capitalism (i.e. subcontracted production through the exploitation of surplus rural labor in Export Processing Zones) negatively, and disproportionately, affect women and children of color, especially those in the “developing” world who produce toys and games which they cannot themselves consume. When placed against the ideological backdrop of childhood (and in this particular analysis, “American girlhood”) as a place and space of enchantment and innocence, American Girl products “are not only signs, but objects, and the ‘real’ conditions of their production are irredeemably disenchanting” (Langer 2004:266).

American Girl and the Production of “Static Ethnicities”

The characters in *The American Girls Collection* represent eras from as early as 1764 through 1944. Generally speaking, their stories are set against the backdrop of significant and meaningful events in US-American history including the American Revolution (Felicity and Elizabeth), waves of migration to and settlement in the Great Plains (Kirsten), the Civil War (Addy), the U.S. Victorian era (Samantha and Nellie), the Great Depression (Kit), and World War II (Molly and Emily). The burden of imparting almost two hundred years of United States history rests on the shoulders of the eleven 18”-tall dolls that comprise *The*

American Girls Collection. They also carry an additional burden: the dolls perform ideological work (duCille 1994). Carolina Acosta-Alzuru (1999) notes, “Through the catalogs’ and books’ text, the dolls/characters....are made to represent each historical period by presenting them as the personification of the United States in each of these eras. In this way, the dolls/characters and country are portrayed as mirror images of each other” (p.27).

No girls of color are represented in US historical events beyond Reconstruction in *The American Girls Collection*. Addy Walker, the lone African American, is situated 1864 and 1865, years that are firmly entrenched in the collective memory of US-Americans because they represent a time of crisis in national identity. Addy escapes from slavery with her mother and her story personifies the search for personal and group freedom. Addy invokes family and, by extension, national reunification (Acosta-Alzuru 1999). Kaya was not introduced into *The American Girls Collection* until 2002, but she is billed as the “*First*” American Girl.¹³ However, she is “a Nez Perce girl growing up *before* America became a country” (Shaw 2004, my emphasis added). Josefina Montoya is a “Hispanic girl of heart and hope”¹⁴ living in New Mexico in 1824 (Acosta-Alzuru 1999:26). Acosta-Alzuru (1999) draws attention to the fact that Josefina *cannot* personify the United States because New Mexico remains part

¹³ This is a unique US-American appropriation of the non-legal term “First Nations” people, used to refer to indigenous and aboriginal Canadian people such as the Inuit (Assembly of First Nations 2006 “Fact Sheet: Terminology”).

¹⁴ American Girl’s use of *Hispanic* as an ethnic identifier for Josefina is problematic because it is anachronistic. As Portes and MacLeod (1996) note, *Hispanic* was adopted by the United States Census Bureau in 1980 to count and categorize a diverse group of people with Latin American ancestry without regard for national origin or citizenship status, race, ethnicity or class background.

of Mexico until 1846, the year US soldiers invade Santa Fe and establish US rule.

Moreover, with regard to Josefina, Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel (2002) propose, “There is a notable contrast in they way Kirsten and Josefina are represented in the catalog and books” (p. 147). Based on their analysis Kirsten, the Swedish immigrant, presents a more plausible representation of ethnic incorporation into US society. Kirsten’s character learns English and mixes Swedish styles of dress with American ones; she becomes an American Girl who just happens to have Swedish roots (Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel 2002). In contrast to Kirsten, Josefina’s “outfits and accessories do not mix and blend her New Mexican heritage with American style and objects” (p. 29).

Kaya and Josefina’s historical placement-- geographically and temporally-- represent “non-events” which both implies and reinforces the invisibility of indigenous populations’ existence in and contributions to US-American history.¹⁵ American Girl contributes to the production of “static ethnicities,” or a perception that certain populations are incapable of “evolving” and fully participating in contemporary US society. Kaya and Josefina, and by extension, real Native American and Latina girls, are not represented in US-American historical events that are encoded with meanings of US-American progress. Because they span virtually the entire 200 years that American Girl represents in *The American Girls Collection*, it appears that only the Euro-American girls can convey the

¹⁵ This analysis does not focus particularly on the lack of African American representation beyond 1864 in *The American Girls Collection*, but the point is further addressed in the conclusion.

emergence of the United States from a bullied English colony to a mighty global military power.

Placing Kaya and Josefina in periods prior to US-Americans' contact with indigenous populations in the Northwest and prior to the United States' expressly imperialistic and militaristic ventures into the Southwest allows American Girl to ignore the United States' legacy of internal colonialism, including its material, cultural and psychological consequences. Before moving on to discuss theoretical perspectives on internal colonization, I highlight some important dates in Nez Perce and New Mexican history. These events had (and continue to have) significantly negative consequences for generations of real Nez Perce and New Mexican people, therefore theories of internal colonization must connect to "flesh and blood experiences" and the material realities of the lives of the colonized (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983:23).

Locating Kaya and Josefina

Kaya is situated in the Northwest Territory in 1764. Anthropologist Peter Wood (2002) notes that in 1764, US-Americans had not yet made contact with the Nez Perce. He remarks, "Lewis and Clark won't come trudging through Nez Perce territory until 40 years later, and Chief Joseph's heroic evasion and eventual surrender... to the U.S. Army lies more than a century away" (Wood 2002). Nez Perce culture was at its peak during Kaya's time (Wood 2002), but their society underwent significant change after the arrival of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in the autumn of 1805. Fur traders followed Lewis and Clark into the Northwest Territory, as did other settlers. Christian missionaries arrived

in Nez Perce lands in 1835; their attempts to convert the Nez Perce to Christianity intensified in 1843 with the institutionalization of whippings for those who resisted. Many Nez Perce staged armed rebellions against increased encroachment by settlers and the military personnel sent to the area to protect them (Harris and McFarland 2000).

Pressure by the federal government to control Nez Perce resistance to Anglo settlement increased. In 1855, the United States government authorized Washington territory's first governor to use force to move Nez Perce and neighboring tribes from their homelands to reservations. The discovery of gold on Nez Perce lands in the 1860s further diminished the tribe's control over their homelands. Although many Nez Perce refused to accept or recognize its terms, the Treaty of 1863 further reduced the amount of land on which they could live. Conflict between those Nez Perce who resisted White American policies and those who did not continued to escalate (Harris and McFarland 2000).

The United States government's declaration of war against them in 1877 was perhaps the most devastating event to befall the Nez Perce. Roughly 800 Nez Perce traversed over 1,000 miles-- east, through the Bitterroot Mountains in what is present-day Idaho and Montana, and north toward Canada-- in an attempt to escape U.S. soldiers. After four months of flight and fighting, Chief Joseph surrendered and the United States government then forced the surviving Nez Perce into prisoner-of-war camps in Kansas (Raymer 2003) and reservations in Oklahoma (Harris and McFarland 2000). Exposure to disease, starvation, and the elements on their journey to, and while imprisoned in, these

camps further decimated the Nez Perce population (Harris and McFarland 2000; Raymer 2003). Finally, in 1889, the Nez Perce were allowed to return to their Northwest reservation. Harris and McFarland (2000) report, “The reservation as it exists in the present maintains the 1889 boundaries and represents a diminishment of Nez Perce land from over 7.5 million acres to less than 90,000 acres. The threat of land take over remains in the present day, for large parts of the reservation are owned by non-natives” (p. 4).

Fast-forward 60 years and we meet Josefina Montoya. Josefina is situated in the New Mexican territory in 1824, just as the new “*americano* traders arrive from the East” via the Santa Fe Trail (American Girl Publishing 2007). Prior to 1821, New Mexico was under control of the Spanish colonial government and trade with the United States was forbidden (La Pierre 1999). Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821 and the ban against trading with the United States was lifted. The Santa Fe Trail (as well as the Oregon and California Trails) allowed for increased commerce and migration between New Mexico, other western territories and the United States.

At the time when Josefina’s story takes place, the institutionalization of Manifest Destiny, “the belief that the United States was guided by a providential destiny” to expand westward, is still 20 years away; it became official federal policy in 1845 (Johannsen 1997:10). Influential supporters of Manifest Destiny such as Massachusetts Representative Caleb Cushing justified westward expansion on the grounds of spreading civilization to the uncivilized. These justifications were, of course, rife with racist undertones. Cushing argued,

although somewhat inconsistently throughout his political career, that Native American removal in western territories was inevitable because of the “absence of laws, inferior political organization, and the holding of common property” (Belohlavek 1997:26). Moreover, Mexicans brought armed conflict with the United States upon themselves because of their “intolerable spirit... and their ignorance, passion, and indiscretion in dealing with foreigners and foreign investment” (Belohlavek 1997:38).

The United States government declared war on and invaded Mexico in 1846 when it refused to sell its northern territories. US-American forces defeated the Mexican army in 1848. The two nations signed the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo and Mexico annexed the territories that comprise present-day Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California (Anzaldúa 1999). Through the terms of the treaty, Mexico lost half a million square miles, or roughly half of its land area (La Pierre 1999; Anzaldúa 1999). What may be most significant, however, is that after the annexation of Mexico’s northern territories approximately 100,000 Mexican citizens became citizens of the United States virtually overnight (Anzaldúa 1999).¹⁶ As will be discussed later, however, Mexican Americans’ claims to the rights and benefits of U.S. citizenship are historically precarious. Mexican Americans “have thus experienced a negative mode of incorporation not only at present but for over 100 years” (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:277).

¹⁶ Although granted to New Mexicans of Spanish-descent, citizenship rights were not extended to “Indians” living in these annexed territories (La Pierre 1999).

Theorizing Internal Colonization

What is Internal Colonization?

Broadly speaking, colonization refers to the process by which one nation or state crosses geopolitical boundaries and attempts to exert power and control over people (or groups of particular people) residing in another nation or state (Brunsma *forthcoming*). It is external—the colonizing force moves outside of its borders and into the borders of others. Internal colonization, then, is “a similar structure *within* a given nation-state, typically against a socially marked group” (Brunsma *forthcoming*, my emphasis added). In his article “Internal Colonisation, Development and Environment” Peter Calvert (2001) states that the earliest use of *internal colonization* “referred to physical conquest within, not across, political boundaries” (p. 51). He goes on to note that the term “often implies the subjection of ethnic minorities to a dominant culture” or the “dominance of one race over another” (Calvert 2001:52). Do Native Americans and Mexican Americans, whose ancestral homelands are contemporarily socio-politically bounded within the borders of the United States, comprise internal colonies?

Yes.

Several structural components illustrate conditions of internal colonization. The experiences of the colonized are marked by political disenfranchisement within one’s country of origin or residence, economic disadvantage and exploitation within the home society, occupational subordination, socio-psychological humiliation within and through cultural manipulation and

misrepresentation, and cultural commodification (Brunsma *forthcoming*).

Brunsma (*forthcoming*) notes, “States often utilize the tools and models of [external] colonialism against people within its own borders to effectively create internal colonies out of groups like African Americans or Native Americans.”

The state, however, does not work alone in creating these structures of domination, however. In the context of this particular analysis, commodity culture and culture industries like American Girl exist and operate “within a structure of colonialism [that] can affect individual and collective repertoires of action, thought, belief, and behaviors” for and about the internally colonized (Brunsma *forthcoming*). Like “multicultural” Barbie, American Girl’s Kaya and Josefina “are at once a symbol and a symptom of what multiculturalism has become at the hands of contemporary commodity culture: an easy and immensely profitable way off the hook of Eurocentrism that gives us the face of cultural diversity without the particulars of racial difference” (duCille 1994:51-52). The “particulars of racial difference” that are erased in *Kaya’s Story Collection* and *Josefina’s Story Collection* are the outcomes of Native Americans’ and Mexican Americans’ experiences in systems and processes of internal colonization.

Native American Internal Colonization: The Nez Perce Case

The indigenous inhabitants of North America can stand anywhere on the continent and look in every direction at a home usurped and colonized by strangers who, from the very beginning, laid claim not merely to the land and resources but to the very definition of the Natives. (Owens 2001:14-15)

Readers do get a glimpse (literally and figuratively) of the 1877 Nez Perce War in *Welcome to Kaya’s World 1764: Growing Up in a Native American*

Homeland.¹⁷ The Nez Perce War is covered in just over two pages and readers learn that Nez Perce are allowed to return to the Northwest twenty years after being sent to prisoner-of-war camps (Raymer 2003:49-51). Yet, the material and cultural consequences of the Nez Perce War are downplayed. In the remaining seven pages of the book there are no images or illustrations of Nez Perce reservations nor is contemporary reservation life discussed. In fact, American Girl goes so far as to suggest, “The Nez Perce people have lost much over the past 200 years, but they have never lost their spirit... The Nez Perce people have worked hard to keep their culture alive and strong no matter where they lived, *and they have succeeded*” (Raymer 2003:52, my emphasis added). Have they? Harris and McFarland (2000) explain, “The Nez Perce way of life had [social and psychological] protective factors ingrained into their culture” (p.3). These factors were significantly suppressed through physical exile from native homelands, forced religious conversion, coerced cultural assimilation in state-sponsored boarding schools, and the imposition of white US-American mainstream culture.

Nez Perce people lived as nomadic hunters and gatherers prior to US-American migration to their territories. Although Cushing could not see a structured or organized legal or political system in Native American communities as noted above (Belohlavek 1997), the behavior of tribe members was regulated by “positive peer pressure” and a profound need for social interdependency

¹⁷ American Girl offers a non-fiction series of books called *Welcome to _____'s World*, in which the historical periods corresponding with each character in *The American Girls Series* are explored through photos and illustrations. Ironically, the characters' historical locations and the histories discussed in the *Welcome to _____'s World* books do not quite coincide.

(Harris and McFarland 2000:2). Social interdependence was a key value and organizing feature in Nez Perce life, as was ecological interdependence. Tribal cohesion and solidarity was threatened by two processes: adherence to the terms of the Treaty of 1863 offered by the United States government and adoption of the values, beliefs, and practices (especially, religious ones) of white US-Americans.

According to Harris and McFarland, “Nez Perce who accepted the Treaty were not [immediately] impacted by the land diminishment, while those who rejected it suffered the loss of tribal homeland” (p. 3). The schism between Christian and non-Christian Nez Perce still exists in the present day (Harris and McFarland 2000). Nez Perce respect for and reliance on the environment clashed with settlers’ desires for land acquisition. General Oliver Howard, who commanded U.S. forces in the war against the Nez Perce, told Nez Perce leader Toohoolhoolzote, “We do not wish to interfere with your religion, but you must talk about practicable things” (Josephy 1971, p. xvi, as quoted in Harris and McFarland 2000:4). Failure to recognize that Nez Perce respect for the environment was not just a religious framework but also a set of socially valuable and ecologically necessary practices has contributed to the near extinction of several animal species on which the tribe historically relied, including salmon, gray wolves, and bison (Raymer 2003).

Unlike Raymer, Harris and McFarland make *explicit* connections between state-sanctioned colonization of Native Americans and the attendant processes of cultural subversion and degradation. The negative effects of resettlement are

contemporarily experienced. Harris and McFarland (2000) note that “the white way of life introduced alcohol” to the Nez Perce (p.4). Other risk factors are evident at multiple levels of Nez Perce life. On the social level, many Nez Perce communities lack employment opportunities to foster economic self-sufficiency. Nez Perce youth demonstrate a lack of cultural pride, lack of knowledge regarding culturally-specific religious values or traditions, and limited bonding with community members. Schools cannot, or do not, bridge cultural gaps between Nez Perce children and administrators. A lack of activities that focus on Nez Perce culture prevents students from bonding with their schools. On the individual level, Nez Perce students’ academic performance is poor or failing and they cannot demonstrate age-appropriate career-related goals (Harris and McFarland 2000).

Harris and McFarland (2000) argue that, when celebrated, honored, and affirmed, culture is a protective factor that can enhance an individual’s and group’s quality of life. Cultural therapy, practices which draw upon one’s unique identity as a member of a culturally-distinct group, works to develop connections between community and individual, reduce social marginalization, and empower participants (Harris and McFarland 2000). The impetus for stressing Nez Perce clients’ rich cultural legacy through therapeutic practices arises from studies that suggest rates of alcohol and drug use increase when Nez Perce clients identify with mainstream (white) culture. Conversely, greater association with a spiritual (Nez Perce tribal affiliation or church membership) identity is correlated with

decreases in alcohol and drug use among Nez Perce clients (Harris and McFarland 2000).

Louis Owens (2001) writes, “It is apparently delightful to caricature Native Americans as sports mascots and in movies, but as long as real people are hidden from sight on rural lands reserved for their containment, it is unnecessary for the dominant culture to even contemplate the Natives’ quality of life” (p. 21). American Girl should be commended for not attempting to caricature the Nez Perce people. However, they should not be allowed off the hook so easily because they produce only a partial account of the history of the Nez Perce. Situating Kaya in 1764 takes her out of the context of the explicitly imperialistic and militaristic state policy of Manifest Destiny. Kaya is 160 years too early for forced dispossession and resettlement. While addressed superficially in the non-fiction companion text, reservation life remains conveniently hidden from the consciousness of American Girl’s socially privileged consumers.

Latino Internal Colonization: The Mexican-American Case

In *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality*, Mario Barrera (1979) argues that “the imperial expansion of the United States [into southwestern territories previously controlled by Mexico] resulted in internal colonialism, a condition which Chicanos have shared with other racial minorities,” such as Native Americans (p. 218). Barrera’s focus is on the class segmentation that results from contact and conflict with US-American settlers, especially *after* the Mexican American War in 1848. Although Josefina represents the pre-war

era, New Mexicans like Josefina experienced economic subordination resulting from American economic expansion.

Prior to Anglo-American encroachment in the New Mexican territory, self-sufficient haciendas and debt peonage characterized the economy of the southern portion of the territory. The organizing economic features of the northern part of New Mexican territory were subsistence farming and sheep herding in communal villages (Barrera 1979). In *Welcome to Josefina's World 1824: Growing Up on America's Southwest Frontier* readers learn, "As trade between the United States and Mexico increased and more Americans began settling in New Mexico, the U.S. government began to feel that these lands should belong to the United States... When Mexico refused to sell its northern lands, the United States declared war in 1845" (La Pierre 1999:56).

Other than noting that Mexico lost a half a million square miles of land after their defeat in 1848 (LaPierre 1999), there is no mention of the impact on individuals like Josefina. Within the course of sixty years, if she lived to be in her seventies, Josefina would have seen a dramatic increase in land privatization with the settlement of economically powerful Anglo cattle ranchers. Barrera (1979) writes, "With the economic boom and the movement of Anglos into the state, the pressure on the land increased. From that point on, the process of land transfer accelerated" (p. 24). It was sped, up, too by the Mexican government's inability to hold the United States accountable to the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. According to Anzaldúa (1999), "The land established by the treaty as belonging to Mexicans was soon swindled away from

its owners. The treaty was never honored and restitution, to this day, has never been made” (p. 29).

Dispossession of Mexican-Americans occurred as they became increasingly unable to pay fixed land taxes to Anglo-American land grant companies and Anglo-American investors seized up the land at significantly reduced prices (Barrera 1979). The irony of internal colonization is that the colonized may first be physically dislocated which leads to becoming economically disenfranchised. Then they may have no recourse from further economic exploitation (Brunsma *forthcoming*). Anzaldúa remembers (1999):

In the 1930s, after Anglo agribusiness corporations cheated the small Chicano landowners of their land, the corporations hired gangs of *mexicanos* to pull out the brush, chaparral and cactus and to irrigate the desert. The land they toiled over had once belonged to many of them, or had been used communally by them... To make a living my father became a sharecropper. Rio Farms Incorporated loaned him seed money and living expenses. At harvest time, my father repaid the loan and forked over 40% of the earnings. Sometimes we earned less than we owed, but always the corporations fared well (p. 31).

As this example suggests, Mexican-Americans’ experiences of economic disadvantage and exploitation satisfy one of the structural components of internal colonization.

Barrera (1979) also notes that Anglo conquest in the Southwest contributed to a colonial labor system in which Mexican Americans and Chicanos were occupationally subordinated. As internal colonies, Mexican Americans in the Southwest experienced labor repression, or conditions in which coercion and legal restrictions limited their occupational opportunities and rights. They also faced a dual wage system, a practice which “consists of paying one wage to

minority workers and another to nonminority workers who perform the same task” (Barrera 1979:41). Job (or occupational) stratification is third form of occupational subordination that New Mexicans experienced at the hands of white US American colonizers in the nineteenth century. Occupational stratification, an informal rather than institutionalized practice, uses racial or ethnic categorization as a determinant for classifying workers as suitable or unsuitable for particular jobs. Generally speaking, Mexican Americans and Chicanos were relegated to the most dangerous and menial jobs across all major industries in the Southwest (agricultural labor, herding, mining, and railroads) by the turn of the century. Anglo-American employers viewed Mexican American and Chicano laborers as expendable and often dismissed them in times of economic depression (Barrera 1979).¹⁸

The features of a colonial labor system, including and especially labor repression and occupational stratification, are still in practice today and they have taken on many of the dimensions of global capitalism, which will be discussed shortly. As Anzaldúa (1999) reminds us:

*Los gringos had not stopped at the border...Currently, Mexico and her eighty million citizens are almost completely dependent on the U.S. market. The Mexican government and wealthy growers are in partnership with such American conglomerates as American Motors, IT&T and Du Pont which owns factories called *maquiladoras*... It is illegal for [undocumented] Mexicans to work without green cards. But big farming combines, farm bosses and smugglers who bring them in make money off the “wetbacks” labor—they don’t have to pay federal*

¹⁸ According to Barrera (1979), “The system of colonial labor appears to have been based on racial rather than ethnic distinctions” (p. 49). All racial minorities living in the Southwest at the time (including Chicanos, Native Americans, Blacks, and Asians) were occupationally subordinated, especially in comparison to whites. Barrera (1979) further notes that, on occasion, Chicanos were displaced from their low positions in the colonial labor system by other racial groups.

minimum wage, or ensure adequate housing or sanitary conditions (pp. 32, 34)

Land appropriation and occupational subordination by Anglo-Americans in Mexico's northern territories set the stage for "creating and perpetuating the colonial status of Chicanos" in the United States and those living in its borderlands today (Barrera 1979:218).

Social-psychological humiliation is another condition which marks Latinos' experiences with internal colonization. Portes and MacLeod (1996) argue that when an ethnic identity is imposed upon an individual or group by cultural outsiders it is a form "symbolic violence" (p. 528). Because the individuals or members of a particular group "cede their original [racial or ethnic] identities not so much out of interest, but out of inability to resist external pressures" (Portes and MacLeod 1996:528) it creates social and psychological conflicts for the newly-named communities. In the United States, "*Hispanics*" became Hispanic not because "they" wanted to, but because the United States government needed a convenient way to count people within the population who shared Spanish language and ancestry as a common linguistic and cultural root. However, the unique heritage and traditions of people as varied as Bolivians, Guatemalans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans are collapsed and conflated into a pan-ethnic identity that neither affirms nor celebrates one's nationality, or national origin or cultural group. Additionally, being grouped into an umbrella or catch-all category fails to produce an overarching solidarity among contemporary Latin American-descended groups (Portes and MacLeod 1996).

Portes and MacLeod (1996) find adoption of ethnic identities varies greatly between national origin groups. Among major Latin American nationalities, children of Mexican origin follow Nicaraguans in choosing to call themselves *Hispanic*. They also find that “the higher the indicator of socio-economic status,¹⁹ the lower the incidence of Hispanic identity” (Portes and MacLeod 1996:534). For children of immigrants, adopting *Hispanic* rather than an American or national origin ethnic identity, is related to decreased expectations for attending college, decreased self-esteem, and higher reported incidences of discrimination.²⁰ Although Portes and MacLeod could not identify causality in their study, the findings raise important concerns for *Hispanic* children.²¹ Whether this pan-ethnic identity is voluntarily adopted or forced upon one by the state, it “is not associated with a positive adaptation profile, but with several dimensions of disadvantage” (Portes and MacLeod 1996:541).

Setting Josefina in New Mexico in 1824, rather than after the US-American invasion of Mexico in the mid 1840s, is convenient for American Girl. It allows them to ignore the legacies of internal colonization that have plagued Mexicans and Mexican Americans for last century and a half, including the structuring of nativism and racism into economic and occupational opportunities

¹⁹ In their study, parents' home ownership (did they own or rent) was the proxy for socioeconomic status (Portes and MacLeod 1996).

²⁰ Portes and MacLeod (1996) classified students' ethnic self-identifications “into four mutually exclusive categories: non-hyphenated American, hyphenated American, non-hyphenated foreign nationality, and Hispanic” (p. 533).

²¹ While not demonstrating causality, their study did indicate that “acceptance of the term Hispanic is *not* associated with greater acculturation or socioeconomic advantage.”. In other words, national origin groups that are “better-off” are “more capable of resisting the symbolic violence of unwanted outside labels” (Portes and MacLeod 1996:536).

in the Southwest territories and forced assimilation into dominant US-American culture. American Girl confidently claims that the contemporary Southwest “is a vital part of the United States that reflects all the cultures of the people for whom it is home—including Spanish, Mexican, Indian, and Anglo” (Tripp 2001:397) Really? Anzaldúa disagrees. From her perspective, the only “legitimate” culture and people in the Southwest are Anglos and all others are considered “transgressors, aliens—whether they possess documents or not, whether they’re Chicanos, Indians or Blacks” (Anzaldúa 1999:25).

Internal Colonization from a Feminist Postcolonial Perspective

Redman, redskin, savage, heathen, injun, american indian, first americans, indigenous peoples, natives, amerindian, native american, nigger, negro, black, wet back, greaser, mexican, spanish, latin, hispanic, chicano, chink, oriental, asian, disadvantaged, special interest group, minority, third world, fourth world, people of color, illegal aliens-- oh yes about them, will the U.S. government recognize that the Founding Fathers (you know George Washington and all those guys) are this country’s first illegal aliens.

We are named by others and we are named by ourselves. (Cameron 1983:51-52)

US third-world feminists often address issues of internal colonization in their writings because it represents the conditions of their existence within society, generally, and within feminist movements, especially. Their lives and the lives of their female ancestors have been marked by gender domination and oppression as well as hierarchies of race, class, culture, and sexuality (Sandoval 2003). These oppressions are not only inflicted upon women of color by whites; their own people and cultures subjugate them. For centuries, women of color, especially Indians and Chicanas, have been enslaved, viewed as a “force of

cheap labor, colonized by the Spaniard, the Anglo, by her own people (and in Meso-America her lot under the Indian patriarchs was not free of wounding)” (Anzaldúa 1999:44-45).

Much of the previous discussion incorporated these themes from feminist postcolonial perspectives on the conditions of internal colonization. In line with applying a postcolonial feminist framework for understanding internal colonization in *The American Girls Collection*, issues of authority, positionality and authenticity are presently addressed. Who writes, and what they write, about “American Girls” and US-American history matters. In what follows, I take up a discussion about applying (and problematizing the use of) two concepts from feminist postcolonial theory in an analysis of *The American Girls Collection*: native informants and oppositional consciousness. “Native informants” are individuals who translate and interpret their cultures for outsiders, and most specifically, for socially-privileged researchers (Khan 2005). Oppositional consciousness is an important tactical device with which the internally colonized can resist the matrix of dominant ideologies that subjugate them. Once a subjugated group becomes self-conscious of its position, that position can become a site of resistance (Sandoval 2003). Oppositional consciousness, then, is a form of “political revision that denies any one ideology as the ‘final’ answer” (Sandoval 2003:89). One could argue, too, that oppositional consciousness denies that there is only one version of, or intention behind, a particular story. US third-world feminists (“radical women of color” according to Moraga and Anzaldúa) speak back to their oppressors, challenge their positions as subordinated or objectified subjects, and

offer an incredible amount of insight about their experiences as the colonized. This is an important contribution to general feminist scholarship, and particularly to postcolonial theory.

Problematizing Native Informants and Oppositional Consciousness

The stories about Kaya and Josefina were not, in fact, written by women of color although the stories *are* about the lives and experiences of girls of color. Valerie Tripp, who earned an undergraduate honors degree from Yale in 1973 and a Masters of Education from Harvard in 1981, is the author of the books in *Josefina's Story Collection*.²² Janet Beeler Shaw, author of *Kaya's Story Collection*,²³ earned an undergraduate degree from Goucher College and a master's degree in English from Cleveland State University (Children's Literature Comprehensive Database 2004). Both women are Anglo-Americans.

According to both authors' biographies, each conducted in-depth field research. Tripp "involved her whole family in her research trips, spending several summers in New Mexico. Illustrator Jean-Paul Tibbles also did on-site research" (Joyce 1997). Similarly, with the assistance of American Girl staff and the Nez Perce Tribe, "Shaw conducted extensive research at museums, native cultural centers, and historical sites in the plateau region to develop Kaya"

²² The books included in *Josefina's Story Collection* (which are also available individually) are: *Meet Josefina*; *Josefina Learns a Lesson*; *Josefina's Surprise*; *Happy Birthday, Josefina!*; *Josefina Saves the Day*; and *Changes for Josefina*.

²³ The books included in *Kaya's Story Collection* (which are also available separately) are: *Meet Kaya*; *Kaya's Escape*; *Kaya's Hero*; *Kaya and Lone Dog*; *Kaya Shows the Way*; and *Changes for Kaya*.

(Mattel, Inc. Investor Relations 2002). Most importantly, however, both women consulted with advisory boards to create Kaya's and Josefina's stories.

The advisory board to Janet Shaw included a professor of anthropology; elders from the Nez Perce Tribe; curators of museums; elders with other tribal affiliations; a Nez Perce language instructor; and a Nez Perce National Historic Park ranger (Shaw 2004). The advisory board who worked with Valerie Tripp included professors of curriculum and instruction, history and social science, and Spanish; archival directors and museum curators; a historian; and a senior research librarian (Tripp 2001). These advisory boards authenticated and approved the authors' and illustrators' stories and representations of Nez Perce and New Mexican life during the characters' respective historical periods.

Because many of the advisory board members are themselves Native Americans or Latinos, they fulfilled the roles of "native informants." Put another way, they are authentic, the real thing, "real Indians" (Garrouette 2003). But (and there is a but in all things American Girl), why are these advisory boards complicit in the whitewashing of Native Americans' and Latinos' experiences with internal colonization in the United States? After all, the stories they helped Tripp and Shaw craft took place *before* the Nez Perce were dispossessed of their land and the New Mexico territory was invaded by US armed forces.

Like their White colonizers, Latino and Native American "native informants" run the risk of being cultural and epistemological appropriators. Gloria Anzaldúa critiques what she views as an unequal relationship between the

internally colonized and their colonizers with regard to the production of “authentic” indigenous cultural forms. She writes:

Whites, *along with a good number of our own people*, have cut themselves off from their spiritual roots, and they take our spiritual art objects in an unconscious attempt to get them back... Instead of surreptitiously ripping off the vital energy of people of color and putting it to commercial use, whites could allow themselves to share and exchange and learn from us in a respectful way (Anzaldúa 1999:90).

Shaw suggests, however, that it was actually the advisory board, and not her, who exercised control over the final production of Kaya’s stories. She says, “At every step along the way, the members of the advisory board gave me guidance and corrected my mistakes. If these stories portray Nez Perce life truly and accurately, it is because of the dedicated attention they gave to the text, illustrations, and products” (Kidsreads.com 2001). In terms of potential omissions or misrepresentations, Shaw does not say who will be held accountable but Louis Owens offers one possible response. He writes, “If a fear of inauthenticity is the burden of postmodernity... it is particularly the burden of the Euro-American seeking merely his self-reflection *and even more so that of the indigenous American in the face of this hyperreal ‘Indian’*” (Owens 2001:17, my emphasis added).

It is important to remember that authenticity is critical to the successful marketing and consumption of the Kaya and Josefina dolls and their accessories; it is intimately connected to American Girl’s (and ultimately, Mattel’s) bottom line. American Girl is invested in making sure that its consumers know that they can bring Kaya’s and Josefina’s stories to life by owning and playing through the character dolls and their “array of historically accurate and culturally authentic

clothes and accessories.” This, of course, “will help girls understand the material culture” of the Nez Perce Tribe and New Mexicans (Mattel Inc, Investor Relations 2002). That may be true; seeing tangible representations of cultural artifacts may indeed be very educational for American Girl consumers. However, Eva Garroutte (2003) suggests, it may actually contribute to consumers conceptualizing indigenous cultures “as a collection of consumable commodities that can be individually extracted from a larger complex of beliefs, practices, and daily life activities and put to use to serve whatever agenda the buyer conceives, much like a lucky rabbit’s foot” (p. 91).

Kaya’s advisory board voices an oppositional consciousness and defends the decision to set Kaya in 1764:

As grandparents, we want our children to know of life before contact with Euro-Americans—a time when our institutions of education, law, health, and beliefs were still intact... It also validates that we were here since time immemorial.... Most important, however, is believing that some day things will come full circle and we will live like we once did—not as subjects on a inner colonial system or as a minority group in America, but as the true, real people that we were created to be—a people who will once again be the stewards of this land from which we all came... We want everyone to know that we have not vanished through extinction or assimilation... (Children’s Literature Comprehensive Database 2004).

Unfortunately, however, this attempt at oppositional consciousness on the part of Kaya’s advisory board is undermined and American Girl gets the final word.

Both *Kaya’s Story Collection* and *Josefina’s Story Collection* end with brief chapters titled “A Peek into the Past.” Unlike the stories that precede them, these chapters are not fiction; they introduce readers to real, rather than imagined, social and cultural changes that took place in the years after Kaya’s

and Josefina's stories are set. However, in neither story collection does American Girl link the consequences of internal colonization with the official state policy of Manifest Destiny and they downplay the degree of violence inflicted upon Native Americans and New Mexicans.

In *Kaya's Story Collection*, the "Peek into the Past" section condenses the ten years between 1840 and 1850 into four sentences. We read, "In the 1840s, white settlers and prospectors, or people searching for gold, began trickling through Nez Perce country on the Oregon Trail... That trickle of white people became a flood in 1850, when gold was discovered in the Northwest" (Shaw 2004:98). Between these two particular lines we do read about Nez Perce exposure to the diseases carried by US American settlers, as well as the environmental damage caused by US-American westward migration, but we do not read that this migration was state-sanctioned.

In *Josefina's Story Collection*, readers learn that US goods and styles flooded New Mexican markets after 1821 and that US Americans "became interested in the Mexican lands in the southwest... Many people believed that the United States was entitled to all of the land between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans" (Tripp 2001:392). American Girl notes that the US declares war on Mexico in 1845 (La Pierre 1999), but again, this is not linked explicitly to Manifest Destiny in the story collection. Additionally, the history of racist interactions between Anglo Americans and Mexicans is made to seem a thing of the past rather than a condition of the present: "One reason was prejudice against people of Spanish and Mexican heritage" (Tripp 2001:394, my emphasis).

Unfortunately, this prejudice never went away and the conditions of internal colonization have not disappeared. Omi and Winant (1994) argue that “it is implausible to believe that racism is a thing of the past” simply because laws promoting racial and gender equality were passed in the 1960s (p. 157). As a commercially successful and competitive force in the children’s culture market, American Girl produces and reinforces perceptions that US American history is devoid of race, class and gender hierarchies and that childhood is a natural stage in the life course, one that is devoid of conflict and inequality. American Girl connects the myths of the “end of history” and “childhood innocence” (Giroux 2000:1-2) which is very good for business, indeed.²⁴

Theorizing an “American Girl-Industrial Complex”

By constantly invoking notions of a shared history and culture, American Girl constructs an “American” identity (Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel 2002). The company also continually invokes the educational value of their product lines (Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel 2002). These invocations constitute forms of “promotional rhetoric” that work to separate consumption practices from the industrial production process (Langer 2004:263-264). The good name and reputation on which American Girl banks sustains itself because the “conditions of production in the toy industry are hidden from consumers” (Langer 2004:262).

²⁴ This reiterates the point Omi and Winant (1994) make about legislative victories from the Civil Rights era. The “‘end of history’ assumes that liberal democracy has achieved its ultimate victory and that the twin ideologies of the market and representative democracy now constitute, with few exceptions, the universal values of the new global village” (Giroux 2000:1).

In terms of production, how “American” is American Girl? Figure 1 illustrates American Girl’s connections to global capitalism and the features on which the production of its material goods rests.

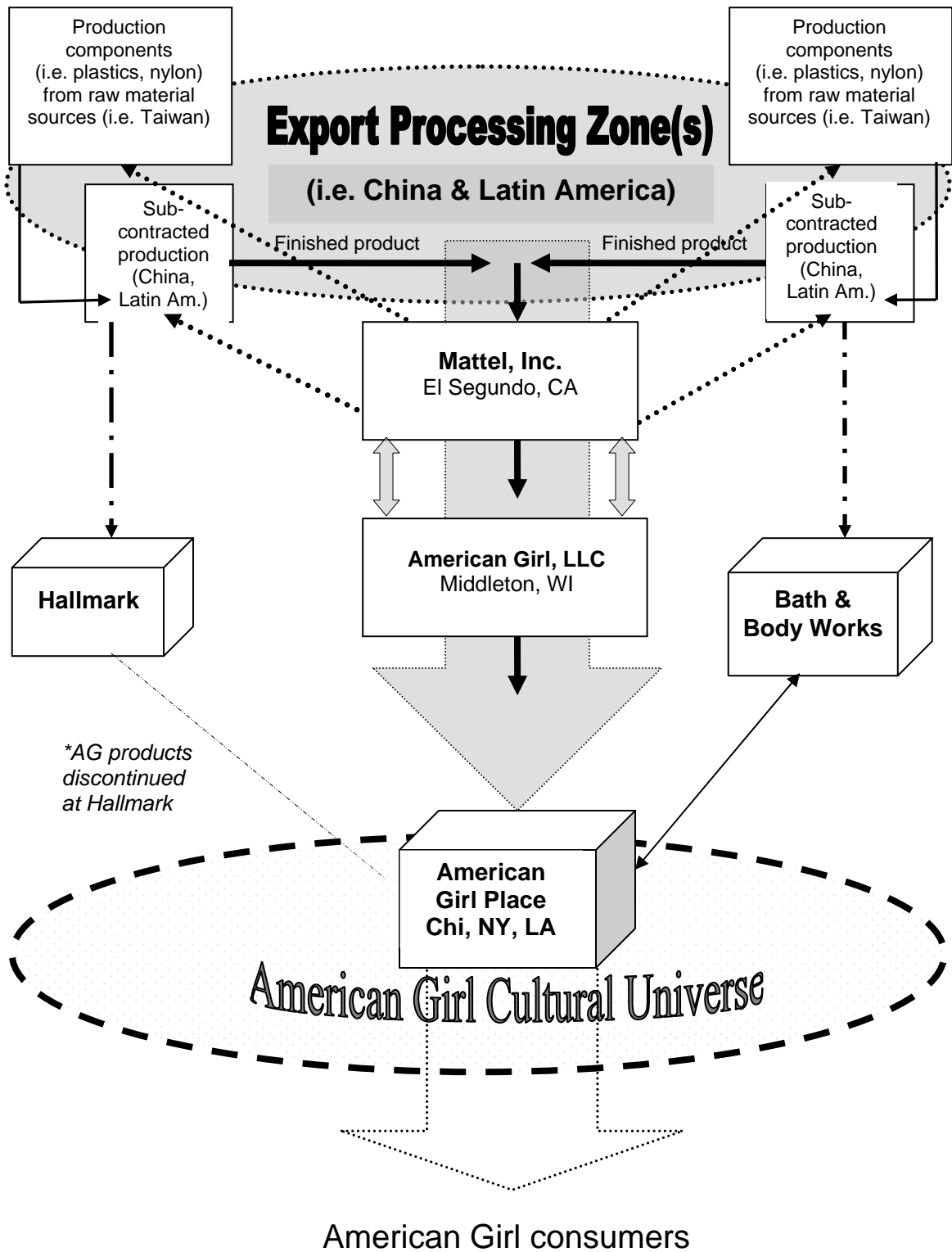
If we consider that American Girl is headquartered in Middleton, Wisconsin, it is American. Even after its acquisition by Mattel in 2005, the company remained firmly rooted in the US. American Girl has a total of four warehouse and distribution sites Wisconsin, an additional warehouse and distribution site in Edison, NJ; an outlet site in Oshkosh, WI; and retail locations in Chicago, New York City, and Los Angeles. As previously indicated, two additional retail outlets will open in Dallas and Atlanta (American Girl 2006 “Brand Overview”). In considering its managing company Mattel, Inc., American Girl is American. Mattel’s corporate headquarters, or its “commodity management center” (Tempest 2006:366) is located in El Segundo, California.²⁵ El Segundo is the location from which “Mattel’s team of experts on commodity and material prices determine the optimum locations to buy the plastic resins, the cloth, the paper, and other materials” used to manufacture its toys, including Barbie and American Girl dolls (Tempest 2006:366).

Primary components for manufacturing Barbie, for example, are obtained from Taiwan, China, Japan, Italy, and Saudi Arabia (Tempest 2006). Once secured, production components are shipped to the factories in which the dolls are made. If the location of a product’s final production is the bearer of its “ethnicity,” American Girl is *not* American. American Girl is made in China.

²⁵ It is difficult to ignore the irony in the fact that California is part of the territory that once belonged to Mexico. Talk about global connections!

Figure 1

Conceptual Model of the “American Girl-Industrial Complex”



The factories which produce Mattel products, including American Girl-branded dolls, clothes, and books are located in Export Processing Zones (EPZs), primarily in China, but there are locations scattered throughout Asia and Latin America. Production in EPZs is important for a number of reasons. The factories producing toys in these zones not under direct contract by Mattel; rather, the labor is subcontracted out and “local ‘suppliers’” are responsible for setting workers’ wages, ensuring humane work conditions, and upholding workers’ rights (Langer 2004:264). In other words, if a factory owner mistreats the workers who assemble American Girls or Barbie, these abuses cannot be directly connected to Mattel.

Tempest (2006) notes, “Although the labor component is probably the cheapest aspect of toy making, it is also the most critical” (p. 368). EPZs tend to be very densely populated with “surplus rural labour” (Langer 2004:258) and producing Barbies and other Mattel products is labor intensive.²⁶ The dynamics of labor in EPZs is highly gendered (Tempest 2006) and raises problems with Western conceptions of “childhood” and “innocence” (Langer 2004). Women between the ages of 18 and 23 comprise a large percentage of the subcontracted labor force in Sichuan province in China (Tempest 2006). Also, research about workers in EPZs “focuses on the age of toy factory workers, constructed as ‘little more than children themselves’ or, on occasion, as ‘child labor’” (Langer 2004:259). Child labor is, in fact, a reality of global capitalism and *not* a mere fiction.

²⁶ Tempest (2006) indicates that 15 separate paint stations are required to turn out a typical Barbie, to say nothing about applying her hair or sewing her outfits.

Producing Mattel's products is labor intensive but it is certainly not well compensated, despite the fact that Mattel rakes in billions of dollars every year, with at least \$1.4 billion in sales from Barbie alone (Tempest 2006). Regardless of whether workers are assembling Barbies, Power Rangers or American Girls, they earn roughly \$30 to \$40 a month (Tempest 2006). Langer (2004) notes that the "wages, occupational hazards, hours of work and living conditions of the largely rural migrant labour force...would preclude the possibility of participation in global children's culture" (Langer 2004:259). In other words, "Other" children may be producing American Girl products but it is highly unlikely they are able to play with or enjoy them.

Finished American Girl products are exported back to the United States for distribution and sale through the company's website, retail and outlet locations, mail order catalog and through other indirect markets. As Figure 1 illustrates and as was previously discussed, American Girl-branded products are carried by outlets such as Bath & Body Works and Hallmark. These companies, too, can be implicated in the scheme of global capitalism and its reliance on foreign production in EPZs. For example, Bath & Body Works is headquartered in Ohio but many of its products are manufactured in other countries. Limited Brands, Inc., the parent company of Bath & Body Works, assures its customers that their "vendors must fully and completely comply with all laws and regulations applicable to our businesses, including laws and regulations governing the *importation* of goods into the United States. We must also assure that the merchandise we sell is produced only in accordance with our labor standards"

(Limited Brands, Inc. 2007: “Social Responsibility, my emphasis added). Even though American Girl, Mattel, and their business partners can be concretely connected to the exploitive structure of global capitalism, the consequences remain largely invisible to American Girl consumers.

With regard to Disney and its related products, goods, and services, Celeste Lacroix asserts, “Critics and scholars recognize the power of these cultural products and the narratives they tell. We ask ourselves, what are children being taught? First and foremost, they are taught to consume” (2004:226). American Girl promotes a commodity culture. To be an American Girl is to consume its products and to consume its products is to buy (literally) into a “cultural universe” (see Figure 2) of values, ideologies, and beliefs that shape how one experiences girlhood and nationhood. By way of key arguments related to the wedding-industrial (Ingraham 1999) and the prom-industrial (Best 2000) complexes, I address the particulars of an American Girl cultural universe, and the significance of viewing American Girl as an “American Girl-industrial complex” in its own right.

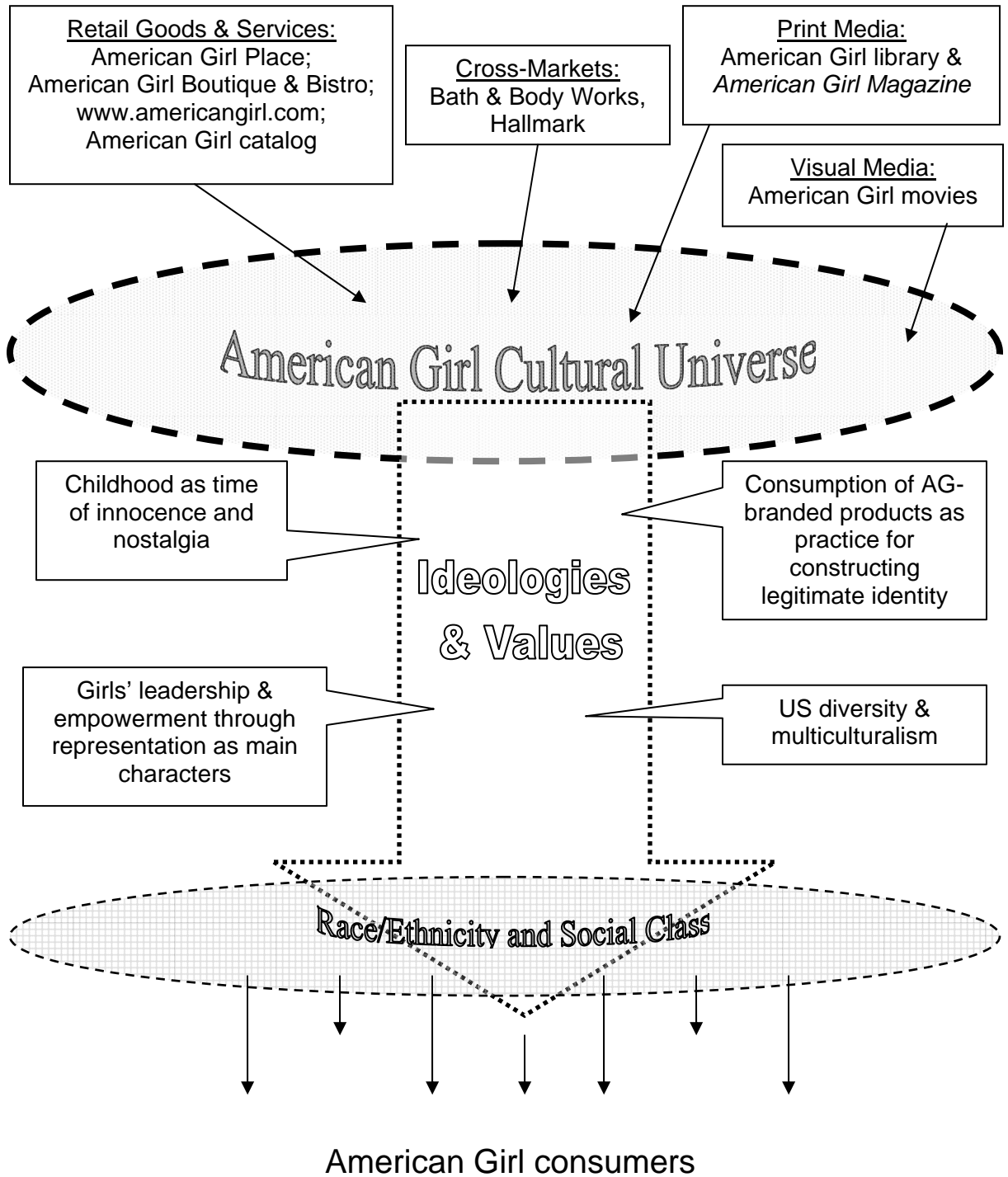
In *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*, Chrys Ingraham (1999) demonstrates that cultural narratives and practices that legitimate heterosexual marriage and foster the consumption of products and services related to wedding celebrations are produced in a tiered market. The structure and forms of particular social institutions (i.e. the state, organized religion) and cultural outlets (i.e. media, popular culture) coalesce with wedding-related industries to form a wedding-industrial complex (Ingraham 1999). What

is particularly significant about the wedding-industrial complex is that production and consumption within it relies upon maintaining class, race, and gender hierarchies and the fetishization of “the white wedding gown and the fantasy bride” renders invisible the “interdependency of weddings with the historical needs of capitalism” (Ingraham 1999:39). It is also important to note that the consumption practices within the wedding-industrial complex are spurred by cultural imagery and symbolism. Ingraham (1999) finds, “The romance, promise and morality of white weddings secure product consumption, especially by women, who associate this image with something positive and trustworthy” (p. 68) even when the material realities of weddings and marriage are differentially available to and distributed among the population and when the institution of marriage is often a site of conflict.

Similarly, in *Prom Night: Youth, Schools, and Popular Culture*, Amy Best (2000) argues, “Those commodities considered necessary for a successful prom thirty, or even fifty, years ago have evolved in dramatic ways to include a wider range of commercial resources” (p. 163). Those commercial resources that the prom market is peddling to high school-aged consumers mirror those produced and marketed for weddings: “limousines, luxury hotels, expensive dresses, appointments at hair salons, and long weekend excursions” (Best 2000:163). Prom has become a commodity market that produces and reproduces class, race, and gender inequality. Like weddings, consumption practices related to prom rely on (gendered) cultural narratives, such as a night of romance or a time for coming of age, that shape one’s expectations of the prom (Best 2000).

Figure 2

Conceptual Model of the American Girl Cultural Universe



According to Acosta-Alzuru (1999), “The relationship [between American Girl and its consumers] is unique precisely because [it] continually, and even overtly, tells its readers what constitutes an American Girl” (p. 25). American Girl has a variety of outlets and product lines through which to disseminate its vision of American girlhood. Through its characters, activities, and philanthropy, American Girl attempts to promote and reinforce affirmations that girls do matter and that girls can do (American Girl 2006 “Press Releases,” August 22, 2005). By offering a line of racially and ethnically diverse dolls, American Girl attempts to demonstrate that girls in the United States are diverse and unique. Most importantly, perhaps, American Girl celebrates childhood and reinscribes it as a time of excitement, fun, and imagination. Pleasant Rowland claims, “I wanted to show that the real essentials of growing up haven’t changed very much, in spite of the differences in the world in the last two hundred and fifty years” (Morgenson 1997, as quoted in Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel 2002:140).

Race, ethnicity, and class work to differentially filter American Girls’ goods and services to its consumers. As a result American Girl’s values and ideologies are received in unequal measure by consumers. This could serve to reinforce inequalities among children (and parents) based on whether they can or cannot consume the company’s goods and services. As indicated earlier, even though there are some dolls of color in the American Girl line, they pose problems if they serve as proxies for the incorporation of minorities in U.S. society. American Girl produces “static ethnicities” and traps girls of color in time. Girls pictured playing with American Girls dolls, visiting American Girl Place in Chicago, and those girls

in Fan Gallery photos on the American Girl website are predominantly white. When combined with cost and limited accessibility, these images reaffirm that American Girls goods and services are for white, middle- and upper-class consumers.

The books alone can be found at any major bookstore or public library which minimizes the cost of reading about one's favorite character. However, owning an American Girl doll is important to the Pleasant Company's vision of active girls who "bring history alive" through play with their dolls. When Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel (2002) conducted their survey of the American Girl collection in 1999, the dolls were priced at \$82.00. Today, each doll and a paperback edition of her introductory story are priced at \$87. Of course, each doll has a line of historically-representative accessories that one *must* have in order for her American Girl's story to come alive and to purchase a character's whole world would run into the thousands!

The dolls are integral to the "American Girl Experience" which can be enjoyed at the American Girl Place. These perks of American Girl Place sound very warm, welcoming, and fun. The price, however, is a barrier to entry into the American Girl community. First, if one does not live in Chicago, New York or Los Angeles there are travel accommodations to be made, including air or ground transportation and hotel reservations. If getting to American Girl Place presents no special problem, be prepared to shell out a pretty penny to participate in the fun events. Brunch at the café costs \$18 per person; dinner is \$22. Tickets to the American Girls musicals are \$28 per person for ages 6 and above (no child

under six or infants are allowed entry into the musicals-- add child care expenses for the littler ones). Small packages such as the birthday party are comparable in price; for \$30 per person one can enjoy the specially prepared invitations, cake, ice cream and surprise souvenir commemorating the day. If \$150 per person (with a minimum of 15 girls) is not a budget constraint, parents can offer their girls the best experience American Girl Place has to offer—the private Late Night after-hours party. Included are a meal, a scavenger hunt activity, and a gift certificate to the American Girl boutique (American Girl 2006 “American Girl Place Chicago”).

Rowland's benevolent intention of accessibility by a nation-wide audience is undermined by the high cost of and limited access to American Girl dolls and associated products and services. Real-life American girls who collect and accessorize the fictitious American Girls are lucky girls indeed.

Conclusion

Fred Nielsen, professor of history at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, argues that the “best” feature of *The American Girls Collection* stories is that they “teach what most popular culture does not—a sense of the chronology of American history; [and] a knowledge of some people and events of that history...” (2002:91). Fair enough. However, the sense of US American history that American Girl chooses to *sell* is whitewashed, romanticized and part of a system of global capitalism that continues the project of colonialism. The history

of internal colonization of Native Americans and Mexican Americans is distilled and the legacies of such a system can continue to be portrayed as individual failings rather than structural problems as long as they are decontextualized from the state's project of Manifest Destiny. The exploitive processes through which American Girl products are made are rendered invisible by American Girl's "promotional rhetoric" of education and empowerment.

"Static Ethnicities" Revisited

Much like the positive effects that arise from reading about individuals in nontraditional gender roles, reading about people of color gives children a sense that minorities made contributions to the nation (Sadker and Sadker 1994). By introducing girls of color into their historical collection, American Girl attempts to show diversity in US-American history and identity. However, the model of multiculturalism that American Girl uses is additive and essentially uninspired: add race or ethnicity to a very formulaic and predictable mold and stir. This applies for *both* books and dolls.

In her research on "American Girl" identity and representation, Acosta Alzuru (1999) unlocks the secret to *The American Girl Collection*: "All the books are the same" (p. 20). One can replace the name of a particular American Girl with another and end up essentially with the same story. The backdrop, of course, changes because the "plots set the girls' everyday life against a historical background that is linked to the story" (Acosta-Alzuru 1999:20). Each character's story takes place over the course of six books and each of the six books presents

a minor dilemma that is resolved at the end of each volume. A major overarching theme, resolved in the final volume, connects all six books (Acosta-Alzuru 1999). Like the books that bring them to life, the dolls are virtual carbon copies of one another... even the girls of color! The dolls are identical (skin tone and hair color excepting), right down to their “small smiles that reveal precisely two teeth” (Talbot 2005). Like Mattel, whose ethnic Barbies are just “dye-dipped versions of archetypal white American beauty” (duCille 1994:49), American Girl offers “dye-dipped versions” of characters in *The American Girls Collection*. In essence, American Girl’s attempts to diversify their representations of girls in “America” are feeble, at best, and insulting, at worst.

Kaya and Josefina, as representations of Native American and “Hispanic” people, are problematic for reasons other than just their situatedness in pre-Manifest Destiny eras. They become proxies for the diversity *within* Native American and “Hispanic” populations; the multitude of unique cultures and traditions of Native American tribes and Latin American people become conflated within these two characters. With regard to Josefina, specifically, Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel (2002) find that her “Hispanic” identity “perpetuates the idea that all Hispanics are Mexican. Mexico functions as a synecdoche of Latin America” (p. 158).²⁷

For some girls, Josefina’s (re)presentation creates uncertainty about *what* she is supposed to be. In their study on the construction and content of “American Girl identity,” Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel (2002) found that a majority

²⁷ At the time Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel conducted their interviews, Kaya had not been introduced into *The American Girl Collection*.

of the respondents perceived Josefina to be “a foreigner,” “different,” and “exotic” (p. 152). Respondents commonly referred to Josefina’s ethnicity by using a signifier such as skin color (brown or tan) or a national or pan-ethnic label (Mexican or Hispanic) but rarely did they consider her “American” (Acosta-Alzuru 2002). Acosta-Alzuru (1999) suggests American Girl represents Josefina as “purely New Mexican” and actively demonstrates her inability to meet the expectations of assimilation because of her retention of Spanish. This “reinforces girls’ perceptions that Hispanics have ‘different likes and opinions’ and are not part of American culture” (Acosta-Alzuru and Kreshel 2002:153).²⁸

Every year for the last three years, American Girl has introduced a new doll to its historical collection.²⁹ Every year for the last three years those characters have been white. What is particularly ironic is that the most recent addition to *The American Girls Collection* is not even from the United States!³⁰ Additionally, since its founding in 1986, American Girl has not pushed the boundaries of its historical imagination—US American history, as depicted in *The American Girls Collection*, stops in 1944. As previously mentioned, there are no characters of color represented beyond 1864 but the politics of race became

²⁸ It would be very interesting to find out how girls perceive Marisol Luna, the Mexican-American “Girl of Today” character introduced in 2005 (American Girl “Press Release,” January 1, 2005). Like Josefina, Marisol also speaks Spanish. Marisol, whose character doll features “long, wavy brown hair, medium skin, light brown eyes, and cool, urban attire” (American Girl, “Press Releases:” January 1, 2005) eerily resembles Jennifer Lopez. We have come a long way, indeed, baby!

²⁹ Refer to Table A1 (Appendix) for *The American Girls Collection* characters’ introduction dates.

³⁰ Emily Bennett is from London; she joins her friend Molly McIntire in the United States to escape the ravages of World War II

concretized in the United States in very significant moments in the twentieth century.

If we do agree with American Girl that the boundary between “history” (the past) and “present” (today, contemporary) is 1944, problems of representation still abound. Apparently, for American Girl, British Emily Bennett is more “American” than a Japanese American girl who experienced life in an internment camp... on US soil! In the case of Japanese Americans, internal colonization was bona fide but rarely do we discuss it as such. Asian Americans, and especially Asian American women, are “the visible minority that is invisible” (Yamada 1983:36). Perhaps American Girl chose not to tell the story of Japanese internment because it bears too much resemblance to Jewish internment in Nazi concentration camps? While the truth may be a bitter pill to swallow, American Girl reinforces Asian Americans’ invisibility in US American history. As of 2007, they do not offer an Asian American doll in the historical collection; this may have far reaching effects for young girls, including internalized racism. Yamada (1983) writes, “This mindset is the result of not believing that the political and social forces affecting our lives are determined by some person, or a group of persons, probably sitting behind a desk or around a conference table” (p. 39). Might she be referring to corporate executives of Mattel and American Girl?

If we do *not* agree with American Girl that the boundary between “history” and “present” is 1944, this begs the question as to why there are no girls of color whose stories are set against the national movements for racial equality in the

1950s and 1960s. If American Girl truly wishes to represent the diversity of US-American girlhood and move girls of color into the twentieth century, why not portray an African American girl whose experiences are tied to the fight for school and residential desegregation or the Black Panther movement? Where are the Chicana and Mexican American girls who, as student members of the Brown Berets, staged school walkouts in California to raise the issue of and garner support for educational equality? Limiting American Indian representation to a pre-“*American*” era is shameful; Native American mobilization and resistance against the domination of white culture can be represented by the “Red Power” girl of the pan-tribal American Indian Movement. Within *The American Girl Collection*, American Girl constructs a color line that prevents girls of color from being represented in twentieth-century US-American history. The perception that girls of color do not, and cannot, contribute to US society because they are not represented further contributes to the production of “static ethnicities.”

Implications of a Critical Approach to *The American Girls Collection*

Ann duCille (1994) writes, “More than simple instruments of pleasure and amusement, toys and games play crucial roles in helping children determine what is valuable in and around them... What did it mean for me that I was nowhere in the toys I played with?” (p. 48). The psychological consequences of invisibility and internalized racism are very real. In the 1940s, psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark demonstrated the effects of internalized racism in Black children in their famous “doll test.” When the Clarks asked children to

show them which dolls (Black or white) they liked the best, which they would like to play with, and which dolls were nice, Black children overwhelmingly attributed positive characteristics to and selected white dolls (duCille 1984). Conversely, dolls that looked bad to Black children were black. The results from the Clark doll test were used to support school desegregation in 1954, but cultural changes generally lag behind legal ones. When this study was replicated by Darlene and Derek Hopson in the mid-1980s the results were eerily similar to what the Clarks revealed in the 1940s: 65% of Black children in the study chose white dolls over black ones and 76% indicated that Black dolls looked bad to them (duCille 1984).

American Girl can combat charges that they do not value diversity or that they render some racial or ethnic identities invisible in US-American society by referring to their “Just Like You” doll and product line. Offering girls a “menu” of 25 various combinations of skin tones, facial features, and hair and eye colors, “The Just Like You line highlights the individuality and diversity of today’s American Girls” (American Girl 2006 “Brand Background”). Yes, Asian American girls (and light-skinned Black girls and medium-skinned girls whose ethnicities are “Hispanic”) now have doll options available to them, but there are two caveats. First, it is costly to produce difference. For example, although Mattel desired to (re)produce in its Shani doll the variations in skin color, hair style, and body types that are seen on real African American women, “profit motive mediated against the very realism the corporation set out to achieve” (duCille 1994:56-57). Mattel was either unwilling or unable to integrate suggestions for Shani “where doing so would cost the corporation more than the price of

additional dyes and ethnic fabrics” (duCille 1994:56). Second, when difference is (re)produced, it does not end up looking all that much like reality. Sisters Megan and Erin Yee have dolls from the “Just Like You” line. Megan stated, “There are two Asian dolls that are supposed to look like us. But they don’t” (Moskin 2004). Unfortunately the sisters do not explain why their dolls do not look like them (or vice versa): is it skin tone, eye shape, hair texture? Perhaps the dolls are “too” Asian compared to how the girls view themselves? It is unclear. What is clear is that there are constraints to producing “authentic” racial and ethnic differences, especially those that do not rely on stereotypes. One must concede producing and representing difference is difficult (duCille 1994).

Another very important issue to consider is that the “Just Like You” dolls are contemporary. For the dolls and the girls they purportedly represent, “*this* is their moment in history to shine” (American Girl 2006 “Brand Overview,” my emphasis added). It is significant that *this* moment in US American history is not marked by race or racism because today’s United States is *colorblind*; race is no longer a determinant for, or consideration in, the distribution of social and material rewards and benefits (Omi and Winant 1994). After the Civil Rights movement’s legislative “victories” in the 1950s and 1960s, the state has attempted to down play the continuing significance of race in American society. The state “promotes a false universalism which can only serve to mask underlying racial conflicts” (Omi and Winant 1994:152). This false universalism extends into the economy and culture industries, too.

This analysis ambitiously attempted to link how American Girl constructs constrained, yet commercially profitable, Native American and Latina racial and ethnic identities for its consumers through the characters Kaya and Josefina. I asserted that theorizing internal colonization in *The American Girls Collection* cannot take place outside of conceptualizing American Girl as an “industrial complex” that produces and markets a “cultural universe” of material goods, values, and ideologies to its consumers, most of whom are economically- and racially-privileged young girls. *The American Girls Collection* and all of American Girl’s products are not just toys or books or games. There are very real social and cultural meanings tied up in these objects.

Ann duCille (2002) cautions us to regard dolls as she does, “as objects that do the dirty work of patriarchy and capitalism in the most insidious way—in the guise of child’s play” (p. 50). With the ever increasing popularity and expansion of American Girl dolls and related products, it is certainly advice worth heeding.

Appendix

Table A1

The American Girls Collection Chronology by Introduction Date

Year Introduced	Doll Name	Year Represented	Era Represented
1986	Kirsten Larson	1854	Great Plains settlement
	Samantha Parkington	1904	Victorian U.S. & U.S. Industrial Revolution
	Molly McIntire	1944	WWII home front
1991	Felicity Merriman	1774	pre-American Revolution/ Colonial U.S.
1993	Addy Walker*	1864	Pre-Reconstruction
1997	Josefina Montoya*	1824	Colonial New Mexico
2000	Kit Kittredge	1934	Great Depression
2002	Kaya*	1764	Pre-America/US
2004	Nellie O'Malley	1904	Victorian U.S. & U.S. Industrial Revolution
2005	Elizabeth Cole	1774	Pre-American Revolution/ Colonial U.S.
2006	Emily Bennett	1944	WWII home front

*Denotes "dolls of color" or non-Euro-American/Caucasian dolls.

Table A2

The American Girls Collection Chronology by Year Represented

Year Represented	Doll Name	Year Introduced
1764	Kaya*	2002
1774	Felicity Merriman	1991
	Elizabeth Cole	2005
1824	Josefina Montoya*	1997
1864	Addy Walker*	1993
1854	Kirsten Larson	1986
1904	Samantha Parkington	1986
	Nellie O'Malley	2004
1934	Kit Kittredge	2000
1944	Molly McIntire	1986
	Emily Bennett	2006

*Denotes "dolls of color" or non-Euro-American/Caucasian dolls.

References

- Acosta-Alzuru, Carolina. 1999 (August). "The American Girls Dolls: Constructing American Girlhood Through Representation and Identity." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. New Orleans, LA.
- Acosta-Alzuru, Carolina and Peggy J. Kreshel. 2002. "I'm an American Girl...Whatever That Means"-- Girls Consuming Pleasant Company's American Girl Identity." *Journal of Communication* 52(1): 139-161.
- American Girl 2006. "American Girl Place Chicago." Middleton, WI: American Girl, LLC. Retrieved April 21, 2007. (http://www.americangirlplace.com/agp_chi_splash.php).
- American Girl. 2006. "About our Company." Middleton, WI: American Girl, LLC. Retrieved April 14, 2007 (<http://www.americangirl.com/corp/index.html>).
- American Girl 2006. "Brand Background." Middleton, WI: American Girl, LLC. Retrieved April 14, 2007 (http://www.americangirl.com/corp/media/brand_bkgground.html).
- American Girl. 2006. "Brand Overview." Middleton: WI: American Girl, LLC. Retrieved April 14, 2007 (<http://www.americangirl.com/corp/overview.html>).
- American Girl. 2006. "Fast Facts." Middleton, WI: American Girl, LLC. Retrieved April 14, 2007 (<http://www.americangirl.com/corp/media/fastfacts.html>).
- American Girl. 2006. "Press Releases." Middleton, WI: American Girl, LLC. Retrieved April 14, 2007 (http://www.americangirl.com/corp/media/press_releases.html).
- American Girl Publishing. 2007. "Josefina: Stories from America's Southwest Frontier." Middleton, WI: American Girl, LLC. Retrieved April 15, 2007 (<http://www.americangirlpublishing.com/characters/josefina/josefina.aspx>).
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1999. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 2nd Edition. San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.
- Assembly of First Nations. 2007. "Fact Sheet: Terminology." Ottawa, Ontario, Canada: Assembly of First Nations. Retrieved April 15, 2007 (<http://www.afn.ca/article.asp?id=437>).

- Atkinson, Chryssa. 2001. *Lindsey*. Middleton, WI: Pleasant Company Publications.
- Barrera, Mario. 1979. *Race and Class in the Southwest: A Theory of Racial Inequality*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Belohlavek, John. 1997. "Race, Progress, and Destiny: Caleb Cushing and the Quest for American Empire." In Haynes, Sam W. and Christopher Morris (eds.), *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum and Expansionism*. (pp. 21-47). College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press.
- Best, Amy L. 2000. *Prom Night: Youth, Schools, and Popular Culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Brunsma, David L. *Forthcoming*. "Colonialism." *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Second Edition*. New York, NY: MacMillan Reference USA.
- Calvert, Peter. 2001. "Internal Colonisation, Development, and Environment." *Third World Quarterly* 22(1): 51-63.
- Cameron, Barbara. 1983. "Gee, You Don't Seem Like an Indian From the Reservation." In Moraga, Cherríe and Gloria Anzaldúa (eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. (pp. 46-52). Latham, NY: Kitchen Table--Women of Color Press.
- Casanova, Mary. 2006. *Jess*. Middleton, WI: Pleasant Company Publications.
- Children's Literature Comprehensive Database. 2004. "Janet Shaw." Washington, DC: CLCD, Company, LLC. Retrieved May 5, 2006 (http://www.childrenslit.com/f_jshaw.html).
- duCille, Ann. 2002. "Dyes and Dolls: Multicultural Barbie and the Merchandising of Difference." *differences* 6(1): 46-68.
- Garroutte, Eva Marie. 2003. *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Giroux, Henry A. 2000. *Stealing Innocence: Youth, Corporate Power, and the Politics of Culture*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press
- Harris, Elizabeth and Joyce McFarland. 2000 (November). "The Assessment of Culture as a Protective Factor Among Native Americans: The Survey of Nez Perce Culture." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Evaluation Association. Honolulu, HI.

- Ingraham, Chrys. 1999. *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Johannsen, Robert W. 1997. "The Meaning of Manifest Destiny." In Haynes, Sam W. and Christopher Morris (eds.), *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum and Expansionism*. (pp. 7-20). College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press.
- Joyce, Stephanie. 1997. "Meet Josefina: An American Girl." Nashville, TN: BookPage Online. Retrieved May 5, 2006 (<http://www.bookpage.com/9709bp/childrens/meetjosefina.html>).
- Khan, Shahnaz. 2005. "Reconfiguring the Native Informant: Positionality in the Global Age." *Signs* 30(4): 2017-2035.
- Kidsreads.com. 2001. "Janet Beeler Shaw—Ask the Author." New York: The Book Report Network. Retrieved May 5, 2006 (<http://www.kidsreads.com/series/series-american-girl-author.asp#ShawTalk>).
- La Pierre, Yvette. 1999. *Welcome to Josefina's World 1824: Growing Up on America's Southwest Frontier*. Middleton, WI: Pleasant Company Publications.
- Lacroix, Celeste. 2004. "Images of Animated Others: The Orientalization of Disney's Cartoon Heroines From *The Little Mermaid* to *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*." *Popular Communication* 2(4): 213-229.
- Langer, Beryl. 2004. "The Business of Branded Enchantment: Ambivalence and Disjuncture in the Global Children's Culture Industry." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 4(2): 251-277.
- Limited Brands, Inc. 2007. "Social Responsibility: Labor Practices." Columbus, OH: Limited Brand, Inc.. Retrieved April 21, 2007 (http://www.limitedbrands.com/social_responsibility/labor/vendor.jsp).
- Mattel, Inc. Investor Relations. 2002. "American Girl Proudly Introduces Kaya: The First American Girl." El Segundo, CA: Mattel, Inc. Retrieved May 5, 2006 (<http://www.shareholder.com/mattel/news/20020930-105195.cfm>).
- Moraga, Cherríe and Gloria Anzaldúa. "Entering the Lives of Others: Theory in the Flesh." In Moraga, Cherríe and Gloria Anzaldúa (eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. (p. 23). Latham, NY: Kitchen Table--Women of Color Press.

- Moskin, Julia. 2004. "It's the Hottest Place in Town, and Dolls Eat Free." *The New York Times*, May 16. Retrieved May 5, 2006 (<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?sec=travel&res=980CEFDC173FF935A25756C0A9629C8B63>).
- Nielsen, Fred. 2002. "American History Through the Eyes of the American Girls." *Journal of American and Comparative Cultures* 25(1,2): 85-93.
- Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. 1994. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s, Second Edition*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Owens, Louis. 2001. "As If an Indian Were Really an Indian: Native American Voices and Postcolonial Theory." In Bataille, Gretchen (ed.), *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations*. (pp. 11-23). Lincoln, NE: The University of Nebraska Press.
- Portes, Alejandro and Dag MacLeod. 1996. "What Shall I Call Myself?: Hispanic Identity Formation in the Second Generation." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 19(3): 523-547.
- Portes, Alejandro and Rubén Rumbaut. 2001. *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Raymer, Dottie. 2003. *Welcome to Kaya's World 1764: Growing Up in a Native American Homeland*. Middleton, WI: Pleasant Company Publications.
- Sadker, Myra and David Sadker. 1994. *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Sandoval, Chela. 2003. "US Third-World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World." In Lewis, Reina and Sara Mills (eds.), *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. (pp. 75-99). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Shaw, Janet. 2004. *Kaya's Story Collection*. Middleton, WI: Pleasant Company Publications.
- Talbot, Margaret. 2005. "American Girl Crazy! A Gaggle of Earnest Dolls in Historic Costumes Are Threatening to Dethrone Barbie. How'd They Do It?" *Salon*, May 10. Retrieved May 5, 2006 (<http://dir.salon.com/story/mwt/feature/2005/05/10/talbot/index.html>).
- Tempest, Rone. 2006. "Barbie and the World Economy." In Grewal, Inderpal and Caren Kaplan (eds.), *An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in*

a Transnational World, 2nd Edition. (pp. 363-368). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Tripp, Valerie. 2001. *Josefina's Story Collection*. Middleton, WI: Pleasant Company Publications.

Wood, Peter W. 2002. "The New 'American Girl:' A Doll Gives Up on History." *National Review Online*, September 26. Retrieved May 5, 2006. (<http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/comment-wood092602.asp>).

Yamada, Mitsuye. 1983. "Invisibility is an Unnatural Disaster: Reflections of an Asian American Woman." In Moraga, Cherríe and Gloria Anzaldúa (eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. (pp. 35-40). Latham, NY: Kitchen Table--Women of Color Press.