



Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the New Girlie-Girl Culture

By Peggy Orenstein

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From *New York Times* bestselling author Peggy Orenstein, now available in paperback—the acclaimed *New York Times Magazine* contributor and author of the groundbreaking *New York Times* bestseller *Schoolgirls* grapples with where to draw the line for our daughters in the new girlie-girl culture.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Product Description

The acclaimed author of the groundbreaking bestseller *Schoolgirls* reveals the dark side of pink and pretty: the rise of the girlie-girl, she warns, is not that innocent.

Pink and pretty or predatory and hardened, sexualized girlhood influences our daughters from infancy onward, telling them that how a girl looks matters more than who she is. Somewhere between the exhilarating rise of Girl Power in the 1990s and today, the pursuit of physical perfection has been recast as a source—the source—of female empowerment. And commercialization has spread the message faster and farther, reaching girls at ever-younger ages.

But, realistically, how many times can you say no when your daughter begs for a pint-size wedding gown or the latest *Hannah Montana* CD? And how dangerous is pink and pretty anyway—especially given girls' successes in the classroom and on the playing field? Being a princess is just make-believe, after all; eventually they grow out of it. Or do they? Does playing Cinderella shield girls from early sexualization—or prime them for it? Could today's little princess become tomorrow's sexting teen? And what if she does? Would that make her in charge of her sexuality—or an unwitting captive to it?

Those questions hit home with Peggy Orenstein, so she went sleuthing. She visited Disneyland and the international toy fair, trolled American Girl Place and Pottery Barn Kids, and met beauty pageant parents with preschoolers tricked out like Vegas showgirls. She dissected the science, created an online avatar, and parsed the original fairy tales. The stakes turn out to be higher than she—or we—ever imagined: nothing less than the health, development, and futures of our girls. From premature sexualization to the risk of depression to rising rates of narcissism, the potential negative impact of this new girlie-girl culture is undeniable—yet armed with awareness and recognition, parents can effectively counterbalance its influence in their daughters' lives.

Cinderella Ate My Daughter is a must-read for anyone who cares about girls, and for parents helping their daughters navigate the rocky road to adulthood.

An Exclusive Note from Peggy Orenstein



As a mom, I admit, I was initially tempted to give the new culture of pink and pretty a pass. There are already so many things to be vigilant about as a parent; my energy was stretched to its limit. So my daughter slept in a Cinderella gown for a few years. Girls will be girls, right?

They will—and that is exactly why we need to pay more, rather than less, attention to what's happening in their world. According to the American Psychological Association, the emphasis on beauty and play-sexiness at ever-younger ages is increasing girls' vulnerability to the pitfalls that most concern parents: eating disorders, negative body image, depression, risky sexual behavior. Yet here we are with nearly half of six-year-old girls regularly using lipstick or lip gloss. The percentage of eight- to twelve-year-old girls wearing eyeliner or mascara has doubled in the last TWO years (I ask you: shouldn't the percentage of eight-year-olds wearing eyeliner be zero?). A researcher told me that when she asks teenage girls how a sexual experience felt to them they respond by telling her how they think they looked. Meanwhile, the marketing of pink, pretty, and "sassy" has become a gigantic business: the Disney Princesses alone are pulling in four BILLION dollars in revenue annually.

As I immersed myself in the research for this book, I began to trace a line from the innocence of Cinderella to the struggles Miley Cyrus has faced in trying to "age up," which in turn was connected to how regular girls present themselves on Facebook (where identity itself becomes a performance, crafted in response to your audience of 322 BFFs). It seemed that even as new educational and professional opportunities unfurled before my daughter and her peers, so did the path that encouraged them to equate identity with image, self-expression with appearance, femininity with performance, pleasure with pleasing, and sexuality with sexualization.

So much is at stake, for mothers with girls of all ages: How do we define girlhood? What about femininity? Beauty? Sexuality? Our choices will tell our girls how we see them, who we want them to be, our values, expectations, hopes, and dreams. Do we want them to be judged by the content of their character or the color of their lip gloss?

I'm the first to admit that I do not have all the answers. Who could? But as a mother who also happens to be a journalist (or perhaps vice versa), I wanted to lay out the context—the marketing, science, history, culture—in which we make our choices, to provide information and insight that might help parents, educators, and all of us who care about girls guide them toward their true happily-ever-afters.

Orenstein, who has written about girls for nearly two decades (*Schoolgirls*), finds today's pink and princess-obsessed girl culture grating when it threatens to lure her own young daughter, Daisy. In her quest to determine whether princess mania is merely a passing phase or a more sinister marketing plot with long-term negative impact, Orenstein travels to Disneyland, American Girl Place, the American International Toy Fair; visits a children's beauty pageant; attends a Miley Cyrus concert; tools around the Internet; and interviews parents, historians, psychologists, marketers, and others. While she uncovers some disturbing news (such as the American Psychological Association's assertion that the "girlie-girl" culture's emphasis on beauty and play-sexiness can increase girls' susceptibility to depression, eating disorders, distorted body image, and risky sexual behavior), she also finds that locking one's daughter away in a tower like a modern-day Rapunzel may not be necessary. Orenstein concludes that parents who think through their values early on and set reasonable limits, encourage dialogue and skepticism, and are canny about the consumer culture can combat the 24/7 "media machine" aimed at girls and hold off the focus on beauty, materialism, and the color pink somewhat. With insight and biting humor, the author explores her own conflicting feelings as a mother as she protects her offspring and probes the roots and tendrils of the girlie-girl movement. (Jan.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Orenstein's *Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem and the Confidence Gap* (1994) was a watershed best-seller, and she has continued to write extensively—both in print and online—about the hazards of growing up female in contemporary America. Here she explores the increasing “pinkification” of girls’ worlds, from toys to apparel to tween-targeted websites, and she writes not only as a detached, informed journalist but also as a loving, feminist mother, bewildered as her daughter, “as if by osmosis,” learns the names of every Disney princess, while her classmate, “the one with Two Mommies,” arrives daily at her Berkeley preschool “dressed in a Cinderella gown. With a bridal veil.” Orenstein skillfully integrates extensive research that demonstrates the pitfalls of “the girlie-girl culture’s emphasis on beauty and play-sexiness,” which can increase girls’ vulnerability to depression, distorted body images and eating disorders, and sexual risks. It’s the personal anecdotes, though, which are delivered with wry, self-deprecating, highly quotable humor, that offer the greatest invitation to parents to consider their daughters’ worlds and how they can help to shape a healthier, soul-nurturing environment. --Gillian Engberg

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Billie Duran:

People live in this new time of lifestyle always try and and must have the time or they will get lot of stress from both way of life and work. So , once we ask do people have free time, we will say absolutely without a doubt. People is human not really a robot. Then we request again, what kind of activity are you experiencing when the spare time coming to you of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading publications. It can be your alternative with spending your spare time, often the book you have read is actually *Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the New Girlie-Girl Culture*.

Arthur Elsberry:

Playing with family in a very park, coming to see the sea world or hanging out with friends is thing that usually you have done when you have spare time, after that why you don't try issue that really opposite from that. One particular activity that make you not experiencing tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller

coaster you are ride on and with addition of knowledge. Even you love Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the New Girlie-Girl Culture, you could enjoy both. It is excellent combination right, you still desire to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh can happen its mind hangout fellas. What? Still don't obtain it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

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