

Public Abstract

First Name:Veronica

Middle Name:Elizabeth

Last Name:Medina

Adviser's First Name:David

Adviser's Last Name:Brunsma

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

Graduation Term:WS 2007

Department:Sociology

Degree:MA

Title:Theorizing American Girl

The American Girls Collection is a line of historically-situated fictional characters (and dolls) who represent significant and meaningful events in US-American history. However, American Girl presents a whitewashed version of girlhood and nationhood. Through an analysis of the texts in the fiction and non-fiction books associated with American Girls' characters Kaya and Josefina, this project addresses how American Girl constructs constrained, yet commercially profitable, Native American and Latina racial and ethnic identities for its consumers. 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.

This project also considers American Girl as a model of a self-reinforcing cultural industry through which it produces and markets its products and a particular set of "American" ideologies and values for consumption by young girls. The American Girls Collection cannot be considered outside of the influence of the characteristics of global capitalism in which third-world labor is exploited and hidden from consumers in the US.