

**TWEENING THE GIRL: THE CRYSTALLIZATION OF THE
TWEEN MARKET 1980-1996**

by

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ABSTRACT

While it was the phenomenal commercial success of the girl band, the Spice Girls, in the mid-1990s that legitimized the tween girl as a viable and lucrative market segment; it was really during the 1980s - precisely the moment she should have been ignored - that the tween persona crystallized as a specific, segmented marketing niche carved out of the transitory and transformational spaces between childhood and adolescence. She is an image of a transitional girlhood that is sold to both the mediated marketplace and to girls themselves. The tween as a category represents the targeting of a new consumer subjectivity, particularly the upaging of the child, the downaging of the teen, but also the reclamation of girlhood as a site of consumer autonomy and power. The tween girl I argue is a commercial persona which exists in the marketplace as an historical site of identity work. She is the personification of a market segment that crystallizes as the segment is defined, honed and traded within the dynamic interchanges of the mediated marketplace (advertising, marketing, merchandising, retail and the media). The tween is also a key cultural resource through which girls reaching their maturity come to negotiate their lives as transitional consumers.

This thesis is a historical case study of the crystallization of the tween persona in the synergistic circuitries of the mediated marketplace that uses a historical discourse analysis of industry trade publications and retrospective interviews with suburban tweens as the primary modes of analysis. While most works on the tween focus on the 1990s, this thesis uncovers how the crystallization of the tween is firmly rooted in the context of the twentieth century as the marketplace solidified the child and the teen consumers, and the 1980s which were a period of dramatic changes in the landscape of media culture and social upheaval for the middle class as more mothers joined the workforce, dramatically shifting girls' roles in their families and their access to family resources.

Meanwhile, challenged by the presence of girls in the marketplace, feminism was forced to recalibrate its relationship to both the girl and consumer culture, opening new opportunities for plurality. In unravelling the historical discourses about the tween and its links to feminism, this thesis adds to the field of Girls' Studies by addressing how a

category of girlhood was organized and produced by the mediated marketplace and how girls engaged with this persona in the context of 1980's suburbia.

Keywords: Tween, Girl's Culture, Market Segments, Feminism, Consumer Culture, Advertising, Marketing, Marketing History.

Subject Terms: Girls Studies, Teenage Girls, Girls in Popular Culture, Child Consumers, Teenage Consumers, Children -- History, Adolescence -- History, Advertising -- Social Aspects.

DEDICATION

To Troy, my parents and the rest of my family and friends who always believed in me, especially when I didn't believe in myself. Thank you, thank you, thank you. Words cannot express how much you have given me over the years.

And to the Spice Girls, for starting me on this path.

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Spice Girl fans at a concert.

“On July 8 1996, the Spice Girls released ‘Wannabe’ and with it a new pre-teen generation was born.”

(Rice, 2000)

INTRODUCTION

I have always had a mixed reaction to the Spice Girls. My first response to the Girls was utter indignation. I mean who were these garishly clad women dancing around in sequin micro-minis and platform boots calling out to us to “Spice up [our] life.” My indignation was pushed even further when I found out that they had these ridiculously insipid stage names, like Posh Spice, Scary Spice and, even worse, Baby Spice. Nevertheless, once I became familiar with them, their anthem of Girl Power piqued my feminist sensibilities. Rarely had I heard such an overt declaration for equality. And there was a third response. While wrestling with my conflicted views, I could not help but smile and bob along with their catchy music on the radio.

But none of this really mattered to the band as I was not the chosen demographic of the Spice Girls audience. Being in my early 20s, I was much too old to be of consequence to growing Spice empire. The phenomenal success of the Girls lay in the hearts and wallets of the millions of devoted pre-pubescent girls who lined up for hours to buy tickets to their concerts; concerts which sold out in minutes. These girls bought their albums at unprecedented rates, over 55 million albums worldwide, and sent the Girls to the top of the billboard charts in over 31 countries, becoming the fast-selling musical act since the Beatles (Sinclair 2004). And it did not stop there. These same girls bought all things Spice; stickers, dolls, lollipops, backpacks, notebooks, each item emboldened with messages of “Girl Power”. Ultimately, it was these girls who had the power to make the Spice Girls a commercial success.

The Spice Girls phenomenon awoke the world to the incredible commercial power of the tween consumer. In turn, it helped launch a campaign that solidified the tween category in the public conscious. The power of the Spice Girls was noted by Karen Brooks, spokesperson for the accessories retail chain Claire’s, who stated that with the release of their first album *Wannabe* in 1996 the “appearance of Sporty, Scary, Ginger, Posh and Baby unleashed a tsunami of genuine wannabes – a generation of little girls with money and aspirations, just waiting for a focus” (as quoted in Rice, 2000).

Since the Spice Girls, the tween phenomenon has flourished with ex-Mouseketeers Britney Spears and her rival Christina Aguilera whose music dominated the pop charts in the late 1990s, followed by Hilary Duff who made the *Forbes* list of

richest young stars under 25 in 2005 by flogging her clothing line, Stuff by Duff, her movies, concerts and albums. The power of the tween star continued into the twenty-first century with the rise of Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen, a \$1 billion-a-year global empire selling everything from phones to toothpaste to action dolls (Leith 2006, 57). Another tween princess, Miley Cyrus and her alter ego Hannah Montana, has a clothing line with Disney, a record-breaking sell-out concert tour and, “to the [movie] industry’s astonishment,” a 3D film of their concert tour which made \$31 million at its box office opening weekend (Dent 2008).

But the power of the tween market does not stop at rocketing tween celebrities into the stratosphere of stardom and commercial achievement. The tween does not just buy her own stuff; she influences family purchases. In 1999, tweens were considered to be worth \$260 billion in estimated spending power (Siegel, Coffey and Livingston 2001, 29-30). By 2007, this increased to \$630 billion (Chang 2007, 9). The influential power of the tween prompted Martin Lindstorm, a leading guru on brands, to state that 80% of all global brands require a tween strategy. No longer are just tween products sold to tweens, but items that are traditionally considered adult-oriented, such as electronics, hotels and cars (as cited in Schor 2004, 13). The tween has solidified her place as a salient component of our culture; popular culture that caters to the tween girl is ubiquitous. Tween products dominate the magazine stands with *Teen People*, *Teenbeat* and *Cosmo Girl*. Tween princesses flood the pop charts and shopping malls are full of stores that cater solely to tween girls such as La Senza Girl, Limited Too and Claire’s, to name a few. Even the tabloids are ruled by tween movie stars from such films as *Camp Rock* and the *High School Musical* trilogy.

It would be easy to tell the story of the tween market by beginning with the Spice Girls whose battle cries of “Girl Power” proved to the world the power of the girl market. But the Spice Girls are actually the end of the story as they represent the culmination of the tween as a legitimate market segment. Starting with the Spice Girls ignores a broader history of girlhood and fails to contextualize how the tween became possible in the 1990s and early 2000s.

This thesis will look back, to the late 1980s and reveal how young girls were “discovered” as a separate marketing demographic, distinct from children and teenagers. It will look at how this discovery eventually led to these girls being labelled “tween consumers”. How marketers, retailers and subsequently the media industries, heralded this tween girl as one of capitalism’s most valuable customers is the core of this thesis.

What makes the emergence of the tween girl even more significant was that she was discovered precisely at the demographic moment she should have been ignored. Lodged between two huge population bulges, the baby boomers and their future children, the girl of the 1980s was a small cohort. In fact, the 1980s was the first decade in over a century that the number of youth in North America aged five to 17 was in decline and, the first time ever that youth outnumbered senior citizens (Foot 1996, 26). Given these demographics, the coveted should have been the 18-to-34 age bracket of the baby boomers. But using only demographic analysis as a basis of assessment of a market has proven to be an unsafe proposition when it comes to the power of the tween and what she could offer as a market.

It was in the 1980s - long before the Spice Girls - that advertisers, marketers, retailers and the media began to focus their attention on the young girl, a girl who was no longer a child, but not quite a teen. The question that needs to be asked is why? Why does this moment in the life course of female consumers become the focus of the market research gaze? What do girls offer that makes them worthy as a market segment? What was it about the social, cultural and political realities of the 1980s that galvanized marketers, advertisers, retailers/manufacturers and the media to chase the girl market?

Before answering these questions, we need ask who (or what) is this tween girl? The answer I provide is that she is a commercial persona -- an abstraction amalgamating the representative characteristics of girls as they are speculated about, conjectured upon and imagined by various industry stakeholders that stand to gain from acknowledging and knowing girls as consumers. By using the term persona I want to clearly indicate we are not discussing a real person, or even a stage in real girls lived experience, but a construction of a bounded girl consumer conjured up by the forces of the mediated marketplace as a way to define, explain and sell the market to stakeholders. The focus of this thesis is to show how the tween girl persona crystallizes within the circuitry of the mediated marketplace as various stakeholders from marketing research, advertising; retail/merchandising and youth media industries cultivate, and address the tweenaged girl according to the interests and logics of the mediated marketplace.

While it may seem that the tween girl popped up out of nowhere in the early 1990s with the incredible rise of the Spice Girls and their subsequent successors, (Britney Spears, Hilary Duff and the Olsen twins) historical analysis reveals this is not

the case. As Kline, Dyer Witherford and dePeuter have argued, a cultural analysis that focuses on only a certain media text, such as the Spice Girls, isolates it from its “grounding in specific material conditions and human practices” (2003, 79). A cultural historical perspective on the other hand allows for an examination of the “material conditions and human practices” that produced the tween and made media texts such as the Spice Girls possible and allows us to see that the tween demographic did not transpire out of the imaginations of Spice Girl manager Simon Fuller, instead it crystallized as part of larger trends in the mediated marketplace.

In emphasizing the historical construction of this commercial persona, I do not mean to imply that real girls were not part of this process. A cultural historical account of human practices must also examine how real girls are experiencing and actively defining themselves within the context of the mediated marketplace. Their experience of the expanding zones of consumption in their life and their interest in the scope for pleasure, friendship and group identity it offered them is an equally important question addressed in this thesis.

To put the tween consumer in her historical context this thesis sets out to trace how the tween girl persona was shaped by, and conversely influenced, the lives of suburban white Canadian girls in consumer culture. As we shall see there is no one industry or sector responsible for the discovery of the tween persona, instead she is discursively articulated in the synergistic relations of the mediated marketplace, as advertisers, retailers and merchandisers try to cull her as a customer, as the media attempts to define her as an audience and as marketers work to get to know her as a market. This formation of the tween girl persona is metaphorically framed by the term crystallization, a process in which many small particulates organically come together to produce a larger whole.

A cultural historical analysis of the crystallization of the tween girl persona I suggest requires two things: first, a historical genealogy of the discourses on the girl consumer/audience by the industries that discovered her as a valuable consumer target, and second, the contextual analysis of this targeting practice within the broader trends of the industrial, social, cultural and political frames of the eras. While the crystallization of the tween girl persona is firmly rooted in the context of a post-War marketplace that claims youth segments as markets, this thesis will show that she is more specifically crystallized within an environment of radical social, political and cultural changes of the

1980s and early 1990s – in the marketplace, in media and in the everyday family life and ideology within which girls came to know themselves as consumers.

The 1980s and early 1990s were periods of dramatic shifts in the landscape of consumer culture as incited by neoliberal politics and an expanding media market. Changes in the mediascape brought about by the development of new technologies alongside the neoliberal policies of deregulation, resulted in the opening up of new media spaces, as cable technology and deregulation of the media meant new opportunities for targeting niched audience segments. Cultural commentators have pinpointed the 1980s as a moment of radical change for the advertising industry (Leiss, Kline, Jhally and Botterill 2005), the culture industries (Hesmondhalgh 2002), television institutions (Ang 1991) and consumer culture (Slater 1997). These radical shifts in the mediascape created new opportunities for industries to discover niche markets such as the tween girl.

The second social upheaval that provided a catalyst for the tween girl was the radicalization of women's lives. The 1980s witnessed a dramatic change in the landscape of the family and the expectations of gender roles as many middle-class women entered the workforce. The decade also saw a paradigm shift in ideologies of feminism as feminism was forced to recalibrate its relationship to both the girl and consumer culture. It is because of, and in direct response to, these two seismic shifts that the tween girl attracts attention as a market, customer and audience.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how the tweenaged girl became the object of the market researchers' gaze and began to crystallize as a persona according to the logics of the mediated marketplace as it responded to the new neoliberal politics and feminist realities of the 1980s. The tween consumer is cleaved from the transitory and transformational spaces between childhood and adolescence and is part of the reclamation of girlhood as a site of struggle over female autonomy, identity and power.

The first chapter of this dissertation sets the stage. It outlines how the institutions of the mediated marketplace are one of the major forces to define young people in the twentieth century. The following three chapters each trace one site of the tween persona: as a girl, a child and a teen. Each of these chapters begins by providing the historical context leading up to the 1980s and explores how the tween colonizes each space. The chapters then investigate the impact of changes in the mediascape and feminism on the colonization of each space and evaluate what the colonization offers the matrices of both the mediated marketplace and girls themselves. Chapter 2, "Girls just

wanna have fun: Capitalizing on the girl” addresses how the girl was ignored by both the media and feminism prior to the 1980s. The eighties were a period of renaissance as the mediated marketplace opened up new spaces for the celebration of girl culture, while feminism was forced to recalibrate its relationship with the girl and the culture she consumed and enjoyed. Chapter 3 “Momma’s little shoppers: The colonization of childhood” explores how the tween persona was carved out of the protective space of childhood. As a child, she had access to family resources, but in new ways. She eased the burden for working mothers by inserting herself into the family economy and, by doing so, legitimized childhood as a commercial space. The fourth and final chapter “Selling cool: Downaging the teen” illustrates how the celebratory aspects of adolescence are “down-aged’ onto the tween girl as a direct result of the teen consumer/audience proving to be unreliable. The tween offered a means to establish brand loyalty and consumer socialization previously allocated to the teen and reconfirmed the hegemonic ideology that marketplace promises the resources for subjectivity.

CHAPTER 1: SETTING THE STAGE

“Move over baby boomers. After courting you for 40 years, marketers and advertisers have now turned their attention to a powerful new group of consumers – your kids.” (Steinberg 1998, 58).

In grade five I was allowed to go to the mall without my parents. I would meet up with my friends and together we would make our way to Upper Canada Mall on the bus. We would scour the mall, our meagre allowances burning holes in our pockets. We would buy the latest teen magazines; plan future clothing purchases when shopping with our mothers; and, often after a trip to the food court, peruse the toy store for the latest gizmos. I loved all of these excursions. It was freeing to be in a public space without my parents. I felt empowered (and cool). But there was more to this than my own personal freedom. The hidden story behind these mall excursions is that retailers, designers and merchandisers noticed. Little did my friends and I know at the time that we were participating in a dramatic deepening of the commercialization of youth culture. Unbeknownst to us, we were not exactly experiencing a new frontier. As our parents could tell us, the youth market had been colonized by market forces long before the 1980s. However, the 1980s were a period of intense commodification and increasing segmentation of the youth market as young people were targeted explicitly and intensely as consumers by the mediated marketplace.

The obvious starting point of this hidden story is to question who was being targeted? Who was being noticed? My friends and I were not quite teens and yet we definitely were not children, so who were we? How did the industries of the mediated marketplace come to know us? This line of questioning ultimately leads to wider questions - what is a market or, more precisely, who is a market? How does a market come to be known and understood?

In the mediated marketplace, each of the advertising, marketing, media, retail and manufacturing industries work from the position that it has an intimate knowledge or

understanding of who is actually going to buy, watch or consume their products and services. Since it is impossible to know each and every customer/audience member, a model of the ideal consumer represented by the market is formulated.

In this dissertation, I argue that the girl market comes to be represented by the commercial persona of the tween. The tween girl is characterized in the circuitry of the mediated marketplace as market researchers work to define and articulate the particulars of the market; as advertisers, product designers, manufacturers and retailers attempt to know the consumer as a market segment and a customer; and as media producers strive to produce for and advertise to the targeted tween audience.

Shifting definitions of childhood and adolescence

The concepts and definitions of childhood are fluid. The meanings and values of childhood change dramatically with the ebb and flow of shifting social institutions such as the economy, education, the family and the market. Phillipe Ariès (1962) was among the first to substantially challenge previously accepted understandings of childhood as universal and natural (Jenks 2005, 55). Ariès, basing most of his work on French culture, argued that our contemporary “idea” of childhood rose in fifteenth century Europe. It was the eighteenth century, in the period of post-Enlightenment which saw the genesis of modern conceptualization of childhood. Ariès’ arguments challenged the view that childhood is a natural state. Subsequent historians, such as Lawrence Stone (1977), Lloyd de Mause (1979) and Holyes (1979), have supported Ariès claims. While these works have been criticized for their lack of evidence, (see Pollock 1983), they did open up possibilities to examine “the social construction of childhood as an ongoing historical process” (Jenkins 16). They also illustrate how social boundaries between youth and adults are “flexible, permeable and always changing” (Austin and Willard 1998, 14).

Following Ariès, most historical and sociological studies on childhood are situated in the logic that Western definitions of childhood are socially and historically located (Austin and Willard 1998; Cook 2004; Kline 1993; James, Jenks and Prout 1993). These authors read childhood as an ideological construct born out of a multi-dimensional network of social forces, institutional regimes, economic demands and historical developments. Of course, this does not apply solely to young people. Childhood, as Henry Jenkins suggests:

is not timeless but rather subject to the same historical shifts and institutional factors that shape all human experience. Children's culture is not the result of purely top-down forces of ideological and institutional control, nor is it a free space of individual expression. Children's culture is a site of conflicting values, goals and expectations (Jenkins 1998, 14).

There has been value in disconnecting childhood from the historical, social and political, and reifying it as a natural state. Giroux traces how by emptying childhood as a "historical, social and political construction enmeshed in relations of power, many adults shroud children in an aura of innocence and protectedness that erases any viable notion of adult responsibility even as it evokes it" (Giroux 2000, 2). The myth of childhood innocence has a political consequence of exonerating adults from their responsibility towards youth, while simultaneously emptying the child of his/her own political agency (Kincaid in Jenkins 1998, 1). It functions by assuming that the innocent child lies outside the harsh realities of the adult world (Jenkins 1998, 2). The myth also functions as a means of reinforcing and legitimizing control by adult institutions over the child. Adults and their institutions need to protect and care for the innocent child who is removed from the political sphere.

Mythologizing childhood as a period of innocence illustrates how definitions and understandings of childhood and youth are organized, defined and structured to meet the needs of institutional forms such as families, schools, governments and the mediated marketplace. This thesis builds on the premise that the definitions of childhood are historical, social and political in nature. But such logic must also recognize that young people are not completely passive; they are "active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live" (James and Prout 1997, 8).

Childhood and adolescence in twentieth century consumer culture

One of the major institutional forces to define the child in the twentieth century was the marketplace. At the beginning of the century, young consumers were grouped into two rudimentary units, the child and the adolescent. These were vague, cumbersome and crudely defined categories. It was not until after World War II that the categories of youth became more refined with cleaner, more decisive boundaries. Throughout the twentieth century categories such as the toddler, the preschooler, the

teenager and, of course, the tween,¹ have become distinct segments defined by capitalist forces.

The divisions of youth have been given meaning within the circuitry of the mediated marketplace. Youth went from being grouped together in large, unwieldy categories to being segmented or colonized into smaller segments that offer more intense marketing opportunities (Williamson, 1986). One of twentieth century capitalism's more prosperous accomplishments has been the compartmentalizing of youth into discrete marketing niches. Turning young people into consumer markets has been essential for the continuation of industrial capitalism (Ewen 1976). "Capitalism," as Judith Williamson argues, "is constantly searching for new areas to colonize" (1986, 116). The colonization of new markets provides an outlet for overproduction. Capitalism's productive capacity is always growing to the extent that it overproduces. To circumvent overproduction it has to look for new markets (Leiss, Kline and Jhally 1997, 20) and youth has offered many opportunities for new markets.

The "discovery" and compartmentalization of the tween is not an isolated incident in the history of marketing but is part of a larger historical project of the commercialization of youth that occurs during the post-War era. The colonization of the youth market is eloquently illustrated by a marketer quoted in an article in *Advertising Age*. The marketer states:

When the economy is going good they [advertisers] stay away from it [the youth market]. When the economy goes in the crapper, then all of a sudden everyone starts looking for new market niches and advertisers start saying that they are interested (Yovovich 1982, M5).

This quote anticipates Williamson's observation that capitalism's survival relies on finding new areas to colonize. Young people provide a perfect opportunity for this. In the past 50 years youth have been one of capitalism's new markets as every stage of youth - the young child, the teen and (as I will illustrate in the next few chapters) the tween - had been consolidated and produced as lucrative market segments, customers and audiences. In colonizing these markets, the child, the teen and the tween have been constructed as specific segments of the market that are legitimized, defined and contained according to the logics of the media marketplace.

¹ There is a certain amount of slippage as these boundaries are never completely defined. There is always some ambiguity at the edges of the divisions.

In recent years, a few excellent, informative histories have traced how childhood has been colonized by the forces of consumer culture. Of these, four stand out for offering detailed accounts of the commodification of childhood - *Kids' Stuff* by Gary Cross, *Out of the Garden* by Stephen Kline, Ellen Seiter's work *Sold Separately* and the appropriately titled work by Daniel T. Cook, *The Commodification of Childhood*. Each of these texts explores both the development of children's material culture in the twentieth century and the industries tied to such developments. These four works suggest how insight into one aspect of childhood is really part of a much larger story about broader socio-cultural frames such as the conceptualization of parenthood, constructions of childhood and a history of consumer culture. All of these texts work to highlight a tension between the child and children's cultural industries that respond to, position and construct meanings of childhood at various historical moments, and illustrate how childhood is structured and organized according to the needs of the marketplace.

Gary Cross's text *Kid's Stuff*, published in 1992, is a chronological narrative of the history of children's playthings. Cross begins his analysis in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries arguing that knowing the early roots of the children's toy industry and the changing patterns of childrearing help to illuminate an understanding of the toys in the twentieth century (Cross 1992, 10). As he moves to examine the mid- and late-twentieth century, Cross unites both social and economic history by tracing the developments in toy manufacturing, the strategies used to promote products and the role that toys play in the socialization of children. He ties these developments to changes in consumption patterns, educational philosophies, gender roles and the family. Cross's work highlights the need for historical analysis of the business of children's culture as it intersects with various social institutions such as the family, childhood, education and gender. The weakness of his work is that much of the theoretical underpinnings of his analysis are implied, and there is very little attempt to link his discoveries to larger theories on gender or political economy. Cross's text is a lost opportunity to theoretically position children's culture within the broader context of critical and social theory. He also refrains from directly outlining his methodology, leaving it open to inference. Despite these oversights, his work does serve as a model in tracing the connections between children's material culture and wider social institutions.

Kline's work is much more theoretically positioned. His monograph on the toy industry, *Out of the Garden*, criticizes the historical development of the toy industry and children's play. His work represents an attempt to acknowledge the "market as a

growing force within the matrix of socialization” (Kline 1993, 13) as he positions the evolution of children’s culture and play within the structural forces of the marketplace. He suggests that there has been an oversight of this type of analysis as:

the academic and journalistic commentaries on childhood seldom acknowledge the marketplace as a part of the matrices of contemporary socialization or devote serious attention to how children learn those roles, attitudes and sentiments that reinforce the consumer culture (Kline 1993, 13).

Kline’s work begins to rectify such omissions. One of the strengths of his book is his exploration of the cultural impacts of industry research on children and the marketing of toys to children. He argues that these cultural impacts include dramatic shifts in the way children play and how play is conceptualized by adults.

Kline’s work explores the intersections between children’s material culture and media culture with the development of post-War consumer culture and the changing realities of childhood. Kline highlights the 1980s as a particular moment of importance in children’s culture. During the 1980s, changes with deregulation of television and a rediscovery of the market segmentation by age and gender, meant toy companies began to alter their approach to marketing by creating specific character-based shows. In effect, these shows would become program-length commercials for a range of character-licensed products drastically altering the way children played. Ultimately, Kline makes an argument that privileges the role of marketing as a major force in the socialization of children and cultural understandings of childhood.

Out of the Garden demonstrates that children’s culture cannot be understood outside the marketing of it to the children themselves. The marketing of children’s culture is not simply an economic impetus of capitalism, but a cultural activity that helps to shape the way children engage, play and are socialized, as well as how children are perceived by other institutions (Kline 1993, 350). Kline calls for an understanding of the complexities of children’s marketing and children’s consumer culture as a way to appreciate the socio-cultural constructions of childhood and children’s leisure.

Two years following Kline’s work, *Out of the Garden* (1993), Ellen Seiter’s *Sold Separately: Parents and Children in Consumer Culture* (1995) was published. Seiter’s work begins by challenging middle-class conventions that commercial children’s television and mass-market toys limit children’s intellectual growth and reinforce traditional gender and race paradigms. Looking specifically at what Seiter calls the

“lowest forms of children’s television and culture” (1995, 5), Saturday morning cartoons and commercials, she concludes that children’s culture has been scapegoated as the cause of passive children, the rise of consumerism by children and the reinforcement of racist and sexist stereotypes. She argues that not only do these well-meaning middle-class critiques alienate working-class aesthetics and values, they also fail to consider how children actually engage with the media in productive ways. Instead of worrying about the debilitating effects of commercialization on children, parents and teachers should focus on improving access to education and entertainment for those left out (1995, 234). In undertaking such a task, Seiter pays particular attention to the ways in which the “television industry organizes, distorts and expresses gender and race difference” (1995, 6). A critique of gender is woven through Seiter’s text as she focuses on different stories told to girls and boys by the mediated marketplace, in particular children’s’ media and the toy industry.

Daniel T. Cook adds to the conversation started by Cross, Kline and Seiter but instead of focusing on toys, media and children’s play his work, *The Commodification of Childhood*, is a detailed history of the positing of the child as a consumer by the apparel industry. In his own words, he traces the “rise, growth and segmentation of the children’s wear industry in the United States from 1917 to 1962” (Cook 2004, 2). The study begins in 1917 when the children’s wear industry began to organize itself as an industry with the publication of the first trade journal *Infant’s Wear Department*, which later became *Earnshaw’s Review* (later shortened to *Earnshaw’s*) named after the affable publisher George F. Earnshaw. Cook suggests that the industry is largely responsible for the compartmentalization of the child consumer into finely graded age categories “nuanced by clothing choices and retail spaces” (Cook 2004, 2). In tracing this history, Cook reminds us that children and childhood are not “on the sidelines of culture” but inseparable to the “rise, reproduction and transformation” of consumer culture in the twentieth century (Cook 2004, 21). Children and children’s culture are intricately linked to the structural forces of the market; therefore, any study of children and children’s culture must take into account how childhood has become organized by, and understood in, the language of the market (Cook 2004, 21).

The strength of Kline’s, Seiter’s and Cook’s works is in delineating how childhood is discursively shaped by the marketplace. They also illustrate how the positioning of the child as a consumer is a means to instil the logic of consumerism and legitimize consumption. The child offers more than a just a market; selling to the child cements

ideological values around consumption. The child offers marketers opportunities to reify consumption as a basic human need. Kline's and Seiter's works add a further dimension by suggesting that the mediated marketplace plays an increasingly important role in the socialization of children.

The push to connect market definitions of age cohorts to larger ideological drives is also worked out by Thomas Frank. Frank's 1997 monograph, *The Conquest of Cool*, focuses on the more elusive category of youth and youth culture as opposed to childhood. Studying the accounts of the cultural upheaval of the mid- to late-1960s, Frank suggests that the nuances of business culture have been ignored. The accepted story of the era has been that corporate interests were the "great symbolic foil against which young rebels defined themselves" (Frank 1997, 7). Frank challenges this argument and contends that business actually benefited from the rebelliousness of youth culture. Unfortunately, the text pays much more attention to the response of the hegemonic forces of business culture to youth culture rather than assessing the contested and symbiotic relationships between youth culture and corporate ideologies. Frank's work highlights how youth is not simply an age category, but that youth became a culture in the post-War era. Marcel Danesi continues with this line of reasoning in *Forever Young* (2003). While not a historical study like the other works discussed, it does offer insight into the blurring boundaries between youth and adulthood. Danesi maintains that in contemporary Western society youth has come to be positioned as a purchasable category. Danesi exposes how consumption is the site of psycho-social identity as youth is no longer simply an age category but is sold as a state of mind and a lifestyle choice to adults by the advertising, fashion and music industries.

The historical perspective developed by these authors allows for research that looks beyond trends and establishes shifts in children's and youth's commercial culture that is part of larger socio-cultural phenomenon. As Cross, Kline, Seiter and Cook have illustrated, developments in children's consumer culture are intimately connected to changes in the social and cultural structures of children's lives, the family and twentieth century capitalism. Frank's and Danesi's works outline how youth has become unhitched from age and sold as a lifestyle choice.

Four of these texts focus on a specific site as a point of study - Cross, the toy industry; Cook, the children's apparel industry; Seiter, children's television and toys; and Frank, the advertising and menswear industries - and offer a thorough interrogation of one or two cultural industries. In contrast, Kline and Danesi appreciate that youth culture

is a complex synergy between a multitude of industries that work tangentially to sell to young people. Kline's work hones in on the toy industry, television and market research while Danesi, a semiotician, focuses mostly on fashion, music and language.

What is overlooked in many of these texts is an analysis which problematizes gender. For Danesi, Frank and Cross gender is completely ignored. While Kline and Cook build gender into their studies, gender is not the starting point of their studies. Kline acknowledges the gender division inherent in the children's cultural industries. He spends considerable time discussing the gender-specific design of toys, such as Barbie, and the commercials and media that accompany such goods. He contends that the increasing segmentation of the children's market by gender resulted in more gendered play and little shared culture in which to play together:

Without the sense of common bonding to toys and without a shared knowledge about characters, play scripts and appropriate game structures, boys and girls now seem to find it harder to mesh their make-believe play than ever before (1993, 243).

Television shows and toys were aimed at girl or boy audiences specifically and contributed to the socialization of gender. While Kline's analysis adds depth to the argument of children's gender socialization, his analysis of gender is a small component of a very rich and dense text that spends much more time exploring the history and development of children's media and toy industries.

Cook also includes gender as part of his analysis. In his book on the children's clothing industry, there are two chapters that focus on the girls' clothing industry. Unfortunately, Cook does not take into account feminist readings of the clothing industry nor is there much attention given to the context of girls in wider social frames beyond the clothing industry. Neither Kline nor Cook position gender as central to analysis, nor do they include much in the way of a feminist critique. Their views of gender are more tied to how the mediated marketplace produces and reproduces different discourses for girls and boys, which are then reinforced in the cultural spaces beyond. Seiter comes the closest to doing, but still comes up short. What is missing in all of these works is an appreciation of the nuances of girls' culture from a feminist perspective.

A final and obvious oversight in the study of children's and youth's consumer culture is the lack of studies of the tween girl. On one side, there are the scholars of childhood studies, Cross, Cook, Kline and Seiter for example, and on the other there are those who address adolescence, Frank and Danesi. Since the tween girl is lodged in

the space between childhood and adolescence, there have been very few academic works that specifically address her and even fewer that place her in a historical context. It is this absence of academic study of girl culture, particularly that of the tween as it intersects with the synergistic circuitries of the mediated marketplace, that this dissertation addresses.

The tween girl

Gender is central to my analysis of the tween, since the tween consumer is predominantly a girl. Children's culture scholars Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh's anthology entitled *Seven Going on Seventeen: Tween Studies in the Culture of Girlhood* (2005) noted this gendering of the term tween from the beginning of its use. They argue that:

the word 'tween' is commonly understood to be a construction of the present day pertaining to a younger pre-adolescent and young adolescent age group exclusively or almost exclusively female, possessing, or as critics express it, defined by a distinct commodity culture (6).

Mitchell and Reid-Walsh's conclusion that the tween is predominantly defined as female is also evident in the trade press of the marketing and advertising industry. The majority of articles written reference the tween exclusively as a girl (see Dent 2008, Mah 2005, McCormick 2000, Rice 2000, Steinberg 1998). Other texts simply imply this to be true. An example of this is YTV's *2007 Tween Report*. While the report avoids referencing gender at all, the images that accompany the report emphasize girls with boys appearing only as siblings. The privileging of the tween as a girl within the marketers discourses has not gone unnoticed by Cook and Kaiser who uncovered the blatant gendering of the tween in the trade press. In making their claim, they quote an article from *Entrepreneur* magazine in 1999 to exemplify this gendering. The article, according to Cook and Kaiser, suggests that girls are considered to be a better "niche market than tween boys; that is girls represent 'predictable economic stuff' such as accessories, clothes, makeup and shoes" (as quoted in Cook and Kaiser 2004, 204).

Boys are rarely categorized as tweens or included in the tween paradigm. When they are, it is mainly as users of technology and/or media, in particular video games.² Notice how the boy is not defined as a consumer but a user. Somehow boys magically acquire all the latest video games and equipment without actually being customers, influenced by advertising to desire and purchase the goods. An example of this hypocrisy is illustrated in a documentary on Global Television entitled *Tweens: Too Fast Too Soon* shown on Canadian television in the spring of 2003. The documentary focused on how young people were growing up too fast, too soon. The parts of the documentary that focused on the tween girl showed them shopping and spending their parents' money. Much of the concern around girls growing up too early was that they were spending too much time in shopping malls, trying on makeup, buying sparkly accessories and searching for the latest fashion trends - all because girls are heavily influenced by the powers of advertising and the media. According to the documentary, the items that the girls wanted to purchase were too expensive and too provocative for young girls. However, the main concern raised by the documentary with tween boys was that they spent too much time playing video games that were too graphic and violent for young boys.

Other documentaries such as *Merchants of Cool* (2001) and CBC's documentary *How the Kids Took Over* (2005) tell similar stories. In each of these films, boys are never problematized in terms of how they spend their money or what they buy in the mall. Instead, they are problematized based on how they spend their leisure time in the private spaces of the home, while girls are addressed based on how they engage with commercial public spaces, such as the mall. This reversal of traditional constructions of gender in which the domestic sphere is feminine and the public sphere is masculine does not offer any emancipatory opportunities, instead it reifies the girl as a passive, irrational consumer and vilifies boys as detached, violent technophiles.

This blatant gendering of tween is part of the wider misogynistic view that naturalizes a link between the feminine and consumption, discussed in Chapter 2. The characterization of the tween girl as a voracious consumer, latching onto every new trend, replicates the stereotype of a passive female consumer easily duped by

² See Stephen Kline et. al. (2003) for more information on this.

advertisers and marketers into buying vast quantities of goods (Driscoll 2002; Hollows 2000; Lury 1996; McRobbie 2000).

Men, and by extension boys, rarely get positioned as consumers. When they do, their consumption is often rationalized as production and labour, or at least rationalized as a practical purchase, such as a car, a new lawnmower, or a new suit for work (Brezeale 2000). On the other hand, girls and women are often positioned as irrational consumers, manipulated into buying frivolous purchases. Positioning the girl as a consumer, then, needs to be viewed within the context of the feminization of consumption to be understood.

The mediated marketplace

Studies of youth marketing parallels the historical trajectory of the marketing industry as a whole during the post-war era. Marketers moved from approaching consumers in grossly differentiated demographic terms to addressing them as specific nuanced targetable groups.³ The segmentation of youth into age and gender based categories could only occur in a climate in which marketers were actively searching for more nuanced and precise ways to approach, address and sell to the consumer. This dissertation draws heavily on each of these six works previously discussed (Cross, Kline, Seiter, Cook, Frank and Danesi) in terms of establishing both a historical perspective and a methodology (to be explained later in this chapter) which traces the rise of the tween as a component of a larger trend in consumer culture occurring in the last half of the twentieth century. The tween persona is articulated by the industries that target her. As historical studies of child and youth marketing practices discussed previously have illustrated, the cultural industries all had a stake in segmenting and targeting youth. The various sectors of the mediated marketplace, including the media, retail, product designers and advertisers all worked together reaching this effort to target the segment as consumers. It was not just market researchers attempting to identify and explain a segment of the youth market's behaviour who performed this task. An understanding of the tween must take into account that the crystallization of the tween

³ The evolution of market segmentation from being general and vague to something more nuanced and specific mirrors Marion's account of the marketing industry as a whole moving "from crude intuitive action toward an increasingly informed and scientific discipline" (Marion 2005, 12).

persona is historically constituted within the wider frames of the social and cultural structures of the times. I use Kline's, and to a lesser extent Danesi's, understandings of the cultural industries as an entry point for an analysis of the tween girl because she is not devised in response to the needs of one industry but instead she crystallizes at the intersection of a constellation of cultural industries that work in tangent to know and articulate her as a customer, a market and an audience.

These industries form the backbone of what is termed the "mediated marketplace". This term builds upon Douglas Kellner's definition of media culture as a strategic definition of the tethered relationship of the media to consumer culture. Media culture, according to Kellner, performs four functions: it provides materials that people use to construct identities; it helps to shape people's view of the world and their values; it provides the symbols and myths that form a common culture and; finally, it provides materials to create identity for individuals to insert themselves into technologic capitalism and global culture (Kellner, 1995, 10). One of the strengths of Kellner's definition is the appreciation of the symbiotic relationship between the media and consumer culture. The term mediated marketplace harnesses the idea of this symbiosis and acknowledges a synergy between consumer culture and the media. The weakness of Kellner's term is that it is often used in ways that privilege the media over other dimensions of consumer culture. Kellner's work itself starts with the media and works outwards. Those who use the term focus on media products and on the genres of the media (see for example Dennis 2005; Gill 2007 and Lewis 2008). Even Kellner's own work on media culture focuses on specific texts and genres (1995).

The other option is to use the more accepted terminology of "culture industry". This term introduced by Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1947) and recently updated by Hesmondhalgh (2002), meshes two seemingly separate entities - culture and industry - and pulls back the curtain to reveal the interdependencies between culture, society and business. Adorno and Horkheimer defined the culture industry as a mass-produced, corporate leisure industry designed to distract individuals from their own exploitation (1947).

While the term culture industry reveals the connections between the economic and the cultural, it does not work as a definition for the interaction between marketers, advertisers, product designers, retailers, manufactures and the media. Firstly, it includes components of leisure culture and art that are not relevant to this study. Secondly, the culture industry is a holistic term that positions the commercial interrelated with the

political, social and cultural life, leaving little room to isolate separate sites and focus on the synergistic relations between the various components. Drawing on Raymond Williams, Hesmondhalgh points out that the culture industry is a highly contested, problematic term, as both the terms 'industry' and 'culture' are complex and difficult (2002, 14). Culture industry, as Hesmondhalgh offers, focuses on the relationship between "culture and economics, texts and industry, meaning and function" (2002, 14). One of the continuities of the culture industries is that they are businesses, meaning that like all businesses their underlying motive is to turn a profit. Despite this clear-cut goal, the texts that they produce are "complex, ambivalent and contested" (Hesmondhalgh 2002, 3). In Hesmondhalgh's version, the culture industry does not incorporate the consumer goods industry, excluding companies such as Nike or Coca Cola, but does include the marketing and advertising of these products. Furthermore, in his definition, fashion is what he calls a "hybrid" of a culture industry because it is both a consumer goods industry but it also emphasizes signification (Hesmondhalgh 2002, 14). Here the term fails for the purpose of this thesis. Folded into the matrix of the mediated marketplace are the industries of retail/merchandising, manufacturing and product design, which are all "hybrid" to use Hesmondhalgh's reading of culture industry.

A third phrase that overcomes the limitations of the terms "media culture" and "culture industry", is the term "mediated marketplace" used by Leiss, Kline, Jhally and Botterill (2005) in their comprehensive study of the advertising industry entitled *Social Communication in Advertising: Consumption in the Mediated Marketplace*. The authors strategically use the phrase "mediated marketplace" to reflect the complexity of consumer culture and the marketplace. Its strength lies in the play on the word "mediated". On one hand "mediated" privileges media production as a driver of the marketplace without over-privileging specific media texts and genres over other aspects of cultural production. Instead, as the authors wisely suggest, the mediated marketplace appreciates "the promotional messages being forged between the various sectors of cultural production in the media-driven (or 'mediatized') marketplace" (2005, 16). These sectors include the market researchers who work to define and articulate the particulars of a market; advertisers and advertising agencies who strive to sell goods and services; the product designers, manufacturers and retailers who actually produce and sell the goods and services to specific customers; and, the media producers who create media content to gather audiences.

But the term “mediated“ also references the notion of mediation and negotiation. It appreciates the synergistic relations in and between the commercial media system, global retailing and production, and the advertising and marketing circuits which link up to these. None of these cultural sectors is the locus of meaning, instead meaning is forged out of the interconnected dialogues between these sectors. These sectors are also connected to the wider forces of the economy and the socio-political. They do not lie outside of the realities of these, but instead interact with and respond to the economic, social and political structures in which they operate.

The mediated marketplace also mediates the lived experiences of the members of a market society. Using various forms of market research, cultural producers uncover the social structures and cultural dynamics of particular populations, which they then appropriate and adapt into their own cultural productions. This, as Leiss, Kline Jhally and Botterill point out, renders the marketplace into an “oscillating feedback loop” (2005, 16). The mediated marketplace builds on Kellner’s media culture as providing the resources individuals use in the construction of their own subjectivities. As well as, Adorno and Horkheimer’s understanding of the interconnectedness of business to culture and society. But it also addresses the synergistic relations of cultural producers. This work sets out to show how categories of childhood and youth are shaped and defined according to the logics of the mediated marketplace. Selling to the child and youth is part of a hegemonic process of consumer socialization and reification of consumer ideologies.

Throughout the rest of this dissertation I will argue that the tween girl consumer offers more to marketers than simply access to a new market. She is a deflector in the constant battle to legitimize and extend consumption in the context of two major social upheavals - changes in the mediascape and a shifting feminist politic.

The tween girl as a commercial persona

The tween was not an actual person or group of people. There was no secret tribe of young consumers called “twens” who were previously unknown until they were discovered by marketers in the same way anthropologists might scour the rainforests of South America looking for a new civilization. Although, reading the industry press during the 1980s and 1990s, it might appear so as advertisers and marketers recall their “discoveries” in a similar way as anthropologists might. Nor was there one specific tween girl who became the model of the tween girl, in the way Joe the Plumber was

used to represent Middle America in the recent American election campaign. Instead the tween girl was what Cook calls a figment of the “commercial imagination” (Cook 2004, 17). She was the personification of a consumer that crystallizes as the cultural industries of marketing, advertising and the media researched, targeted, and traded the girl segment..

Business executive turned author, Michael J. Croft, simply defines market segmentation as “the process of identifying different groups of users within a market who could possibly be targeted with separate products or marketing programs” (Croft 1994, 1). On the surface, this appears to be a rational and straightforward summary, but “the process of identifying” is more complex than Croft credits. It is deeply ideological since marketing is essentially a “body of expertise that simultaneously describes and constructs its subject matter” (Cochoy as quoted in Marion 2005, 3).

The idea behind market segmentation is that the marketer now intimately “knows” narrow subgroups and thus can effectively address them by appealing to their specific needs and wants. “Identifying” or “knowing” the market involves identifying basic demographic variables such as age, race, class, sexuality and occupation as well as behavioural variables such as rate of use of products or brand loyalty. During the 1980s, “knowing” the market expanded to include more intricate sets of psychographic data including personality, consumption practices and lifestyle attitudes.

Essentially markets are socially constructed categories of meaning. They are a way of making sense of a population for the purposes of selling products and maximizing profits. Market segmentation is a means of apprehending human activity (Cook 2000, 487) and it is a form of social organization in which the consumer becomes the object of the “market research gaze” (Cook 2004, 19) where the object is seen through the eyes of the holder of the gaze.⁴ The types of quantitative and qualitative information gathered and collated on groups of people are based on their position as consumers. Each bundle of information is considered pertinent or viable by market researchers only if it is ultimately relevant to their purchasing practices. Market segmentation is a means of analyzing group characteristics and translating these characteristics into valuable information to be exploited to the benefit of those companies trying to sell to them.

⁴ This idea is obviously built on Mulvey’s (1989) notion of the gaze.

Of course a cynic could reasonably argue that market segmentation and the reiteration of the need for market segmentation by the marketing and advertising industries justifies their own existence as the more complex and elusive the consumer the greater the need to rely on market researchers and advertising professionals to understand and explain the consumer.⁵

Market researchers need to be able to clearly define a group of consumers to their clients (advertisers, retailers, the media etc.). They must be able to articulate the complexities and nuances of aggregates of individuals based on traits a group has in common. Anthropomorphizing the bland lifeless data of market research into stereotypical representations of people articulates the values, desires, needs and lifestyles of the segment. These representations can be both visual and literal. For example, one can imagine a market described like this: educated, professional, single middle-class men and women who live in urban centres or, older, retired professional women who live alone and with a large disposable income. However, these descriptions lack personality and depth. To give meaning to the particulars of a market, savvy marketers name and personify markets making them tangible, beyond being simply benign collaborations of demographic, psychographic and behavioural data.

The word persona is etymologically derived from the Latin word for mask or character and has been used in literature to refer to a social role in a script played by an actor (Oxford English Dictionary). At the root of the word persona is a concept of being a simpler, external representation of a more complex self or personality. Carl Jung (1928) used the term persona to signify an outward social performance of a personality. The persona is not a pose or a false front that one uses intentionally to misrepresent oneself to others. Rather the persona is the performance of the self to others, and may change according to the occasion, situation or context.

The concept of a commercial persona builds out of these etymological roots. A persona is not a real being but instead is a portrait of the selected attributes of a prototypical consumer and/or audience. It is a symbolic representation of the complexities of a market segment including demographics, motives and psychographics organized to meet the needs of the synergistic relations of the mediated marketplace.

⁵ A similar type of argument can be seen in Marion, who argues that the “formalization and dissemination of marketing principles and tools led to the construction of marketing professions reinforcing the need and presence of marketers in the economy” (Marion 2005, 4).

The commercial persona is much more than a construct referring to a social group. It is a corporate construct, forged in the matrices of the mediated marketplace, according to its logics. It is a commodified form of abstractions about social identity, motives and psychology that like Jung's persona, can change in various situations or contexts.

Ien Ang has argued that audiences are similarly abstract constructions of the media industries. Building on Raymond Williams notion that "masses are illusory totalities" (as quoted in Ang 1991, 2), Ang argues that the "'television audience' only exists as an imaginary entity, an abstraction constructed from the vantage point of the institution in the interest of the institutions" (Ang 1991, 2). Just as Ang argues that the television audience did not exist prior to television, the tween persona did not exist prior to the tween market. The tween girl consumer, like the audience, is not "an ontological given but a socially constituted and institutionally produced category" (Ang 1991, 3). Before the 1980s, the girl was acknowledged by some as a customer and as a consumer, but she was not fully acknowledged by the mediated marketplace. The tween audience, and we can add to this the tween customer, and the tween market are institutionally produced categories of knowing the consumer. They are abstractions that are constructed from the viewpoint of invested institutions. The tween persona then is a developmentally and gender bounded construct of a commercial imagination that gives meaning to the girl as a market, audience and customer. Yet to say that the tween is reified as a seemingly natural social category does not imply that she does not seem real to girls themselves as they take up and incorporate this commercial persona in the construction of their own subjectivity and performance of their own roles as tween consumers.

Defining personae

Arguably, one of the most lucrative commercial personae has to be the yuppie. Born in the early 1980s, the yuppie "emerged from the womb of new psychographics and lifestyle profiling tools" (Leiss, Kline, Jhally and Botterill 2005, 454) and was the personification of a lucrative group of consumers who were courted by advertisers and marketers in the mid-1980s. The yuppies were the golden egg of industry. They were a specific segment of the demographically charged baby boomers who were entering into the work world with the freedom to choose between starting families and prioritizing careers. Some chose careers over families, giving them new freedoms to live in urban

centres and purchase expensive luxury items with their disposable incomes. It was these choices that garnered the young, urban professionals the moniker “yuppie”.

The yuppie was the personification of a market segment based on lifestyle, attitudes and values. He/she was the symbolic representation of this elite subsection that combined both demographic realities such as age, economic status and geography with psychographic variables such as lifestyle and attitude. The yuppie was a college-educated, status-conscious, career-orientated urban dweller with a large disposable income. Tom Wolfe allegedly dubbed them the “splurge generation”. Yet not all boomers were yuppies; in fact, very few were.⁶ Yuppies were an “elite subsection of the baby-boom generation” (Burnett and Bush 1986, 27).

In the 1980s, the yuppie grabbed a huge chunk of the public imagination and became a marketing icon (Feuer 1995, 14). In 1984 they were featured on the cover of *Newsweek* magazine which declared 1984 the “Year of the Yuppie”. The yuppie demographic was catered to by the media with shows such as *Thirtysomething* and *LA Law*, produced specifically for this demographic. Product designers celebrated the yuppie aesthetic of functionalism and minimalism while advertisers and marketers embraced yuppies because of their attitudes towards conspicuous consumption. Companies such as Ford, American Express, Campbell Soup and Anheuser Busch (Michelob) introduced campaigns specifically geared for the yuppie. Even companies like Zippo, the makers of the quintessential cigarette lighter, jumped on the yuppie band wagon and produced Contempo, a high-end luxury lighter (Burnett and Bush 1986, 28) while Mattel had a yuppie Barbie, complete with business suit and briefcase (Hendra, Cerf and Elbling 1989, 192). There was even a satirical guide to yuppiedom entitled *The Yuppie Handbook* published in 1983. The image of the yuppie extended beyond the iteration of the marketing industry. The yuppie meets Cook’s definition of a successful marketing persona as it occupied “most every corner of popular media culture, in

⁶ In the United States there were only about 1.5 million Americans that were blessed with the right combination of age, profession and geography to classify as a yuppie, contradicting the image of the yuppie as ubiquitous (Ehrenreich 1989,196). A similar argument can be made in Canada. In Ontario, for example, during the 1980s the increase in the number of married couples that were childless was more pronounced in the suburban and rural areas of than in the City of Toronto (calculation by the author, Mitchell 10, 1991), thus seriously questioning the stereotype of young professionals as urban.

commercials, advertisements, music videos, sit-coms and the popular press” (Cook 2004, 19).⁷

The yuppie phenomenon proved how valuable a market niche could be. The value of yuppies went beyond their own purchasing power; they had the power to influence the marketplace. *Marketing Magazine* proclaimed that “Yuppies carry the clout to make a product fly or flop, and not just because of their numbers. Of importance is their role as trendsetters; they’re on the cutting edge of what’s in and what’s out” (Scotland 1985, 19). The image of the yuppie was so popular that for some who did not meet the definition of the yuppie, they aspired to be yuppies by exhibiting traits similar to the yuppie in their buying habits (Burnett and Bush 1986, 27).

Advertising to the yuppie was so profitable that other attempts at similar psychographic markets followed; there were puppies (poor urban professionals), mobys (Mommy older baby younger) (Popcorn, 1991, 45), dinks (dual income no kids) woppies (well-off older people) and, my favourite, muppies, (middle-aged urban professions) (Marney 1987b, 10). Many of these groups did not grab the attention of media culture in the manner that the yuppie did, nor did they seem to take hold in the social consciousness of the public, but did represent a drive to personify discrete segments of the market based on both demographic and psychographic data. Trend watcher Faith Popcorn categorized this as “egonomics” or the phenomena of individualized production and consumption where the “I” takes centre stage in “I deserve it” (Popcorn 1991, 44). She suggests that in the decadent 80s, also know as the “me decade”, consumer culture was about the individual receiving attention, a “little recognition of the no-one’s quite-like-me” (Popcorn 1991, 43). Marketing to the “I” involved conceptualizing consumers as complex, multi-dimensional entities that made consumer choices based on the realities of their lifestyles.

Yuppies, puppies and mobys are examples of niche marketing to the extreme, but they are also attempts to make these niche markets instantly meaningful to both the producers (marketers, advertisers and the media) and the consumers who, at a certain level, have to buy into the images of themselves. This is precisely what is important about the yuppie. The strength of the yuppie, as both a market niche and a persona, was that it resonated beyond the boundaries of those in the advertising and marketing

⁷ Just to be clear, Cook did not refer to the yuppie in his 2004 work. I am applying his insights on commercial personae to the yuppie.

industries. The yuppie moniker and image made its way into popular culture and became a way for a subsection of consumers to identify themselves and use it as part of a map of their own social identity (Leiss, Kline, Jhally and Botterill 2005, 292). The yuppie phenomenon was a critical moment in the history of marketing. It illustrated the potential value of forging market segments out of demographic data fused with psychographic information. The persona of the yuppie built upon the segmentation of a narrow niche of consumers based on their lifestyle, out of the larger demographic cohort of baby boomers. In doing so, it revealed the lucrative potential of capturing a market segment and honing it into a finely delineated market persona. This paved the way for other commercial personae, such as the tween, to follow.⁸

Fifty years prior to the yuppie, in the 1930s, the toddler emerged as an “elaborately nuanced commercial persona” (Cook 2004, 85). The toddler was first understood as a size range and merchandising category in the children’s apparel industry and marked the age between one, when a child “toddles” around just learning to walk, and ends at about three when toilet training is generally completed and there is no need to provide extra room in clothing for diapers. The persona of the toddler was given a boost by Shirley Temple who “performed toddlerhood well past the toddler age” in her signature pinafore dresses and frilly underpants (Cook 2004, 92). Cook fully recognizes the power in being a market segment. He argues that the toddler was given visibility and, eventually personhood, when approached as a consumer (Cook 2004, 85-95).

Both the yuppie and the toddler are commercial personae according to Cook’s definition of personae as:

... assemblages of characteristics - known or conjectured, ‘real’ or imagined, - constructed by and traded among interested parties in the service of their industry. They are the negotiable currency of a merchant-class ideology which seeks to comprehend its subject, “the consumer”, in the abstract, with the goal of opening new markets or of maintaining and expanding old ones (Cook 2004, 19).

Cook provides a robust definition that positions personae as a means of “constructing” and characterizing clusters of consumers according to the logics of the mediated marketplace. What is lost in Cook’s definition of commercial personae is the

⁸ Other successful personae to have followed the yuppie include the GenXer and the metrosexual.

agency of the “clusters of consumers” themselves. A detailed understanding of the concept of a commercial persona must take into account that people are mined for information and they play an active role in the framing of the persona. Individuals have to participate in the “assemblage of characteristics” on some level or the persona is doomed to fail. Taking the yuppie as an example, very few people actually fit the yuppie profile, but the yuppie persona was commonly represented in advertisements in the 1980s and sold thousands of products. The yuppie provided consumers with a symbolic frame on which they could hang their notions of their own subjectivity.

The functions of commercial personae

Commercial personae, such as the yuppie or the toddler, provide the mediated marketplace with three basic functions. The first and perhaps foremost function of commercial personae is to work on behalf of industry to circulate and sell a cluster of individuals as a lucrative market, prompting Cook to refer to personae as the “negotiable currency of the merchant class”. Often market research firms promoted themselves by trying to position their companies as either the company that “discovered” the market or the company that best understands the market in an attempt to garner new clients to their firm. The selling of targeted market segments as commercial personae can be witnessed in the trade publications where market research companies advertise their services to potential clients, merchandisers flog their goods to retailers and media outlets sell advertising space to potential advertisers. Each of these industries uses commercial personae to embed their products in a specific market segment. Personae represent the segment cleanly and effectively communicate the target market of a consumer good or media product. This is all done, of course, to rephrase Cook, in an attempt to “open new markets or to maintain or expand old ones” (2004, 20).

This was an intelligent business strategy for these industries according to Peter Franchese, the editor of *American Demographics* in 1988, a magazine read closely by the advertising industry. “The trick is,” Franchese explains, “to find a faster-growing segment before everyone else does or build a share [in a segment] faster than anyone else” (as quoted in Turow 1997, 55). Latching onto and promoting the right segments could potentially ensure the success of not only market research companies, but of retailers, merchandisers and the media that all catered to specific markets.

The second, and less obvious role of commercial personae, is to explain the cohort or demographic to wider society. This has been especially true for young people

who have often been seen as an enigma by their older counterparts. This argument is outlined in Ilana Nash's illuminating book *American Sweethearts* (2006). While Nash's work focuses on the popular culture representations of adolescent girlhood during the 1930s to 1965, she highlights how representations of girlhood in the narrative cycles of popular culture served to introduce and explain the new teen girl to baffled adults (Nash 2006,18). Articles on girlhood appearing in popular mainstream magazines such as *Life*, *Look*, *Newsweek*, etc. helped to "disseminate the received wisdom about adolescent females to Mr. and Mrs. America" (Nash 2006, 7). Teen girls were interviewed and their opinions were interpreted by both the social sciences and industry in an attempt to find out "what made them tick" (Nash 2006, 143-145). Popular characters such as Nancy Drew, Corliss Archer and Gidget came to represent the teen girl and reassured society that despite the dramatic social upheavals in the intra- and post-War era, the girl would still submit her power to paternal forces of her father and, by extension, the patriarchal power of society. Nash's work illustrates how the codes of girlhood gave meaning to the teenage girl and shaped how adults interacted with and imagined girls.

This logic can be extended to include other industries as well. While Corliss, Nancy and Gidget were offering explanations of teen girls to Mr. and Mrs. America, similar images of teen girls were used in advertisements in both the trade and popular press. They represented the audience for specific media products and they were the consumers of specific clothing sizes. Like the teen girl in the mid-twentieth century, the commercial persona of the tween girl offers explanations to other members of society and works to reassure them of social stasis. In this sense, commercial personae are pedagogical in nature. They offer valuable lessons into how one should behave and what is expected of them as consumers in specific situations. Nash highlights this pedagogical aspect of marketing in her work on the teen girl and suggests that the image of the tween girl in popular culture offered girls lessons in "self subordination to paternal authority" (2006, 13). As another example, the yuppie, who had not previously been accounted for in the marketplace prior to the 1980s, provided a lifecycle narrative of privileged consumerism for young professionals who were prioritizing careers over having families.

The third and perhaps most overlooked function of commercial personae is to provide resources of subjectivity. The resource or image offered is, of course, a highly crafted and intentionally crafted social image that is tailored to meet the needs of stakeholders of the mediated marketplace. Yet forging a successful persona is about

articulating a social identity that cultural industries can mobilize as potential markets as well as individual consumers can use to map out their own consumer sense of self in relation to those of others (Leiss, Kline, Jhally and Botterill 2005, 453). Consumers therefore participate in the co-construction of consumer groups by choosing to buy and use the brands associated with the persona and in identifying with and displaying the values, lifestyles and behaviours they present. In the social communication of mediated markets, consumers do not lack agency nor are they manipulated by advertising's offered array of commercial persona. Sufficient consumers have to buy into the construction of themselves that is projected by marketers. Unsuccessful personae, and there have been many, fail when the image does not resonate with the audience/consumer.⁹ In this sense the mediated marketplace provides consumers with resources they can use for constructing their own subjectivity.

This dissertation builds upon Cook's notion of the tween persona as a reification of the tweenaged girl consumer apprehended as a market demographic, a retail customer and an audience. But the analysis does not stop there, while the tween persona is a symbolic representation of the girl market, she is not created solely out of the imaginations of the media/advertising/marketing matrix; instead she is built out of, and built onto, images of girlhood that resonate with girls. A commercial persona cannot really take hold and sell itself as a profitable market/consumer/audience if people fail to buy into it to a certain extent. The rest of this dissertation unravels how through the circulation of this reification the tween performs these three functions - she sells both the segment and the companies that have aligned themselves with the segment, she explains the cohort, and she provides resources of subjectivity for girls growing up in suburban Ontario.

The circuitry of the mediated marketplace

The "interested parties", using Cook's terminology, in the circulation of the tween persona are a divergent range of cultural industries. The stakeholders include the media research companies who attempt to "know" consumers, the marketers who sell their services to advertisers, the advertisers who choose how and where to communicate with audiences, the media properties that sell their audiences to the advertisers, the

⁹ See page 27 for examples of personae that failed.

merchandisers who produce the material goods for customers, and the retailers who sell the goods in stores.

The background to this study is a set of complex, historical developments connected to the evolution of market research and the increasing need to target market segments by advertisers, retailers and the media -- and to articulate or trade (again to use Cook's terminology) these narrow niches to each other. The tween persona begins to crystallize with the trading of the segment between the interested parties since it is in this process that the tween is most clearly articulated. The tween persona is used to encourage media, advertisers, merchandisers and retailers that she is a customer and audience worth being pursued. Such argumentation builds upon both Kline's (1993) and Danesi's (2003) models in which categories of youth are understood within a broad spectrum of industries that work tangentially, as opposed to narrowing the focus to one specific culture industry. It is in the "trading" of the persona between the synergistic relations of the mediated marketplace that the persona is refined and reproduced.

This thesis is a study of youth culture that focuses on the synergistic relationships between the industries of the mediated marketplace, instead of isolating one site as the origination of the tween persona. Thus, the object of study is not the industries themselves, but the connections between them. Commercial personae begin to crystallize as clusters of customers/audience members are reified into narrow market segments which are then circulated and traded between the channels of the mediated marketplace. Over time, lucrative consumer segments begin to congeal into personae that represent the abstract characteristics of the segment.

The crystallization of a commercial persona involves a complex representation of the wants, needs, desires, concerns, lifestyles, pressures and motivations of the group being targeted. It takes the form of both images and statements that circulate within and between the various arms of the mediated marketplace that cater to the market segment. Marketers, advertisers, retailers, merchandisers, the media and the end user (in the case of the tween, the girls themselves) converse with each other. In circulating knowledge about the target market between these invested industries, each industry begins to add layers of meaning to the market as the consumer is created. Since it is often the manufacturers or retailers of goods that are the clients of both the media and marketing, it is in their vested interest to ensure that they participate in the crystallization of a persona such as the tween. As I will argue, it is in this "trading" of the persona that it is refined and reproduced as marketers, retailers, advertisers, retailers, manufacturers

and the media all work to circulate the symbolic representation of the market in an attempt to cater to it.

The analysis of the discourses that accompany this 'trade' that forms the methodological backbone of the historical analysis of this dissertation. Its purpose is not to isolate one company's or one industry's role in the framing of the tween, but to untangle the interrelationships between interested parties in the historically evolving research, design and targeting practices of the mediated market which does not necessarily evolve according to a unified logic. The actual historical research site of this thesis then, is the synergistic connections of the circuitry of the mediated marketplace. The metaphor that I use to describe these processes of interaction between and among sectors of the market and their potential consumers is crystallization.

Scientifically, crystallization is the process by which small particles start to cluster together to constitute a bigger whole. It is not a linear development in which one can follow an process of one particulate attaching itself to the next in an orderly fashion. Instead it is organic, as small, unseen particulates suspended in a saturated solution begin to cluster together randomly to form a larger whole. Once the cluster reaches a certain size, it becomes stable under the conditions of that particular environment. Crystallization is an apt metaphor for the formation of commercial personae for a number of reasons. Firstly, once the crystal is formed, it is impossible to discern the seed particulate that instigated the process. Secondly, the particles attach themselves in a chaotic frenzy, with many particles crystallizing simultaneously, as opposed to unfolding in an organized fashion. And thirdly, crystallization occurs only in a solution in which particles are already suspended. The solution has to be supersaturated with solutes and the conditions must be right.

The girl that comes to be defined as the tween was present in the marketplace prior to the 1980s. At the time of her crystallization she was already a consumer. She bought and wore clothes; she used consumer items and she watched, read and listened to the media. However, she was not fully acknowledged as a customer by the advertising, retail, merchandising or product design sectors. She was not acknowledged as a market by market researchers, nor was she identified as an audience by the media. It was in the 1980s that these sectors of the mediated marketplace began to crystallize and produce her as a tween.

In this thesis I will suggest that the girl crystallizes as a tween persona under the conditions of the 1980s. While there is no clear inaugural moment of her formation,

small components were already present, but indiscernible, and began to cluster simultaneously. This only occurred once the social, cultural and political environment was supersaturated so to speak. This is an important component of the metaphor; the circuits of the mediated marketplace do not create the tween persona as much as they precipitate the various components of her makeup to cluster into a visible entity. Nor is there one aspect of the mediated marketplace that instigates the tween persona; instead the tween crystallizes in the synergistic relations between the matrices of the mediated marketplace as they begin to define, organize and trade symbolic representations of the girls' market.

Doing the research

To untangle the 'articulations' of the mediated marketplace I chose three specific research sites for my historical research. The first site was trade publications. These publications provide a research access to the discourses between advertising agencies, research companies, product manufacturers and media companies. Daniel Cook uses Goffman's notion of backstage social encounters and argues that trade publications represent this backstage for industry; they are a space away from "the scrutinizing gaze of the general public where the work of erecting a façade gets accomplished" (as quoted in Cook 2004, 18). The images and meanings presented in the journals multiply, mutate and fracture as they circulate through media space and over time in various ways (Cook 2004, 19). Dawn Currie suggests that advertising trade journals "connect the cultural and social dimensions of commercial media because they direct us to the 'hidden' life of social texts: that of their production rather than simply production" (Currie 1999, 304). A historical survey of trade publications enables observations into the workings and justifications of the industry, information stakeholders often do not want to reveal overtly to the consuming public.

The trade journals that provide the primary basis of my analysis were the Canadian publication, *Marketing Magazine*, and the American publication, *Advertising Age* (see appendix 1). Both of these magazines publish weekly. For both of these publications, I undertook a thorough reading of the entire set of publications from 1980-1995. For *Marketing Magazine*, hard copies of the publication were available as it is published in Toronto. For *Advertising Age*, I had to rely on microfiche. Anyone who has used old microfiche is aware of the dangers in overlooking critical articles as reading

microfiche is an extremely taxing endeavour. To ensure accuracy, I also completed detailed searches using various article indices published during the appropriate time periods that were applicable to the study. Furthermore, I widened the investigation to include academic journals relevant to the industry. These journals were *American Demographic*, *Journal of Advertising* and *Market Research*. While the latter two did not prove to be very valuable, *American Demographic* did provide a wealth of information that finds its way into the analysis. *American Demographic* also had tremendous influence on the trade publications as evidenced by the fact that *Advertising Age* and *Marketing Magazine* frequently referred to research presented in the publication in their articles.

To round out the industries studied, I also looked to trade publications in the retail/merchandising sector. I was able to access the American journal on the children's apparel industry, *Earnshaw's*, and *VM & SD (Visual Merchandising and Store Display)*. Both of these publications report on the latest findings of various market research projects, summaries of trends in manufacturing and highlight the business strategies of specific retail stores. The advertisers in these publications are often manufacturers advertising the availability of their wares to potential retailers. The manufacturers include information on the target market of their products and inform retailers of their media strategy in advertising their goods. Retailers want to know this information. They want to know if the new line of children's clothing, for example, is going to be advertised during Saturday morning cartoons or in women's magazines so they can discern who is being targeted and through what channels.

Product designers, retailers and manufacturers take considerable time to ensure that they are producing and selling the right products to the right customer. While advertising binds together the person and the product in the construction of consumer subjectivities (Leiss, Kline, Jhally and Botterill 2005, 265), it is only successful if the consumer has the desire to buy. The designers, manufacturers and retailers of consumer goods all spend considerable amount of time and energy in knowing their customers in order to produce goods that meet their needs, aesthetic values and lifestyles; clothes have to fit properly, toys have to look right, makeup has to be the right colour, and grooming products have to solve the right beauty problems. Trade publications allow for insight into the marketing/advertising industry as well as the merchandising/retail sector.

The second research site for this study is the media industries (see appendix 1). Information about the media industries and their interaction with other sectors can be obtained from trade publications too. These trade journals also contain advertisements from media firms attempting to sell their commercial ad space. These ads, designed to appeal to advertisers and marketers, link the content of the media to specific audiences and are particularly useful (Preston and White 2004). Tracing such advertisements allows for insight into how media collate and define audiences. The consummation of the marriage between the media and advertisers can most visibly be witnessed in trade journals such as *Marketing Magazine* and *Advertising Age*. Since the media produces an audience for sale, it is like other consumer goods in that the purchasers (in this case, advertisers) must be convinced of the value of the commodity to confirm the sale. Much of this conviction can be observed within the pages of trade publications which contain numerous advertisements for various media outlets. These advertisements are essentially trying to sell their products to advertisers by attempting to assure advertisers of their value. In this case, the value is that they are the most efficient means of communicating with their customers. The media companies try to appeal to advertisers by claiming that they can deliver a desirable group of consumers, one so narrow and precise that the advertiser will not waste money paying to reach audiences not be interested in the product (Turow 1997, Leiss, Kline, Jhally and Botterill 2005). Their tactic is to highlight the purity of the audience and drive away those who do not fit the target (Turow 1997, 7). Media firms sell their audience as lucrative for the advertiser by claiming that virtually every audience member is a potential customer for the advertiser. "Advertisers are searching for the right program, at the right time slot, to deliver the right audience and maximize the right number of consumers" (Leiss, Kline and Jhally 1997, 147), part of the media's role is to illustrate to advertisers how their property can achieve this (Preston and White 2004).

In addition to tracing in the trade publications the dialogues about targeted audiences and market segments of the media, I also looked at the media industries products. My main focus was magazines which were targeted specifically at girls which were instrumental in articulating the girl persona to the girl consumer. I focused mainly on *Seventeen* for a few reasons both methodological and pragmatic. First, *Seventeen* was a frequent advertiser in the trade publications and conducted research on their audience. Second, it was frequently cited by girls in interviews as a magazine they read. And third, I was able to gain access to a complete set of this magazine from 1980s-

1996.¹⁰ In addition, I attempted to immerse myself in the culture of the 1980s. I watched movies, looked at any other girl magazines that were available and listened to the music of the time. I specifically focused on media products that girls who grew up in the 1980s indicated were important to them from this period. I also searched through CRTC records from the 1980s and 1990s pertaining to the licensing of television stations YTV, The Family Channel and MuchMusic. These records provided some insight behind the formation of these channels and how they perceived their potential audiences.

The third and final source of research was the girls (or at least a small sample of suburban middle class Ontarians) themselves with whom I explored their experiences of being welcomed as consumers into the embrace of marketing during the 1980's retrospectively. While there are obvious limitations with retrospective interviewing I chose not to silence girls own voices which would continue a critical problem that has frequently plagued scholarship on child and youth consumerism. Although it would have been much easier to focus solely on the discourses found in the trade publications and media, I chose not to do so. Firstly because to leave the lived experience of suburban girls out of the analysis, would theoretically marginalize their own engagement in the crystallization of a tween persona. Obviously, such a historical oversight "neglects the diverse and complex ways in which youth use and relate to cultural commodities" (Buckingham 1993, 166).

To ignore the girls growing awareness of their position in the mediated marketplace also risked minimizing the many ways that youth themselves were mined for information. It is research on the girls themselves that forms the critical backbone of the markets "knowing" the girl and the industries discourses about her. The new methods for studying youth consumers was revealed in Malcolm Gladwell's critical 1997 work on the "coolhunt". Gladwell's journalistic reflection on coolhunters exposed the degree to which young people are mined by market researchers to find out the

¹⁰ I did use other periodicals to round out my research, *Sassy*, *Teen*, *Teen Beat* and *TigerBeat*. In total I had access to 30 of these magazines. Unfortunately these were random as I could only gain access to them by soliciting donations for them through the newspaper. What is interesting about this is that I have the magazines the girls had saved over the years. These were also the magazines that I was able to take to the interviews to stimulate discussion with the interviewees. It should be noted that not one university library in Canada, nor any public library with the exception of the Toronto Public Library, has *Seventeen* magazine or carries the back issues to any other girls' magazines. This is indicative of a scholarly climate which has not taken girls' culture very seriously.

motivators of their lifestyles, values and behaviours.¹¹ Of course, it quickly becomes clear that the type of information that is garnered by the coolhunters is very narrow and suits the corporate agendas of the mediated marketplace.

While it is easy, and justified, to be critical of this process it is important to remember that during the 1980's tween girls became part of the "oscillating feedback loop" of the mediated marketplace referred to by Leiss, Kline, Jhally and Botterill (2005). Like them, although the incredible power of media culture to shape and influence youth culture cannot be denied, my thesis argues that young people do have a certain power and agency in their negotiations in the mediated marketplace. For one thing, children, as Buckingham has shown, are often much more intelligent viewers than they are given credit for and can make thoughtful, critical and often cynical assessments of the mass media (Buckingham 1993). Their inclusion therefore respects children's knowledge (Mitchell and Reid Walsh 2002, 38) and positions youth as actively engaged within historical paradigms as opposed to being on the sidelines passively accepting social changes. So even if there are limitations in their remembrance of their youth I decided that by including the remembered experiences of these girl consumers during their tween years I was exploring to some degree what they were aware of and how they were responding to the market discourses which targeted them.

To give girls a voice in this dissertation, I held retrospective interviews and retrospective focus groups with women who were girls in the 1980s to represent the tween market. In total, I interviewed 21 women living in a suburb north of Toronto during the 1980s. The women I interviewed were born between the years 1970 and 1980 which would mean that they were in their tween years at some point during the 1980s and early 1990s.

While I did not ask the women to self identify, the interviewees did fit the commercial personae of the tween in that she is a white, middle class, heterosexual subject. Given that these women all grew up in suburbia during the 1980s there was little diversity among them, but they were a useful source of normative experiences within this suburban demographic. It should be noted that in focusing on only suburban girls, poor girls, ethnic minorities, inner city and rural girls have been specifically left out

¹¹ See also the PBS Frontline video *Merchants of Cool* (2001) for a detailed account of this process.

of this study as they were not the focus of the mediated marketplace at the time. I make no claims in this thesis to understand their engagements with the markets targeting of the girl consumer. I cannot emphasize enough that given that the women interviewed grew up in middle class suburban towns in the 1980s that there is little economic, racial or religious diversity. Instead these women represent the narrow interests of the mediated marketplace. The acknowledged limitations of this study highlight the need to for further analysis on how marginalized girls interacted with the narrow media constructions of girlhood.

Furthermore it must be noted that these retrospective interviews are limited by the memories of the women themselves. The challenge of using retrospective interviews as a research tool is that there this a tendency to invalidate memory as biased and nostalgic. But I would argue reliance on memory is not a complete disadvantage, what is lost in the fickle process of remembering is gained in that it offers new insight into a specific historical moment. The historical value of remembered pasts rests on three critical strengths. Firstly they provide significant and unique information, secondly they convey both the individual and the collective consciousness of an era and third reflective insights offer new perspectives on the past (Thompson 172).

To begin the interview process I first conducted a series of freewheeling focus groups as defined by researchers such as Stewart and Shamdasani (1990), Krueger (1994) and Frey and Fontana (1994) which created an environment in which disclosures were encouraged and nurtured. The group sessions were designed to be an informal, casual conversation between a group of four to six women in which I, as the researcher, would gently guide the conversation to cover various topics including consumer culture, gender, socialization, the media, their family life, etc. The small number of participants allowed everyone to speak, but was large enough for a diversity of insights and perceptions (Stewart 1990, 58-60; Frey and Fontana 1994). My input to the conversation was minimal to allow for a more organic, authentic process of remembering the past.¹²

¹² Originally I was going to coordinate these meetings myself. I started by contacting one interviewee and using the process of snowballing, asked if she had anyone she would like to include in the group that would be a suitable interviewee. I quickly found that the interviewees actually wanted to take ownership of the whole focus group. They would organize a group of their girlfriends that met together at their houses and often provided snacks. The outcome was a very informal gathering of a group of women who often had shared experiences since many of them were friends during the 1980s. This would allow for different interpretations of one event. I found the response from these groups to be a very rich source of information as I observed the collective actions of the group and the social situations already established to glean information

To counterbalance the focus groups and give the research more depth, I followed up with a set of individual interviews with some of the focus group members. These interviews often took place in the interviewee's homes and the interviewee was asked to bring photos or other paraphernalia from their youth. Photos, letters and diaries are full of the iconographies of daily life. Looking at such items provided an entry point to discuss more mundane topics such as makeup and hair that one might not be able to readily recall. Since memory is not totally spontaneous, it sometimes requires triggers. I also conducted individual interviews with seven women

In the both the focus groups and the interviews, I paid particular attention to the women's' past experiences as consumers of both the media - specifically music and magazines - and of commercial goods - fashion and grooming products. The grooming products I was most interested in were those that were associated with puberty, tampons and razors, and those associated with transformation, makeup and hair products. A final line of questioning in the interviews addressed their experiences as actual consumers, going to the shopping malls, negotiating purchases with their parents and desiring and using the goods. Overall, the oral history interviews (See appendix 2) conducted as both focus groups and as one-on-one interviews provided a very rich resource in detailing the lives of young girls during the 1980s.

To strengthen the retrospective perspective, I have also relied on auto-ethnographical reflections to position myself at the centre of this work. The insertion of the self into the study is a feminist methodological tool supported by Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh who argue that one of the ways to legitimize childhood as a valid research site is to undertake research that "starts with ourselves" (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 2002, 40). Furthermore feminist scholars, such as Walkerdine (1997) Kenny (2000) and Vollrath (2006), have illustrated the importance of placing oneself at the centre of one's work. Their works are richly textured auto-ethnographic analyses of girlhood

that would not come up so readily in one-on one-interviews (Krueger 1994, 6). While I recognize that using this format compromises having a sample that is truly representative, it provides a more authentic experience of the women narrating and remembering the past. As an interviewer, I become less visible and intrusive as I watched these women reveal and discuss their experiences as young females. Focus groups such as these provide qualitative insights into attitudes, perceptions and opinions of the participants (Krueger 1994, 19) allowing the researcher to capitalize on the cumulative knowledge of the group. The informal conversational atmosphere of the focus group stimulated much discussion that was unsolicited or prompted by me as the researcher.

and I follow their examples. Like the interviewees, I was also a young girl during the 1980s and was the target of the tween demographic. Placing myself and my own experiences at the centre of my research allows me, as much as one can in a historical study, to undertake a participant observer role.

Historical case study of crystallization

Together these three sites, the trade publications, the media itself and reflections on the lived experiences of girls provided a rich cross-section of the stakeholder discourses that helped to crystallize the tween as a commercial persona. Applying the cultural-historical discussed previously, I set out to trace the key moments in the crystallization of the tween persona. Historical case studies have been used for deconstructing the synergistic workings of the mediated marketplace before. Thomas Frank's (1997) insightful deconstruction of menswear industry advertising in the 1960s is a historical case study of the progression of business thought and its adaptation to counterculture. Another example is Kline, Dyer-Witheford and De Peuter's (2003) analysis of the video game industry which provides a systemic mapping of the "interplay" between "three circuits: the circuit of culture, the circuit of technology and the circuit of marketing" of the "mediatized global marketplace".

Methodologically, my goal was to tease apart the complex circuitry in the three research sites and search for key moments that come to seed the crystallization of the tween persona. This method is underpinned by the theoretical view that the cultural and the social are engaged in a dynamic interchange whereby one informs, constructs and responds to the other (Currie 1999; Firth 1981; Fiske 1989; Hall 1993; Thornton 1997). Dawn Currie has argued for a dialectical method of feminist analysis that connects the cultural to the social by reading the social in the context of the cultural and vice versa (1999, 13).¹³ Currie distinguishes between the two by defining the culture as "the products and practices which engage us in meaning-making" and the social as "the everyday organization of people and resources necessary for meaning-making to be possible" (Currie 1999, 11).

¹³ See also Kellner's perspective that media culture and society are interlocked in a dialectical relationship in which media culture explains society and society explains media culture (1995).

The interdependent connections of the mediated marketplace provides this dynamic interchange in and between the social (the girls themselves - their lived experience and self-expression) and the cultural (the media, marketing, advertising, merchandising and retail). It is the cross-referencing of the social with the cultural that makes my methodology dialectical. The mediated marketplace exploits the social, as a resource for meaning; at the same time, the cultural provides symbolic references and resources for images, discourses and narratives that generate pleasures, identities and subject positions which people then appropriate (Kellner 1995, 259). It produces the materials for an ideological framework that explains the social world and a subject's place within it.

Building on Currie, this method recognizes that girls are involved in their own meaning making and identity construction in the context of the mediated marketplace which target them. Currie notes that particular media, particular consumer objects and particular experiences play a role in the identity work of adolescent girls and induce girls into consumer identities (1999). Yet, in the structures of the mediated marketplace, girls are active users who make conscious choices about how they will navigate the transitional moments of puberty. They choose particular commodities, popular culture resources and retail experiences in this navigation that are provided for her by the mediated marketplace.

I argue therefore that the tween persona crystallizes out of the dynamic interchanges between the various industries of the mediated marketplace and its consumers as the girl is gathered as an targeted audience, as a fan of specific music, reader of particular magazines and viewer of television shows designed to appeal to her and to provide access to advertisers interested in talking directly with her. She is also positioned as a customer of consumer goods such as fashion, tampons and grooming products. And, she is known as a market with a unique set of needs and requirements demanded by a specific stage of development that crystallizes the tween persona around a specific transitional moment of her lifecycle – developmentally, because her body is experiencing changes brought on by early stages of puberty, socially, because her peer group focuses on the anticipation of a sexualized gender identity, domestically, as parental limitations diminish and peer pressure intensifies, and as a target consumer as she gains money and begins to shop for both herself and her family.

The process of crystallization happens as her transitional status becomes increasingly known and addressed by the various sectors of the mediated marketplace.

Throughout the course of the twentieth century there have been key moments that began to seed the formation of a girl consumer and provide layers of meaning to the girl consumer. The first historical moment takes place in the 1920s as the children's apparel industry began to address the girl consumer in the ambiguous space between the child and adolescent shoppers. While the industry recognized the potential of the market, they struggled to cater to the specific demands presented by the girl body in the transitional spaces of development (Cook 1994). Cook's work reveals how both the child and the teen personae are known as fixed categories of being, as opposed to the tween personae who is conceptualized as being in a perpetual state of intense transformation, both socially and bodily. The second moment occurs in the 1950s as girls begin to play with Barbie and is addressed as anticipating adulthood, meanwhile the music industry sexualizes the girl as a screaming teenybopper fan. In the 1950s, the girl is positioned as a moment of anticipatory socialization focused towards adulthood, while toys such as Barbie and fan culture become transitional objects helping girls in their work of becoming. The third moment, which forms the main thrust of this thesis, is the 1980s, when under the pressures of a deregulated mediascape and feminism, girls are given new freedoms and new spaces. They are addressed by the music industry as girls, not just screaming fans, and new products are designed to cater to their specific needs and desires. It is at this moment that the synergies between the various nodes of the mediated marketplace begin to resonate with each other and produce a more cohesive image of the tween persona as a transitional category. The final moment occurs post-1987, when the market gives the girl the label tween and she solidifies as a persona as the synergies of the marketplace organize and trade her image as a viable consumer. This eventually builds to the Spice Girls when girls come to understand themselves as tween consumers with their own buying power, celebrity culture, shopping habits and lifestyle

Defining the tween girl

The word tween is used in 1987 by Alice Z. Cuneo, a journalist with *Advertising Age* (1987). Cuneo does not credit herself with coining the term. In a brief interview, Cuneo states that the term had already been in circulation prior to her article (Cuneo, 2007 – personal correspondence). The term had been used in the children's apparel industry, but it also appeared infrequently in the commercial press during the 1940s. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term was first used in media in 1941 by

the *New York Herald Tribune*, as part of a title for a newspaper article “Beauty for tween-teens.” The term tween was used sporadically throughout the decades until the 1980s, but not in any meaningful way. What is important about Cuneo’s use of the term tween in the 1980s is that it was one of the first (perhaps the first, but this is difficult to determine) ‘articulations’ of the tween persona as a potentially lucrative market.

In the chapters which follow I argue that while the seeds for the commercialization of youth¹⁴ were deeply laid in the post-War marketplace, it was not until the late 1980s that the tween girl consumer was “discovered” by marketers and her commercial persona honed as a discrete moment in youth consumer development – differentiated from the child and the teen consumer. Buttressed by the fields of developmental psychology and education, the tween girl becomes marked as a whole and total moment in the lifecycle. But the question remains: Who is this girl that comes to be marked as a tween? This dissertation establishes how her formation is shored up by advances in the cultural industries of the mediated marketplace and the historical trends of niching youth into smaller, more nuanced segments. The purpose of the rest of this chapter is to flesh out the articulation of the tween persona.

Although it is difficult to ascribe the precise genealogical beginning of the word, Cook has suggested that the term tween probably developed out of the use of the phrase “twixt and tween” (a play on betwixt and between) that was used in reference to the clothing sections of department stores in the 1920s (Cook 2004, 118). The tween label builds on the labels ‘preteen’ and ‘subteen’ that were used widely by the retail industry after the Second World War (Cook and Kaiser 2004, 204). Both terms, the subteen and the preteen, obviously reference the teenager and position the girl in relation to a teenager, as being almost or below a teen. These linguistic ties to the term tween reveal a subtext to the meaning of tween. They hint at how the tween is a consumer in a liminal moment of betweenness, moving towards teenhood.

The tween is a complicated lifecycle and developmental construct. The commercial persona of the tween involves many layers of meaning. Starting with the most obvious characteristic of the persona, the tween girl is a consumer, in the largest possible sense of the word. She is not addressed as a citizen or autonomous agent but in her ability to engage with the mediated marketplace of the late twentieth century. A

¹⁴ Stuart Ewen argues that the youth market, suggesting that while the 1950s is often credited as the decade in which the teenage consumer was discovered, the seeds of the commercialization of youth begin in the 1920s (Ewen 1976).

girl at a period of late, middle childhood or pre-adolescence is only marked as tween when she enters the marketplace as a market, a customer and an audience. The tween, then, is a young, female with purchasing power.

The girl that becomes the commercial persona of the tween is not just any girl. Not all young girls were “valuable customers”. The targeting of the tween was limited to those considered to have access to disposable income or purchasing power within an affluent family (read white middle class). Marketers were interested in girls who were good consumers; who could be exploited. The tween was not simply a demographic delineated by age and gender but also by class, sexuality, religion and race as the tween has been produced as a middle or upper class, heterosexual, white Christian subject (Cook and Kaiser 2004, 205). This, of course, is of no surprise since historically the ideal consumer has mainly been the white middle/upper class female. The tween has only added one new dimension to this middle class consumer category - age.

The fashion retailers were the first to identify the tween perched on the murky ledge between childhood and adolescence but where this ledge begins and ends is unclear. Actually confining the tween to one cohesive age bracket is particularly tricky as the segmentation of youth into categories is very volatile and dependent upon the agenda of the institution that is categorizing them. In the education system, early adolescence or pre-adolescence has been conceptualized as a specific period of transition between childhood and adolescence when youth on the cusp of puberty require special attention to their needs. The shift between childhood and adolescence is symbolically represented in the division between elementary and high school. The contextual change between elementary school and high school is heightened by physical, emotional and social changes that occur with puberty (Akos 2002, 1). Yet, education conceptualizes youth into different developmental categories, as does the legal system, for example, where anyone under 18 is considered a child. Even within advertising the division of categories of youth often depends upon the agenda of the product being sold.

The age of the tween, like her precursor the subteen or preteen, is a malleable label with slippery edges. There has been a wide range of chronological boundaries to these terms and there is a historiographical nature to them. The chronological age of the tween is malleable and without definitive boundaries. In the trade publications published in the 1980s, the tween is sometimes completely overlooked and youth is divided only into two categories - childhood from infancy to 12 years and adolescence 13

to 19. In other instances, the tween is sectioned out into its own category of youth. The actual age of the tween changed depending upon how marketers and demographers decided to categorize them. Sometimes the tween years have started as young as eight or as old as 12, and ended as early as 12 or as late as 15. Media Metrix, a New York research firm has defined them as aged eight to 13. Alice Z. Cuneo's article in *US News and World Report* defined them as aged nine to 15 (Cuneo 1989, 83-85), while Peter Zollo of Teenage Research Unlimited has categorized them as aged 12 to 15 (Zollo 1995). Ten years later, in her 2004 exposé on the commercialized child, Juliet Schor defines tweens as children from grades one (approximately six or seven) to age 12 (Schor 2004, 12).¹⁵

Chronologically the tween, like its precursors the sub and preteen, is located in relation to the teen, but it is a new relationship. The preteen and subteen reference the transitional status of such an identity almost as if this age is a pit stop in the development of childhood to teenagehood. The construction of the two labels alone in that each uses the base word "teen" with prefixes of "sub" or "pre", is enough to signal its transitional status. The subteen or preteen identity is an aspirational identity. It is, according to Cook and Kaiser, the identity of a girl looking forward "in pursuit of the autonomy or expression" available to those older than her as she tries to disassociate herself from childhood and gain the freedoms that come with adolescence (Cook and Kaiser 2004, 211). In such a narrative, both childhood and teenagehood are positioned as "real" identities with specific levels of independence, autonomy and sophistication, and the subteen/preteen is an ambiguous state suspended in the transition between these two "real" identities. Despite the name, which recalls the notion of being in between, the tween persona unlike the subteen or preteen is no longer just a pit stop on the road of development from childhood to teenagehood. It is an identity in and of itself legitimized by her being acknowledged in the mediated marketplace.

¹⁵ This slippage between the terms that characterize young people is not simply confined to tween. There are no hard edges to the categories of adolescence and childhood. At times, a person under the age of 19 may be defined as child, or a child may be aged three to 11 and 12 to 19 year olds are teenagers. The US Census Bureau in 1982 considered anyone under the age of 14 as a child, youth were aged 14 to 24. In some contexts, such as the statistics for the Canadian Bureau of Broadcast Measurement or the Print Measurement Bureau, anyone over 18 is an adult, while 12 to 17 is considered a youth. At other moments, childhood and adolescence are distinctly separate life stages and marked by a series of rites or indicators such as graduating from elementary to high school.

The ambiguity of the tween is heightened by the fact that while the tween becomes isolated as a moment of the lifecycle that stands unto itself, the meaning of tween is underpinned by biological realities of the body and puberty. It is the physiological realities of this moment in the lifecycle that lend to the definition of the tween as being on the cusp - as a period of transformation. Her body is undergoing dramatic change. She begins to develop breasts, she experiences menarche, her body sprouts hair in new and strange places, and there are drastic shifts in her body's chemistry as new hormones cause emotional turbulence. It cannot be denied that tweenhood is a period of growth and change connected to the biological realities of the body and puberty as the girl begins the physical transformation into womanhood. The tween persona has a duality that was not inscribed to the preteen of the 1940s to 1970s. On one hand, the tween is in the liminal state, according to tween marketing expert Siegel, "of being too old to be a kid and too young to be teen, or in other words, too old to be dependent on parents and too young to have a work permit" (as cited in Quart 2003, 64). A view also taken by Cuneo who suggest that the "tween is too young to be treated as a freedom-loving teenager but too old for babyish appeals" (Cuneo 1987, 51). The tween consumer is a moment of transition and an ambiguous state on the cusp of adolescence and reinscribed according to the logic of the marketplace. The attraction of the tween consumer for the cultural industries is that she is considered on the cusp of developing shopping habits and patterns that may carry through her life. She is , what James McNeal refers to, a future market (McNeal 1964, 1998).

On the other hand, tween consumer is an identity that stands unto itself. While the aspirational aspect of girlhood does not disappear, tweendom is celebrated as a unique and special moment in the lifecycle. The tween persona is imbued with special characteristics such as frivolousness and fun that evade women – and a passion of goods that provide it.¹⁶ The tween does not have many of the responsibilities or pressures of adulthood; she has some of the sophistication and freedoms of adolescence, while being able to access the frivolity and playfulness of childhood

In this thesis I argue that the tween persona crystallizes out of the dynamic interchanges between the various nodes of the mediated marketplace. The girl is gathered as an audience, as a fan of music, reader of magazines and viewer of

¹⁶ Of course, the flip side to this is that as the tween gains special status with unique characteristics, tween characteristics are marketed and sold to older girls and women, resulting in the tweening of womanhood (Rice, 2000).

television. She is also positioned as a customer of consumer goods such as fashion, tampons and grooming products. And, she is known as a market with a unique set of needs and requirements demanded by her transitory stage of development that crystallizes the tween persona around this transitional moment of her lifecycle – developmentally, because her body is experiencing changes brought on by early stages of puberty, socially, because her peer group focuses on the anticipation of a sexualized gender identity, domestically, as parental limitations diminish and peer pressure intensifies, and as she learns the consumer role as she begins to shop for both herself and her family.

By the 1990s, the cultural industries had positioned tweenhood as a unique, isolated but transitory moment of the lifecycle. It is in the ambiguity of her transitionality through which tween is embraced and cherished as an identity unto itself. Tweens occupy their own transitional spaces in the marketplace, spaces that celebrate the moment of tweenhood's transitionality on its own, not just in a teleological reference to adolescence. They had their own stores, their own media, their own celebrities and their own product lines that catered specifically to them as transitional subjectivities.

CHAPTER 2: GIRLS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN: CAPITALIZING ON THE GIRL

“Feminist responses to the Spice Girls depended on whether their activities were perceived as self-regulating or whether they had been manipulated into acting out a marketing concept. In a millennial society alas, you can’t have one without the other.” (Greer 1999, 26).

For young suburban girls like myself growing up in the 1980s, the decade was exciting (and fun). Cyndi Lauper and Madonna dominated the airwaves and their kooky, whimsical fashions dominated our closets. Little girls’ toys were glittery, sparkly and smelled like fruit. Strawberry Shortcake, My Little Pony and Cabbage Patch Kids provided hours of play. But this decade was about more than simply being fun. It was a decade that began to open up spaces for girls’ consumerism as various sectors -- the toy industry, the music industry, the self-care industry and the clothing industry all began to find ways to address her uniqueness. It was in the 1980s that the girl as consumer was officially recognized by the mediated marketplace. She was no longer invisible or included as either a child and teen, but welcomed within its complex circuitry as a targetable market, an audience and a customer. The obvious question is why? Why did this new space open up? What did the girl offer the mediated marketplace to justify opening up space for her? My answer focuses on two changes taking place during the 1980s as media deregulation and feminist politics called for a recalibration of girl culture leading me to wonder what feminism’s role in the marketers articulation of the girl?

Feminism and the girl

Feminism trivializes the girl

Until the 1980s, both girls and girls’ culture were generally trivialized or ignored by the various schools of feminism. Girlhood, for the most part, was not something

deemed as valuable enough to warrant serious consideration. When the girl was addressed by feminism, her immature culture was mostly disparaged - Barbie dolls were thought to destroy young girls' self esteem and the few female characters that did appear in children's television were written off as being simply sexist stereotypes. Attention paid to girls predominantly focused on the moral panics of girlhood deviancy.¹⁷ Girlhood was considered as a separate stage in the life course that needed to be regulated and policed to ensure that girls did not stray from the moral path. Girls were only in the public light when they were of concern in the context of family violence, their sexuality or being submissive to the pressures on body image, which manifested around issues of anorexia, bulimia etc. In such debates, girls were not credited with having any agency and, as Griffin observes, these types of discourses constructed girls as being passively deviant and; therefore, needing protection (1993a).¹⁸ There was little attempt to address how young girls engaged with media and consumer culture.

Much of second wave feminism has said little about the experiences and desires of girls outside of assessing gender socialization or sex-role stereotyping (Currie 1999, 9; Dittmar 1992, 99; Walkerdine 1998, 254). What academic interest there was in girls was mainly borne out of a feminist agenda to prove that gender inequalities were a result of social and cultural constraints and not an essentialist reality. Instead of studying how girls interacted with the social and economic structures that formed these inequalities, inquiry was directed towards the construction of stereotypes by capitalist and patriarchal hegemonic forces that legitimized such inequalities (Griffin 1993b, 127). The outcome of such analysis meant that the focus of attention was on the cultural forms that were constructed for girls instead of on the girls themselves, a narrative that failed to conceptualize girls as having any agency and that ultimately worked to disparage girls' culture.

Feminist debate on girls mainly focused on representation instead of actual engagement with works like Susan Douglas's witty exploration of the representation of

¹⁷ Driscoll outlines how girls have been only truly visible when deviant. She highlights the works of Sigmund Freud, Stanley Hall and Margaret Mead who have studied the deviancy of girls as an "unusual way to observe and comment on social norms." The "normal girl" on the other hand is largely specifically ignored by social, cultural or critical theory except as a foil to studies on deviancy (2002, 64).

¹⁸ Also see McRobbie and Garber's argument that girls' subcultures take place within the safe private spheres of the home (1976).

females in popular women entitled *Where the Girls Are* (1994). While her work was published in 1994, she makes many of the same mistakes made by earlier feminist analysis of girls. What Douglas presents is a critical account of what the media offers young women. She suggests that the media is full of contradictions that tell us stories of female equality and yet, in the next moment, tell stories of our subordination. This, Douglas suggests, has “helped make us the cultural schizophrenics we are today. Women who rebel yet submit to prevailing images about what a desirable, worthwhile woman should be” (1994, 8). Despite being interested in the impact of these images, the emphasis of her work is on representation. In her text the “girls” she refers to are mostly women, but Douglas does make a few speculations on how young girls like herself responded to these images of womanhood, unfortunately this is not the main thrust of the text. Nor is her analysis theoretically rigorous, she relies on her own personal experiences and memories in assessing the impact of the media and there is little substantial information in regards to how young girls actually interacted and engaged with the media.

Nowhere was the oversight of girls’ agency more obvious than in the feminist critiques of the Barbie Doll as a hypersexual icon of womanhood that encouraged unrealistic expectations of the body, potentially leading to a negative body image and poor self-esteem. Little, if any, attention was paid to how girls actually played with and used Barbie.¹⁹ In such narratives, young girls were defined as naive innocents blindly corrupted by the Mattel Corporation. While such feminists may have been well meaning, their diatribes contributed to the disparagement of girls’ culture (Seiter 1993, 167-171). Ultimately, girls’ culture is devalued on two fronts. On one front, mainstream popular culture segregates girls’ culture from boys’ and deems it as silly, frivolous and potentially emasculating. On another front, some feminists give blanket condemnation of girls’ culture as an articulation of an insipid and powerless femininity, thus also degrading girls’ culture.²⁰ Girls’ culture, as Driscoll point out, has mistakenly been perceived by feminists as being conformist to patriarchal capitalist systems and girls as dupes of such systems (Driscoll 2002, 278).

¹⁹ See Erica Rand’s reading of Barbie as offering the potential for queer moments (1998). Rand’s work illustrates the possibility for alternative readings.

²⁰ The reclamation of the word girl as a Grrrl is an attempt to celebrate the girl, uplifting her from her devalued state that occurs in both the feminist movement and the mainstream culture.

Ellen Seiter suggests the disparagement of girls' toys has more to do with class than gender. She argues that girls' tastes for toys that display the traditional feminine behaviours signifies a working-class aesthetic of blatant markings of gender difference which upset the sensibilities of the liberal feminist political agenda and middle-class norms of cultural consumption (Seiter 1993, 167).²¹ The middle class used feminist assessments of children's culture as a means to justify a moral high ground and separate themselves from their working-class contemporaries. The consumer culture accessible to the working class, on the other hand, was written off by teachers, middle-class parents, academics and social workers as being conformist to traditional gender stereotypes.²² Toys such as Barbie were considered nothing more than a garish romanticization of femininity in which girls are unwittingly manipulated into following sexist tropes but, as the argument continues, armed with the right tools (read less commercial consumer goods) educated middle-class mothers who understood the powers of the mediated marketplace were able to shield their girls from such pressures (Seiter 1993). What both middle-class mothers and feminist literature had forgotten about was the pleasure that young girls received in playing with Barbie and the agency of girls to construct their own play.

The denunciation by feminists that young girls can actively engage in a consumer media culture on their own terms is part of a wider epistemological issue. There are many studies that address what keeps women from equality, but very few studies that actually assess how women are key, competent social actors in producing their own identities (Budgeon in Inness 1998, 3; Dittmar 1992, 99). This is particularly true when speaking of girls. Feminist discussions of girlhood mostly constructed girls as a part of a process of defining women, but failed to consider how girls themselves produced their own subjectivity. Girls were positioned in opposition to the mature, female subject. In the linear process of development, the girl acts across the space between adulthood and

²¹ Barbara Ehrenreich has made similar arguments in regards to men and the feminist movement during the 1970s and 1980s. She suggests that the "stylistic" sentiments of anti-racism and feminism were used by the middle class as a means to separate themselves from the working class (Ehrenreich 1989, 120).

²² This is despite the fact that feminist social researchers have lamented the erasure of pleasure from studies of popular culture since the 1980s. Studies on women's culture, such as Ien Ang's seminal work *Watching Dallas* (1985) or Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1984), tried to compensate for such oversights, but the authors did not apply these frames of analysis to girls. The focus of these texts was on adult women.

childhood (Driscoll 2002, 29). She was in the perpetual process of becoming something other than what she was at the moment. She was not fully feminine but instead in the process of becoming feminine.

In being concerned with the socialization of girls, feminism had conceptualized girlhood as a moment of disturbance between childhood and womanhood. She was the space in between, positioned in opposition, to adulthood. The girl became understood as the absence of womanhood, rather than understood on her own terms. The girl was seen as “pre-social” to use Buckingham’s critique of the definition of child. For Buckingham, the child was perceived as being in the “teleological process of development towards a pre-ordained goal”. Buckingham suggests that if the child is in a process of becoming, then the adult is a finished state of development and development has ceased (Buckingham 2002, 14). Applying such logic to girlhood, the roles of daughter, virgin, bride, dieter, schoolgirl and so on, express an ephemeral existence in which the girl is in the process of becoming more womanly. The dieter, schoolgirl and bride, for example, indicate that the girl’s body, intellect and social status are on the road to becoming something that has more value than its current state (Driscoll 2002, 59). As a state of transition, girlhood constitutes a crisis in the formation of the self. Her subjectivity lies in becoming, not being. Feminism is implicated in this as feminist practice and theory privileged the adult mode of subjectivity in which the vague category of adulthood is a final endpoint of the naturalized process of subjectivity (Driscoll 2002, 59).

Feminist positions of girls as in transition alienated them from the discourses that produce them, leading Allison James to describe girl subjects as nobodies, “too old to be classified as children and too young to be considered adults” (James in Bloustien 2003, 137). Mary Douglas also makes a similar argument in suggesting that girls do not see themselves as children, but nor do they see themselves as adults. As a result, they are “marginal beings left out from the patterning of society” (Douglas 1984, 95). Since they are defined as being in the process of becoming, there is little definition to what they actually are. It is precisely this alienation of girlhood that makes Driscoll call girlhood an “erasing transformation” since the practises of girlhood encourage one to become a woman to which there is no chance to return to being a girl (2002, 77).

While it was not until the mid-1990s that feminism was able to reflect on its culpability in trivializing girlhood, it did begin to take notice of how media culture committed this crime in the production of the girl. In the early 1990s, feminist

commentator Angela McRobbie suggested that girls' magazines positioned girlhood as an "erasing transformation". The magazines constantly reinforced the notions of looking older, of gaining adult experiences and, of course, of trying to find a serious relationship that would eventually lead to marriage; yet at the same time they celebrated the joys and pleasures of a fun, carefree girlhood. McRobbie's reading of *Jackie* magazine has a similar intonation that Driscoll takes on feminism, but instead of focusing on feminism and the girls' identities, McRobbie looks at how *Jackie* presents a conflicted notion of individualism. Girls' magazines like *Jackie* present the ethos of romantic individualism. Girls have to give up the bitchy catty world of female company and find a boyfriend. But the double-edged sword of acquiring a boyfriend is that the girl is expected to leave that individualism in her relationship with her boyfriend and be willing to give into his demands (McRobbie 1991, 131). Years later, Currie came to similar conclusions arguing that teen magazines do create a community among teenage girl fans which reinforces ideas about how to become women. She notes how girls use these media to learn how to actively negotiate the patriarchal systems and how to help themselves within a male dominated world of power. Ultimately, the role that magazines play in girls' subordination is they fail to offer narratives that challenge the social structures that marginalize girls and instead only offer girls tactics to individually negotiate the structures instead of actively challenging the system as a collective of women (Currie 1999, 67).

A theme that runs through these narratives of transformation is that girlhood is a period of socialization in which girls learn to acquiesce power and agency. Both feminism and the media have constructed the girl as passive with no real agency, while girlhood was not understood or defined on its own terms; it was only valid in relationship to womanhood. There has been little interest of girls on their own terms, by both feminism and the media. Both of these entities have mistakenly forged a definition of girlhood in which the girl had no real agency, while feminism used her as proof of a patriarchal power structure that reinforced traditional gender stereotypes and leaving little room for analysis on how girls actively negotiated the multifarious dimensions of femininity, silencing the girl. As we will see later in the chapter, it was not until the mid-1990s that feminism became self-reflective and made the similar critiques it made about media on itself.

Feminism reinvents the girl

In the late 1970s, feminism began to notice the girl, kicking off what comes to be a renaissance of girlhood in both feminism and the media. One of the first studies of girlhood that took the girl seriously was the work done in the late 1970s by Angela McRobbie and Jennifer Garber. McRobbie and Garber responded to the critical oversight of girls in their work on subcultures by cultural studies scholars at the CCCS in Birmingham.²³ The classic CCCS studies on subculture offered no respite for women as they largely excluded females from their critiques of subcultures (Brake 1979; Christian-Smith 1988; Griffin 1993b; McRobbie and Gardner 1976).

The works of such authors as Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (1976), Dick Hebdige (1979), Paul Willis (1977) and Stan Cohen (1972) marginalized girls and devalued girls' culture as irrelevant and inauthentic. These studies focused mainly on the spectacular aspects of male culture as resistive and oppositional and in doing so relegated girls' cultures to the margins of study. By focusing on the public and visible boys' subcultures of the street, it was easy to ignore girls' cultures which took place in the more anonymous, private spaces of the home and was often more commercial than that offered to masculine subcultures (see McRobbie and Garber 1977).

To rectify these oversights, McRobbie in an article co-written with Jennifer Garber, looked at the subcultural spaces that were available to girls. Moving away from the traditional focus of the field on class alignments, their work advocated for a reading of gender in subcultural spaces.²⁴ McRobbie and Garber called for academics to pay attention to girls' cultures and girls' spaces as sites of agency and creativity, and not simply as market manipulation. McRobbie and Garber's work revealed the complexity of girls' culture as one which was heavily commercialized and constructed but also offered

²³ For a more detailed assessment of how studies on youth culture in the 1970s and 1980s ignored the girl, see Griffin (1993).

²⁴ Stuart Hall refers to the moment when McRobbie and Garber illustrate this oversight as "an interruption" in the work of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. He poetically states in 1990 that at the time feminist critiques were like a "thief in the night, nosily breaking in and crapping on the table of cultural studies" (1996, 242). The debasing of feminist perspectives in such a manner is, of course, offensive, yet despite this his comments cannot be written off entirely. Hall's comments illustrate the sentiment that feminist scholarship had upset the cultural studies applecart, forcing academics such as him to question their theoretical stances and address the gendered nature of power. McRobbie and Garber put questions of identity back onto the agenda of cultural studies (Hall 1996, 268).

space for girls to engage in the production of meaning. Their work highlighted how girls are engaged in negotiative processes;

Girls who define themselves actively within these teenybopper subcultures are indeed being *active*, even though the familiar iconography seems to reproduce traditional gender stereotypes with the girl as the passive fan, and the star as the active male. These girls are making statements about themselves as consumers of music, for example. ... Teenybopper culture offers girls a chance to define themselves as different from and apart from both their young and their older counterparts. They are no longer little girls and not yet teenage girls. Yet this potentially awkward anonymous space can be and is transformed into a site of active feminine identity (2005, 112).

What McRobbie and Garber's pivotal essay accomplished was a merging of feminist theories with sub-cultural theory shining the light on girls, and in doing so they paved the way for a "growing cadre of feminist cultural studies scholars focusing on the culture of girls" (Pecora and Mazzarella 1999, 2; see also Kearney 2007). Although their work held great promise for gendered reading of youth cultures, it took a while to rectify the oversight of girls and address girls as having agency.

Throughout the 1980s, Angela McRobbie continued with academic inquiry into girlhood. Some of the articles that she produced are compiled in her anthology, *Feminism and Youth Culture*, first published in 1991. One of the underlying themes of many of the articles is an analysis of how young girls experience and negotiate their gender through popular culture. In 1984, McRobbie teamed up with Mica Nava and produced the anthology *Gender and Generation*. Other key works during this time included Christine Griffin's *Typical Girls* (1985), which followed a group of young working-class women from their final year at school to the workplace and Elizabeth Frazer's 1987 article in *Media Culture and Society*, which focused on how girls used text.

In Canada there was little work done on the girl, with one notable exception that focused specifically on the teenage girl. In 1985, Maureen Baker authored a report titled "*What Will Tomorrow Bring? A Study of the Aspirations of Adolescent Women.*" The report completed for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women interviewed 122 girls aged 15 to 19, a very narrow age range, to "obtain a more general picture of the hopes and priorities of adolescent women as well as an accurate picture of their present lives" (Baker 1985, 5).

In the United States, the groundbreaking work of feminist psychologists such as Carol Gilligan and Lyn Mikel Brown demonstrated how the traditional work on

adolescence blatantly overlooked girls' voices, girls' experiences and girls' problems. Expanding on a research program at Harvard that began in the mid-1980s called the *Harvard Project on Women's Psychology and Girls' Development*, the work produced by the pair marked a movement to incorporate the authentic voices of girls and their lived experiences into scholarly research. Their book, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development*, was published in 1992 and was based on the "the voices of nearly one hundred girls between the ages of seven and eighteen" (5). Gilligan and Brown should be commended for choosing such a wide age category. Their focus on adolescence includes those entering adolescent instead of being tied to a narrow category of adolescence. This represents a critical understanding of girlhood as more than the adolescent girl. They also make connections between the lives of girls and women. The crossroads referred to in their title is the "crossroads between girls and women [that] is marked by a series of disconnections or dissociations which leave girls psychologically at risk and involved in a relational struggle" (1992, 4). Their work creates an opportunity for:

... women to join girls and by doing so to reclaim lost voices and lost strengths, to strengthen girls' voices and girls' courage as they enter adolescence by offering girls resonant relationships, and in this way to move with girls toward creating a psychologically healthier world and a more caring and just society (1992, 6).

Following Gilligan and Brown's method of integrating girls' stories as told by the girls themselves into their analysis were other American scholars such as Michelle Fine (1993), Lorraine Delia Kenny (2000) and Julie Bettie (2003). Fine's ethnographic study on the impact of sex education on young women, Kenny's autobiographical ethnography of the experiences of growing up in middle-class suburbia and Bettie's ethnographic inquiry into the lives of working-class Mexican-American girls in California all begin with the premise of incorporating girls voices into the analysis.

The attempt to incorporate and include girls as a serious component of feminist inquiry can be partly attributed to what Whelan calls a "crisis" in feminism (Whelan 1995, 126) that occurred in the 1980s. As a movement, feminism was in a rapid state of decline as the promises offered to women by second-wave feminisms were perceived of as failing to truly bring about change. To remain effective, feminism had to incorporate those who had been alienated. For example, black feminist writings demanded that feminism deal with the fact most second-wave feminist thought and politics were

modeled on the experiences of white women in positions of relative privilege, while remaining blind to the issues of racial and/or ethnic differences (Whelan 1996, 135); an oversight which alienated many women. Second-wave feminism failed to successfully respond to the challenges put forth by feminists of colour. Even when feminism began to include women of colour, as bell hooks' argued in 1989, the majority of white feminists neglected to pay little more than lip service to the diversity of women's lived experiences (1989, 22). In response to these criticisms, various strains of feminist thought attempted to be more pluralistic and diverse. They worked to conceptualize how sex, race and class were all implicated in the reinforcement of inequalities (Heywood and Drake 1997, 8). Ultimately, the feminist movement was pushed to recognize that there could be no one single representative subject of feminism but, at the same time, this awareness fragmented the feminist cause as it became increasingly difficult to speak with a collective voice that "articulate(d) the political demands on behalf of a group called women" (Siegel 1997, 62). There are many works that have reflected on how third-wave feminism is a response to be more inclusive of women of colour and third-world women as a way to deal with the "crisis" in feminism and to make it more relevant (see, Drake and Heywood 1997; Siegel 1997 and Whelan 1996). Few works, however, address how this same strategy was applied to girls.

By the 1990s, the proverbial ball - instigated by McRobbie and Garber - had obviously begun to roll. The legacy of the early works of the authors previously outlined illustrates an attempt to rectify the oversight and/or degradation of girls' culture in both academe and popular discourse. It coalesced to a loosely defined field of girl studies (Wald 1998, 586). Recently, scholarship on the girl has grown in leaps and bounds with the works of Currie (1999), Driscoll (2002), Proweller (1998), Bettie (2003) and Bloustien (2003) to name a few.²⁵ Born out of a third-wave feminist reclamation of girls as celebrated rather than derided, these works were part of "a veritable explosion of text both created by and providing spaces for young women to speak about issues that pertained directly to their own lives" (Jiwani, Steenbergen and Mitchell 2006, xi). Such texts also reinterpret girls' consumer culture, particularly the commercial culture that has been vilified by the middle class, in new ways that give girls more agency. As a body of

²⁵ Walkerdine has noted that those who have studied girls in recent years limited their focus to teenage girls, overlooking younger girls (Walkerdine 1997, 2). This can be said of later works in girls' studies too, works by Currie (1999), Driscoll (2002), Proweller (1998) Bettie (2003) and Bloustien (2003).

work, these texts became categorized as Girls' Studies, or Girls' Cultural Studies, a subgenre of academic feminist scholarship that "constructs girlhood as a separate, exceptional and/or pivotal phase in female identity formation" (Wald 1998, 586).²⁶

Together the body of work produced by such scholars represented a move during the mid-1980s of feminist researchers to reposition the girl as visible and central by attempting to understand the lives of girls both on their own terms and in the context of wider social, political and historical realities (Griffin 2004, 30). These works were amongst a body of literature that began to appreciate constructions of girlhood as more than simply proof of patriarchal structures as girls are constituted through the linear process of socialization. Instead, girlhood was seen as an active process of identity construction in which girls often negotiated contested and conflicting tensions (Griffin 2004; Proweller 2004). Girls may engage in accommodation and resistance at the same moment and there is the potential for them to reappropriate and renegotiate traditional meanings of femininity (Proweller 2003; 9, 18). In doing so, they are agents of knowledge production, not passive cultural dupes. Embracing the girl into a feminist dialogue in a way that gave the girl power and an authentic voice is tied to a third-wave agenda of plurality and was part of the response to the "crisis". Instead of being used as a proof of the ubiquity of patriarchal ideologies, girls represented a variety of girl experiences and were understood as multi-dimensional subjects.

Popular culture and feminism

While feminist scholars were reworking their relationships to girlhood, a whole new wave of young feminist artists were also trying to find spaces to celebrate girlhood and reclaim it as a site of empowerment. Beginning with the loud, unapologetically angry music of the Riot Grrrl movement and its corporate (commodified) successor, the Spice Girls, girl bands began to mark the girl as a separate moment of feminine identity. The girl these bands referred to was not a girl on a continuum of female subjectivity in

²⁶ A critique of girl studies is that it privileges a particular type of girl, the loud, mouthy, feisty girl where resistance is highlighted more than conformity (Radway, 2002). In such a scenario, there is the tendency to commit an error similar to one committed by traditional cultural studies that favoured rebellion and resistance over conformity. This oversight has two obvious outcomes, first it either ignores vast populations of youth rendering them invisible, or it forces subjects into positions of rebellion that might not be real, a perspective that is problematic; and second, it overestimates girls' autonomy without questioning how girls actually conceptualize their categorization as girls.

which the final stage was womanhood. Instead, the girl was a stand-alone entity; a part of womanhood that should be celebrated and not disappear. Musically, the Riot Grrrl bands drew on the spirit of punk and rock, traditionally masculine musical forms, as a way of challenging traditional gender divides (Gottlieb and Wald 1994, 266). Kearney points out that Riot Grrrl unofficially formed in Washington D.C in the summer of 1991 when members of the female punk bands Bikini Kill and Bratmobile attempted to forge a community of female youth who played and/or listened to punk music. Documenting their efforts, the bands started zine called Riot Grrrl to simulate a growl, validating young women's anger. Eventually the name of the zine was adopted as the moniker for the feminist movement (Kearney 2006, 59-60). The Riot Grrrl movement was not relegated to the rock underground; it enjoyed mass exposure in part because it was carefully covered in *Sassy* magazine, the popular feminist teen magazine in the 1990s (Gottlieb and Wald 1994). This created an opportunity for the rhetoric of the Riot Grrrls to be picked up and repackaged for a younger, more commercial market by the Spice Girls, who boldly rallied young girls to claim their space in the mediated marketplace with the charge of "girl power". Unafraid of the term girl, the Spice Girls used it as a way to expropriate girlhood as a celebratory, positive site.

As the popular discourses of the Riot Grrrls and the Spice Girls were beginning to reinvent girlhood and girls' culture, other sites began to privilege the girl as well. Some international bodies also tried to make girls visible as part of their agendas. The 1990s were proclaimed by the World Summit for Children as the "Decade of the Girl Child". At the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the Girl Child was considered "one of the *Twelve Critical Areas of Concern*" of the Beijing Platform for Action (Jiwani, Steenbergen and Mitchell 2006, xi), signalling that the girl had arrived as a critical subject on the international stage.

Clearly, by the mid-1990s, the girl had been made visible as feminists were forced to critique girls' culture on girls' terms, not with one eye towards the future of women, but instead by addressing girlhood as a lifestage experience unto itself, ultimately encouraging a whole tangent of new modes of feminist thought. Feminism's reclamation of the girl as a site of agency and empowerment occurred as the girl was made visible in both popular discourse and in the agendas of international agencies. The struggle of feminism to reposition the girl as a site of empowerment and a space that has legitimacy on its own occurred within the context of the girl crystallizing as a legitimate, viable market, audience and customer. The shift in feminism and the

legitimization of the girl/tween market occurred alongside each other, both in response to, and as a result of, each other. This symbiotic relationship is a thread that weaves through the rest of this Chapter. In reclaiming the girl in the same space in which the girl was being claimed as a consumer, feminism had to also recalibrate its relationship with consumption. As previously illustrated, one of the critical weaknesses of second-wave feminist rhetoric was that it devalued girls' relationships with consumer culture. The fact that feminism was reconciling itself with girlhood at the same moment that the girl was being positioned as a customer and a market meant that feminism had to recalibrate its relationship with the pleasures of consumer culture, instead of writing off consumption as a site of patriarchal control and power. The new feminist scholarship of the era offered spaces to reclaim girls' cultures as sites of empowerment as opposed to weakness and vulnerability.

The renaissance of the girl

Before the 1980s: Tracing the beginnings of the girls' market

The evolution of the tween girl consumer as a market in the 1980s and early 1990s is firmly rooted in the retail and fashion industries of the mid-twentieth century. As mentioned in Chapter One, Daniel Cook contends that the tween label is not new to the 1980s. Tracing the historical lineage of the tween, Cook argues that one of the earliest attempts to position girls as tween consumers was in 1926 when Charles, Trankla and Company, a department store in Grand Rapids, Michigan, had the first girls or junior department called the "twixt and tween" section. The department cleverly suggested to the girls that they were in the betwixt and between stage of childhood and young adulthood. It was mainly geared to girls aged 12 to 16, a cohort slightly older than what has been demarcated as the tween of the 1980s and 1990s. This sectioning out of the tween girl indicates a clear attempt to notch out girlhood as a retail category separate from the child and teenager.

The concept for constructing such a retail section for girls was inspired by the observations of a buyer for the Charles, Trankla and Company store that sales were slow for girls in this age group because their clothes were placed too closely to the infants and children's section. Young female shoppers did not want to wander too close to the children's section reaffirming their status as children. Instead the "twixt and tween" section was kept physically separate from the children's section. According to

Cook, physically separating the junior department from the child's worked on two counts; first more girls shopped there, increasing sales, and second it gave younger children something to aspire to, potentially increasing future sales in the twixt and tween section (Cook 2004, 116- 118).

Following the lead of Charles, Trankla and Company in the 1920s, it would take close to 20 years for the girls' market to gather momentum. It was in the post-War era that retailers really began to recognize the potential of the girls' market. During this time the girl was christened a preteen or subteen indicating her transitional status, but she also came to be understood as an "entity unto herself", as remarked by a buyer for Lyttons department store in Chicago in 1955. She was not simply a smaller version of her older sister. "She has," the buyer continued, "quite different problems in dress than her teen-age [*sic*] sister or her younger sister" (as quoted in Cook 2004, 138). Not all retailers were happy about trying to cater to the subteen market. Some considered the "aggravation of trying to please these brats" as was so eloquently stated in a retail trade magazine, that it "(wasn't) worth the gain" (as quoted in Cook 2004, 141). But by the late 1950s, the promise of a stable increase in the population of preteen girls as the baby boomers came of age was too much for retailers to resist and the preteen, or what was sometimes called schoolgirl in the trade publications, became a standard category in the retail industry (Cook 2004, 139).

The model for the preteen girl was the white middle-class teenager who gained social visibility during the 1950s and 1960s. The teen girl was the "stylistic and social goal" for many of the girls that occupied the age group below them (Cook 2004, 137). Teenage girls served as an ideal for the young girls in terms of fashion and as a social identity for younger girls (Cook and Kaiser 2004, 207). The manufacturers of clothes "toned down" less sophisticated versions of teen clothes for these girls just a few years their junior, effectively creating a retail segment and a distinct style range of fashion. Manufactures designed and made clothes for the children's market, the teen market and the preteen market. This essentially "complete(d) a configuration of graded age-size-style ranges for girls of the white middle class" (Cook 2004, 137).

Although some retailers and merchandisers noticed the preteen, she was predominantly overshadowed by the commercial prominence of the teenager during the 1940s and early 1950s (Cook and Kaiser 2004, 208). It was the teenager that really grabbed a hold of the imagination and the attention of the cultural industries. The preteen was only given a slight nod here by marketers and was more often than not

absorbed into the child or the teen markets. The preteen did not become a discrete market segment the way the child or the teenager did. While the segmentation of the preteen took place in the clothing sections of many major department stores, this did not last long. The preteen department suffered as the entire retail industry changed from small downtown stores to large suburban shopping malls. According to preteen clothing manufacturer Tom Hoffman,

the department thrived during the '60s when the buying habits of most Americans mandated that they shop in downtown stores. But the advent of malls meant that suddenly suppliers had to supply 15 stores instead of just one, and business suffered ("Addressing the preteen dilemma" 1986, 72).

But the preteen was not completely ignored by the mainstream media. In August, 1962 she did manage to garner the attention of the public when *Life* magazine published an article on the perils of early adolescence, titled "Boys and Girls Too Old Too Soon: America's Subteens Rushing Towards Trouble". The article opens by following the daily life of Debby, "a pocket *femme fatale* [author's emphasis]," who, we are told, can:

... wrap a boy around her little finger - and works hard at it. She is an attractive child of a generation whose jumble of innocence and worldly wisdom is unnaturally precocious - and alarming (Uzzle 1962, 54).

The article is accompanied with a section titled "The Bewildering Turnover of Boys in Debby's Diary" which is excerpted from "subteen" Debby Yarbrough's private journal. The excerpted entries detail Debby's complicated love life in which she "flips over" certain boys and then breaks up with them. The last line of the section concludes with Debby listing the boys she "went steady with" in seventh grade; "Hal, Scott, Gregg, Randy, Tom" (Uzzle 1962, 56).

Between Debby's diary and the article written by Burk Uzzle, we learn that being a subteen is all about wearing makeup to mask youth, vying to be popular and, most importantly, being involved in "romances complete with wrap-around dancing and necking" (Uzzle 1962, 54). The subteen in the article, like Debby, is presented as a precocious young girl trying to be more adult than her age. The implicit threat underlying the article was that being more adult did not just mean wearing makeup and doing one's hair. It was about being engaged in romantic activities with boys, all activities that "good" young girls should not pursue. The article reeks of that old double standard.

Despite the title of the article being “Boys and Girls”, the concern is about girl’s sexuality, not boys. It is Debby’s diary that is excerpted, and Debby’s mom who is interviewed to explain why she “lets” Debby date. There is no concern or questioning of the motives of Hal, Scott, Gregg, Randy or Tom. Nor does the journalist ever ask for the parents of Hal, Scott, Gregg, Randy or Tom to justify their child-rearing practices.

Obviously, the underlying subtext to this article was a moral panic around girls’ sexuality. This really should not be surprising since the more girls are aligned with older teenagers and are encouraged to model their purchasing habits on the teen consumer, the more society worries about their sexuality also emulating that of a teenager. But there is more revealed in this article than the fear of girls’ sexuality. The entire tone of the article typifies how young girls at this time were not taken seriously and their engagements with popular culture were construed as frivolous, glib and worthy of censorship. Debby’s mother, for example, suggests that Debby’s premature interest in boys and poor attitude to education can be linked to “magazines, TV and too much bop music” (as quoted in Uzzle 1962, 59).

The threat of “bop” music on the girl of the 1960s was not just witnessed in the *Life* article. It was this decade that also bore witness to the iconic image of packs of young girls screaming ecstatically for various male musicians such as Elvis Presley or the Beatles. This version of a girl overcome by her boundless enthusiasm for the heartthrob of moment took the form of a “teenybopper”. Defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “a young teenager, typically a girl, who keenly follows the latest fashions in clothes, pop music, etc”. The word teenybopper was first used in the 1960s and is the conflation of teeny (meaning small) and bopper (meaning “dancer to or fan of pop music”) (Oxford English Dictionary of Modern Slang, 1992). The teenybopper is perhaps the closest precursor to the tween.

In the decades leading up to the 1980s, the teenybopper was not completely ignored. Some media outlets did cater to the teenybopper girl, but it was mostly by treating the young girl as a fan. The girl as fan has been reified in the ubiquitous images of teenyboppers (who were almost always female) screaming for their favourite superstars. In the past, the value of the girl consumer maintained serious links to celebrity culture of the music industry. The cultures of these teenyboppers was often brushed off as simply a craze incited by the hysterics of preteen girls by the popular press of the time illustrating how girls’ culture was not taken seriously. Even the use of the term “mania”, i.e. Beatlemania, often used to describe the infatuation for these pop

stars conveyed a sense that their fandom was fanatical and irrational. Such manias should not be taken too seriously, the public was reassuringly told by media pundits. Girls would outgrow it (see Ehrenreich, Hess and Jacobs 1997). Despite the fact that the culture of these girls was considered as the trivial yearnings of an immature audience, the teenybopper was, as McRobbie and Garber put it, “big business” since the girl fan bought more than just records. They bought all the accompanying paraphernalia and musicians could parlay their popularity into film and television appearances (McRobbie and Garber 1991, 22). The term teenybopper positioned the girl as an audience or fan. In 1976, Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber suggest that a “teenybopper culture, based on an endless flow of young male pop stars, [was] a long-standing feature of post-War girls’ culture” (2005, 111). It was a packaged cultural commodity that emerged from “the heart of the pop-music business” (2005, 111) but it also offered girls a safe space to actively define themselves as fans and separate themselves from their older and younger counterparts. But the teenybopper failed to ignite a separate and unique girls’ market beyond the music industry the way that the tween would come to do in the 1990s.

Reading all of these instances together, the acknowledgement of the uniqueness of the subteen or preteen demographic by the retail industry, the social panics around young girls growing “too old too fast” witnessed in *Life* magazine and the positioning of the girl as a fan, illustrate the early sparks of a girls’ market. However, it would take a long while for these early developments to begin to crystallize into a distinct marketing niche. The potential to see the girl as a voracious consumer and isolate her into her own distinct market was there, but most marketers failed to capitalize on such an opportunity. Instead, the business culture of post-War North America abandoned the young girl consumer for the more enticing teen and child markets. The preteen girl was overshadowed by the expansion of these two markets and was often absorbed into them.

Building a girl audience in the mediated marketplace

As feminism ignored the girl so too did the mediated marketplace. There had been a viable teen girls’ market in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s. Characters such as Corliss Archer, Gidget, Nancy Drew and Judy Graves were all narrative cycles (movies, books and sometimes television shows) that starred and catered to teen girls. But by the mid-1960s, the market for these had mostly fizzled and the girl all but

disappeared off the screens and pages of the media (Nash 2004). The image of the teen girl was “diluted” as she was displaced by her older counterparts; the college student and the hippy (Nash 2004, 18).

While the toy industry had always been interested in the girl (see Kline 1993, Seiter 1995), there were very few shows that catered specifically to the girl audience. The assumed audience of children’s television shows was the boy audience. Seiter illustrates that in children’s media prior to the 1980s most of the characters were male. For example, Disney’s animated characters were male: Bambi, Dumbo, Peter Pan, Jiminy Cricket, Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and Goofy. The situation was not much different at Warner Brothers and Hanna-Barbera with Porky Pig, Tom and Jerry, Daffy Duck, Elmer Fudd, Bugs Bunny, Coyote and the Road Runner, Sylvester and Tweety. The female characters that did appear, Minnie Mouse, Daisy Duck and Petunia Pig for example, were all comic foils for male characters. *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* (1969-1977) was one of the longest-running television series for children and there was not one single girl character. Even the seemingly progressive *Sesame Street* (1969-current) was dominated by male characters, as too was the *Muppet Show* (1976-1981). Disney did “hand out a few starring roles to young women, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty and Snow White” but these were few (Seiter 1993, 146-147). Girls did appear in children’s shows based on family situation comedies such as the *Flintstones* (1960-1966) and the *Jetsons* (1962-1963), but they were not main characters. Two exceptions that did feature girl characters were *Josie and the Pussycats* (1970-1976) and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1971-74), based on an Archie comic book character, but these two exceptions (like Girls’ Studies itself) featured teenage girls and not young girls (Seiter 1993, 148-149).

Girls were ignored because it was assumed that they were not a large enough market to justify the expense of programming and instead were considered an add-on (Seiter 1993, 147). While the media did not want to directly alienate the girl audience, the preferred market was the boy audience. It was thought that having shows that specifically catered to girls would drive away boys. Girls, it was believed, would still consume media products designed for boys; but boys would not consume what was intended for girls (Kenway and Bullen 2001, 49; Seiter 1993, 47). Up until the 1980s, this strategy had been true for most children’s media with the exception of the teen

magazine market.²⁷ Most media favoured male characters and privileged boy audiences so girls were left to identify with token female characters who were designed to maintain the interest of the girl audience without being central enough characters to drive away the boy audience.

Things began to change in the 1980s in the deregulated mediascape of Reagan's America. The shift to deregulation opened up new spaces for the girl audience to be a lucrative, viable market. Under deregulation, the industry-friendly FCC lifted its restrictions on the separations between programs and commercials. This meant that the promotion of products could now occur within the content of a television show (Kunkel 2001, 385). Taking advantage of this situation the toy industry began to aggressively push toys based on television shows. The result was that half-hour television shows such as *The Smurfs*, *The Transformers*, *Jem and the Holograms*, *She-Ra Princess of Power*, *He-Man* and *Strawberry Shortcake* became half-hour advertisements that peddled toys built around the characters of the shows, something that would not have been allowed under the old FCC regulations. The prosperity of a show could be parlayed well beyond the toy department of stores. With the magic of character licensing, children could acquire a whole range of consumer products adorned with their favourite characters - clothing, bedding, furniture, party favours; the possibilities of character licensing proved to be endless.²⁸

By 1985 the cartoon shows, *He-Man*, *G.I. Joe*, *The Care Bears* and *Strawberry Shortcake*, featured all 10 top-selling toys, and childhood became an "interconnected industry that encompassed movies, TV shows, videos and other media forms along with toys, clothing and accessories" (Cross 2000, 210). These programs began to form what Buckingham calls "trans-media intertextuality" that increasingly connected television with films, comics, books, records and computer games (Buckingham 1993, 156). By the mid-1980s children's television shows and characters were designed based on their ability to translate into lucrative licensing opportunities (Englehardt 1986; Kline 1993; Palmer 1987, 66; Seiter 1993).

With the potential of selling media content alongside an enormous amount of licensed merchandise, the girl market suddenly became a viable market. It was no

²⁷ Attempts at "co-ed" magazines for teens do not have a history of being very successful.

²⁸ See Stephen Kline's work *Out of the Garden* (1993) for a further analysis of character licensing.

longer the size of an audience that mattered to the children's cultural industry; it was the ability of the audience to buy character merchandise that dictated the value of an audience. It was in this commercial space that, according to Ellen Seiter, girls and boys came to be "sold separately" (1993). Up until this point, the market for girls' television shows and girls' toys was largely untapped, but character licensing opened up the floodgates and made the girls' market valuable.

The first truly successful character license was Strawberry Shortcake. In the late 1970s, a small firm called Those Characters From Cleveland (TCFC) attempted to get to know the girls' market using focus groups, interviews and storyboards of character designs (Englehardt 1986, 72-73; Kline 1993, 139; Seiter 1993, 150). Based on the responses from the girls, the company designed the Strawberry Shortcake characters and subsequently produced a series of television specials that featured Strawberry Shortcake and her "berry nice friends" who all lived in Strawberryland.²⁹ Strawberry and her friends all had oversized heads on small bodies and wore cute gingham dresses and bonnets. Each character was aligned with a particular fruit (Strawberry Shortcake of course, along with Blueberry Muffin and Orange Blossom) and wore clothes to match their signature fruit; they even smelled like their signature fruit. Strawberry and her friends captured the imaginations of girls. With the deregulation of the media, Strawberry quickly became America's number-one-selling toy doll and appeared on hundreds of products selling more than \$1 billion U.S. worth of merchandise by the time she was four-years-old (Englehardt 1986, 73). The astronomical popularity of Strawberry Shortcake led critic Tom Englehardt to dub the process of designing characters based on extensive market research and the ability to translate the characters into licenses, "The Shortcake Strategy" (1986).³⁰

The "deregulation of television clearly resulted in a new promotional infrastructure more narrowly and purposefully focused on promoting toys and other merchandise" rather than attempting to gather audiences (Kline 1993, 317). Toy companies even advertised to merchandisers the financial opportunities in becoming a

²⁹ Strawberry Shortcake was relaunched in 2003. In 2009, Hasbro will be launching a new line of Strawberry Shortcake toys to coincide with a Strawberry Shortcake movie that will be in theatres August, 2009.

³⁰ Part of this strategy was that it also offered line extensions as a way to increase sales. Strawberry Shortcake had friends that could also be bought; Poochie Puppy had a whole range of fashions and there was an entire line of My Little Ponies.

licensee. Strawberry Shortcake, Hasbro's Jem, and Mattel's Princess of Power and Barbie lines, for example, all had full-page advertisements in the children's apparel trade publication *Earnshaw's* in an attempt to peddle their licenses to potential merchandisers and hoping that a denim manufacturer or an underwear producer might buy the license to sell Strawberry Shortcake jeans or Barbie underwear.³¹ The kitschy Poochie Puppy owned by Mattel promised potential manufacturers:

Poochie puppy love for little girls - and sales success for you! Poochie is true puppy love for girls 5-8. Why is Poochie such a big hit? Because she's the spunky, fun-loving puppy who makes fun happen wherever she goes. Every little girl wants to be a Poochie girl and when our famous puppy and her signature flower paw print appear on your product, Poochie girls will find it irresistible (Poochie Puppy 1984, 81).

Poochie, the smiling dog with gigantic ponytails, movie star sunglasses and an adorable signature paw print in the shape of a flower, had over 25 licenses in her first year, proving just "how lovable she [was] to little girls" (Mattel 1984, 30).

Other types of ads were directed at retailers in an attempt to persuade them to carry a license in their stores. The Cabbage Patch fashion line promised retailers that when they:

... put our Cabbage Patch Kids brand fashion in [their] stores, [they'd] be selling through America's most appealing kids. Kids who'll be brought to life this fall in a multi-million dollar advertising campaign on TV and in print. Cabbage Patch Kids – a brand with character, not the other way around. (Original Appalachian Artworks 1983, 10).

Retailers must have responded to the campaign, as the sales of Cabbage Patch property totalled \$150 million U.S. in the first year, and three years later rose to \$1.5 billion ("Everyday is Christmas" 1985, 104). Both retailers and merchandisers were keen to make sure they got it right. The marketplace was saturated with successful and unsuccessful licenses, choosing the right one virtually guaranteed profit, but banking on the wrong licenses could spell doom in the form of sales bins full of discounted merchandise.

³¹ Character licensing also created more opportunities for obsolescence. According to a 1996 report in *Advertising Age*, the licensing business was about creating the "here today, gone tomorrow" lunch bucket (Fitzgerald 1996, S10).

With Strawberry Shortcake, the girls' market had arrived. Seiter notes that prior to Strawberry Shortcake, the only successful girls' licenses were Barbie and Mary Poppins (Seiter 1993, 150). The girls' toy market had been underdeveloped and there was little innovation in girls' toys. Strawberry and her friends had proven the tremendous power of the girls' market and, in their wake, other licensed properties such as Poochie Puppy and Cabbage Patch Kids followed. The Shortcake Strategy of utilizing extensive market research to create characters that would lend themselves to licensed merchandise was adopted by other companies that produced characters solely for a girls' market such as: Rainbow Bright, The Care Bears and My Little Pony.³² The development of such characters in the 1980s was essentially the development of a girls' market in which the toy industry, in collusion with media production companies, leveraged the findings from market research to create characters and products designed to cater to a solely female audience.

During the 1980s, the marketplace was quickly saturated with product licenses for the girls' market. In 1986, *Earnshaw's* reported that the appeal to children for licensed product peaked between the ages of four to seven as 61.5% of consumers who purchased character apparel were for this age group, 43% of the apparel was purchased for a child under three, only 23.5% for the child eight to 12 and 10% for the teen. In reflecting on these statistics, *Earnshaw's* commented that the "hidden potential here is the eight-to-12" age bracket ("Consumers speak out" 1986, 44-47). There were many opportunities to exploit this eight-to-12 bracket, but the licenses had to be different. They could not be too infantile or it would alienate the older girl. Consequently, companies like Mattel looked to the teen consumer and mined the teen aesthetic for inspiration for the licenses. Two of the more profitable were Mattel's *Barbie and the Rockers* and Hasbro's *Jem and the Holograms*.

In 1987, Mattel introduced Barbie and the Rockers to the children's clothing industry with an ad. The ad claimed that Barbie was already a "solid hit" with girls aged four to 11, but that:

Barbie has done it again. The fashion doll that's been on top of the charts for an incredible 28 years is hotter than ever. She's taking her glamorous act on the road with the enormously popular Barbie and the Rockers – the

³² It should be noted that there were also characters that were successful with boys; Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, GI Joe and The Transformers all catered to the boys' market.

line of Barbie dolls that includes five rock-and-roll friends (Mattel, 1987, 39).

Instead of celebrating the ultra girly aesthetic of pastels, rainbows and glitter, Barbie and the Rockers and Jem and the Holograms channelled the teen aesthetics of glamour, rock and roll, and fashion. In both these lines, the characters looked like real people, they were not dolls with gigantic heads who lived in berry houses, nor were they horses or puppies. They were young female rock stars, with bright garish hair, neon stilettos and glittery miniskirts. The two shows contained scenes that mimicked music videos complete with the artist name and song title at the bottom of the screen. The lyrics in theme song for Jem reminded us what she was all about:

Jem...
Jem is excitement!
Oouu Jem...
Jem is adventure!
Ooouu...
Glamour and glitter,
Fashion and fame Jem is her name!

A radical departure from Strawberry Shortcake and My Little Pony, but the strategy of using the show as a vehicle to sell characters' licenses was congruent. The purpose of these character licenses was an attempt to grab the attention (and wallets) of older girls; girls who still played with toys but also listened to top-40 radio and was fashion conscious. The young girls' needs had been met with Strawberry Shortcake and her contemporaries, Rainbow Bright, My Little Pony, etc. Barbie and Jem represented a desire to cater to older girls. The creation of these characters reflected what was happening in the music industry, as will be outlined in the next section.

The impetus to cater to the girls' market followed when deregulation opened up lucrative possibilities to access girl consumers through brand platforms of character licensing. Of course, this was not completely emancipatory for girls, as Seiter has noted, something was gained and lost when marketers and video producers began exploiting young girls as a separate market. Boys distanced themselves from girls' culture and girls found themselves in a ghettoized culture that no self-respecting boy would take an interest in. At the same time, girls had their own cultural products. They no longer had to compromise and be satisfied with cultural products produced mainly for boys. For once girls were not required to cross over into boys' culture and take on an ambiguous

identification (Seiter 1993, 157-8). Girls could engage with media produced specifically for them.

The girl and teen culture

Many feminists were critical of the children's toy industry and children's media in the socialization of young girls; this was true of both media products in which girls were invisible and in which they were presented in narrow and derogatory terms. The opening up of the girls' market coincided with movements in feminism to make girls visible. One of the industries at the forefront of this fight, surprisingly, was the music industry. MTV, which debuted in 1981, catered to a male audience to a great extent. Its positioning of the youth market was of a male youth market. Its primary audience was the male consumer and the music videos celebrated the male anthems of rebellion, sex and aggression.

This was nothing new; female musicians and their girl fans have traditionally been ignored by the music industry. The industry has a long history of excluding women and girls. The genre of rock n' roll in particular had long alienated females both as performers and as audiences (Lewis 1990).³³ The female fan was not considered a legitimate consumer; her interest in music was viewed as the frivolous and obsessive yearnings of an unsophisticated fan. Even the teenybopper, whose fandom helped to propel the Beatles and Elvis into superstars, was considered a vacuous listener interested more in the looks of the singers than their music. In opposition, her male counterparts were seen as having a serious appreciation of the musical artistry of rock music. Rock music, according to Lisa Lewis, "cultivated an address to male youth. Rock concerts became circumscribed as a male-youth leisure practice" (Lewis 1990, 32). Perhaps this explains why, despite being positioned as a fan by the music industry and fan magazines, the young female consumer was mostly ignored by music television. The consumer that MTV was interested in was the young male. Lewis also argues that

³³ Lewis deflects to the work of various music historians and scholars to make such a claim. She cites, for example, Jane Bowers and Judith Tick's work on women and music history that suggests that even in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, women had virtually no access to music training or education (Lewis 1990, 56). See Lewis (1990, 56-60) for further discussion of this.

MTV's commitment to the rock genre confirmed the alienation of the girl audience. MTV developed an imagery and style designed around the discourse of male adolescence as "ideologies of rebelliousness, independence from social authorities, and sexual promiscuity were culled into symbolic representations of street culture, leisure practice, and female conquest" (Lewis, 91).

Males also dominated the pages of girls' fan magazines such as *Teen Beat* and *Tiger Beat*. Their female counterparts were absent from the magazine. The reason for this was justified by Charles Laufer, editor of *Tiger Beat*, who claimed that:

We don't play up female rock stars for the same reason the record companies don't. They can't sell them. Very few make the top 10 on the charts but if the charts were different, record purchases would be different. And we'd be different too." (as quoted in Wingis 1980, S2).

By the mid-1980s, record charts did become "different" as a select few female musicians began to climb the charts. Pushing back on the domination of the music industries by male rock stars, females began to demand a presence. In the context of a rising feminist politic, female musicians such as rockers Joan Jett, Chrissie Hind of the Pretenders and Blondie along with the pop princesses Cyndi Lauper and Madonna began to demand a presence in the industry. In doing so, they opened up new spaces for young girls by referencing the female adolescent experience and legitimizing the female fan.

Fan magazines responded to their presence. In 1985, *Tiger Beat* had an article that featured the women of rock 'n roll. The article covered rockers Pat Benatar, Chrissie Hind from the Pretenders and Joan Jett. The hook to entice the young female audience, since the editors could not use the conventional approach of presenting the rock stars as heartthrobs "du jour", was to ask questions of the women about their youth. For example, the article reported that Joan Jett founded and led the all-girl group The Runaways when she was 15, while Chrissie Hind "was touched by the British Invasion as a 13-year-old in Akron, Ohio" (*Tiger Beat* 1985, 16-18). Instead of simply presenting the singers as adult women, the magazine connected them to their girlhood as a means of reaching out to the girl audience.

Connecting the adult female musician to the iconographies of girlhood was a tactic that bode well for the music industry in the 1980s. In opposition to music television's acute focus on a male discourse, a number of female musicians, including Lauper and Madonna, began to create music and videos based on the representation of

the female experience. In the early 1980s, both Lauper and Madonna focused on girlhood and produced videos that celebrated the excitement and pleasure of girls' culture. The two artists, playing an adult version of dress-up, adopted an eclectic personal fashion style; they proudly dyed their hair, wore lacy lingerie as clothes and donned heaps of colourful costume jewellery. The stylistic images of these two artists can be read as the celebration of girls' culture that allowed for the wearing of wild clothes and bold makeup as modes of self-expression not open to boys. Both of the musicians blatantly referenced girls' culture. Their songs and images were not simple ballads about girlhood transformations or being treated seriously as women. Instead, their music overtly called for a celebration of a playful, free girlhood that rejected, or at least postponed, the drudgery of being a married (read adult) woman. While the girl they referenced was not the same girl that the toy industry repositioned in the 1980s, the girl in pop music was the girl of the MTV demographic; she was older - a teen - but was single, fun and overtly adolescent.

Referencing girl subjectivity

Both Madonna and Lauper referenced female adolescent subjectivity quite literally by calling themselves girls. Madonna was the "Material Girl" and had a hit song with the same title from her *Like a Virgin* album (1985). In 1987, Madonna released her *Who's that Girl* soundtrack and starred in the movie of the same title. Despite being 30-years-old, Lauper also referred to herself as a girl. The title of her hit song *Girls Just Want to Have Fun*, released on the 1983 *She's So Unusual* album, says it all. The lyrics of the song reference a rebellious Lauper who resists the constrictions of adulthood, despite the fact that her "Daddy Dear" yells at her "whatch'a gonna do with your life." The song, originally penned by Robert Hazard, was written with lyrics that described an "inflated male fantasy of female desire" (Lewis 1990, 95). The original lyrics, which Lauper refused to sing, were:

My father says, "My son what do they want from your life?"
I say, "Father dear we are the fortunate ones.
Girls just want to have fun."

Lauper rejected the lyrics as sexist and demeaning. Instead she worked with her producer to reframe them to express her views on gender inequality (Lewis 1990, 95). The above line became:

My mother says, "when you gonna live your life right?"
"Oh, Mother dear we're not the fortunate ones.
Girls just want to have fun."

While the new line illustrated Lauper's feminist sensibilities, it also repositioned the girl as choosing to have fun as a form of rebellion against the patriarchal structures of male privilege. Fun was framed as a political action not the frivolous activity that the Hazard lyrics implied. This is even more apparent by the final verse of the song.

Some boys take a beautiful girl
And hide her away from the rest of the world
I want to be the one to walk in the sun
Oh girls they want to have fun
Oh girls just want to have fun.³⁴

Fun, as a political action of girlhood, operated as a feminist strategy on two fronts. First, having fun meant rejecting the narrow confines of the private sphere of the home and the drudgery of domestic life for women. Second, fun was about appropriating the coded signs of male space, particularly the street. The video for Lauper's "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" featured a colourful, bopping Lauper leading a group of her girlfriends dancing through the streets of New York. This was also evident in the 1984 video for Madonna's *Borderline*; Madonna and her female companions loitered on the street corner and sprayed graffiti on brick walls. According to Lisa Lewis, both of these videos featured girls reclaiming this masculinized space, a space from which girls have been alienated.³⁵ The videos served as powerful refrains for girls to gain access to the privileged realms of male leisure (Lewis 1990, 93-95).

While music television originally catered to the male audience and discursively produced a male adolescent subject to the exclusion of girls, by the mid-1980s MTV actually opened up spaces for female audiences. It brought music into the safety of the domestic sphere countering the traditional exclusion of girls from a music culture that mainly took place in the unsafe (male) spaces of dance clubs and concert halls (Lewis

³⁴ From *Girls Just Want to Have Fun* recorded by Cyndi Lauper (credited songwriter: Robert Hazard; 1983, Portrait/CBS Records).

³⁵ See McRobbie and Garber (1976) as well as McRobbie (2000) for further discussions of how the street is a male space from which women are alienated.

1990, 69). At the same time female musicians such as Lauper and Madonna, but also Pat Benatar and Tina Turner, waged a “cultural struggle” against MTV’s disparagements of girls’ culture “by appropriating the symbols used in MTV’s male address and creating access signs which exposed the privileged nature of male adolescence” (Lewis 1990, 221).

The influence of Lauper and Madonna extended beyond the confines of the music industry. Both artists were commodified in magazines and by the fashion industry. For example, the whimsical style of Cyndi Lauper was featured in a 1984 fashion spread in *Seventeen* magazine with models posed in her signature fashions and hairstyles. The accompanying text stated:

... girls who just want to have fun know who to look to for their fashion lead, the hottest rock stars in town! You can choose your style from Cyndi Lauper’s kooky combination of old fashioned feminism and new-wave glitz (Holz 1984,137).

In 1985, Macy’s department store in New York City sponsored a Madonna look-alike contest and even created a whole department called “Madonnaland”. The contest was designed to attract attention to its “Madonnaland” clothing and accessories (Lewis 1990, 195-6).

Both Madonna and Lauper’s image of rag-tag fashion where old clothes were worn in new ways suited the 1980s well. The singers’ colourful, self-expressive clothes toyed with the tropes of a whimsical, fun, girlish femininity. Their style took various vestiges of traditional femininity and reinvented them for new purposes; corsets and bras became tops, rosary beads became necklaces, colourful tights were ripped, torn and worn with poofy skirts and Converse running shoes. The style of the two singers offered the possibility of reinventing oneself as a girl through personal display in a way that can be read as a resistance to the constricting practices of womanhood and an attempt to renegotiate traditional gender paradigms. It may not have offered liberation but the style and music of Madonna and Lauper helped to legitimize a new image of girlhood that was brash, bold, fun and in stark opposition to the staid images of the modern women *vis-à-vis* the image of the yuppie, or traditional images femininity as reserved and subservient.

Madonna, and I would add Lauper, introduced to popular culture the art of “reinvention through clothing, attitude and physical form”. Madonna’s “postmodern look-of-many looks engaged both mass consumerism and commercial theory of product obsolescence; a new image meant new “stuff” (Epstein 2000, 194-196). Feminists had

much to say about Madonna's continual reinvention, most famously by Camille Paglia who argued that Madonna exposed the performative aspects of gender suggesting that we are nothing more than our masks (1992) and, in doing so, challenged the accepted feminist arguments that women should rid themselves of masks (Guilbert 2002, 110).

By the late 1980s, the girl actually began to figure in the pop-music industry. Instead of women referencing the girl, as was the case with Madonna and Lauper, the girl herself actually became the singer and star. In 1987, Tiffany and Debbie Gibson, both young teens themselves released chart-topping records. Three years later in 1990, Canada's Alanis (who later recorded under her full name Alanis Morissette) recorded a pop album that won many Junos and went platinum. All of these girls were born in the early 1970s and were close to 16 years of age when their first songs rose up the charts. The fact that these girls became so popular illustrated that there were new possibilities for the girl to figure in the pop-music industry. These new opportunities became clear in the mid-1990s when Britney Spears dominated the pop charts. Spears herself has accredited Madonna with paving the way for her future success at such a young age. She grew up idolizing Madonna and eventually was compared to Madonna (Gauntlett, 2004 163). Spears has been quoted as saying:

I have been a huge fan of Madonna since I was a little girl. I would really, really like to be a legend like Madonna ... Her choreography definitely opened the door for girls to go in there and do their own thing (Clerk 2002, 63).

David Gauntlett has ascribed Madonna's mixing "a populist version of feminism" into pop music as a major turning point in popular feminism. Before Madonna, he argues, feminist messages were not part of mainstream pop music. There were a few exceptions, Joni Mitchell or the Eurythmics / Aretha Franklin duet *sisters are doing it for themselves* (1985). But before Madonna, it was "difficult to point to a superstar with a feminist agenda" (Gauntlett 2004, 168). Madonna's brand of popular feminism made it possible to articulate feminist messages in an accessible form.

Madonna's version of popular feminism challenged contemporary feminism, which had a contested relationship with her (Kellner 1995, 292). One on hand, Madonna was admired for being sexually assertive, independent and empowered. Originally, Madonna held great promise for many feminists. She positioned herself as a women in the music industry who was going to break new ground (hooks, 1994). She appropriated male spaces (Lewis, 1990b); she parodied traditional stereotypes of women; she linked

female empowerment to sexuality (Paglia 1990); and she upset the polar logics of gender as male/female and sexuality as straight/gay (Mistry 2002; Scwichtenberg 1993) leading feminist journalist Kate Tientler of the *Village Voice* and former editor of *Sassy* to proclaim her as the “patron saint of new feminism” (as quoted in Guilbert 2002, 180). For others, Madonna’s version of popular feminism was a radical oversimplification of critical feminist arguments that failed to challenge the structures of a patriarchal society.

She was vilified by feminists such as Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon who saw her as nothing more than a vacuous hodgepodge of female stereotypes that reinforced women as sexually available nymphets (Guilbert 2002). bell hooks charged that eventually Madonna’s constant reinvention of herself, became a reattachment to sexism, as she took up stereotypical images of women repudiating the feminism messages that she had espoused earlier (hooks, 1994) and Susan Bordo pointed out that what was often overlooked in Madonna’s commitment to transformation was the disciplining of the body and the subordination to conventions on beauty (Bordo 1993). Either way, Madonna placed feminist issues on the table, and in calling herself a girl, tied some of these issues to girlhood.³⁶

Between product licensing and the new girl of pop music, new spaces opened up for girlhood. The late 1980s and early 1990s is considered by some to be a period of renaissance of girlhood (Hentges 2006; Nash 2006). The über successful movie producer John Hughes reincarnated the teen film genre and wrote/produced many films in which the central protagonist was a teenage girl. His preferred lead actor was Molly Ringwald and she starred in such films as *Pretty in Pink* (1986) and *Sixteen Candles* (1984). In both of these films, Ringwald played the central character who struggled to navigate the cliquy world of high school while remaining true to herself. Ringwald also starred in the 1985 movie the *Breakfast Club*, alongside four other Hollywood A-listers, Emilio Estevez, Judd Nelson, Anthony Michael Hall and Ally Sheedy. In 1990, *Beverly Hills 90210* debuted as a teen soap opera detailing the lives of six wealthy American high schoolers. As Nash notes, with the John Hughes movies and *Beverly Hills 90210* and its imitators, teenage girls “routinely have their subjectivities represented more

³⁶ Although there has been a plethora of scholarly works published on Madonna since the mid 1980s, many of these focus on Madonna as an adult female artist. There is little acknowledgment of her girl fans and how her references to girlhood may hold emancipatory action.

centrally now, and more seriously than in earlier periods” (Nash 2006, 218).³⁷ Meanwhile the fashions of the period celebrated the fun whimsical style of girlhood; side ponytails, bright colours, ragtag clothes, all signified a fun, frivolous form of girlhood. Unfortunately, none of this was given much credit at the time. The idea that fashion, music or film could be an emancipatory action for girls was ignored, in part, because female consumer habits have rarely been considered an active space of identity construction.

Consumption and the feminine

Madonna was critical in forcing feminism to gaze introspectively. While feminists were battling it out over the political messages of Madonna, they also had to address how to approach the politics of pleasure in consumer practices. Undoubtedly, Madonna's brand of feminism was appreciated by the many young women who bought her music and copied her clothing styles. Prior to the 1980s, much of feminist scholarship overlooked the role of consumption in the discovery of the self and how goods are deployed as a material resource in the process of identity making.

Most of the work produced by feminist scholars simply ignored the consumption of mainstream media products and consumer goods and instead focused on the representation of women. While the reasons for this are complex, one may be, as this thesis illustrates, that many second-wave feminist readings of popular culture have concluded that popular texts work to lock women into feminine identities which render them “blind to and collude in, their own oppression” (Hollows 2000, 20). However, it can be argued that another reason for avoiding a study of consumption has been a conscious political move because consumption has mostly been defined in misogynistic terms. The act of consuming has been reified as feminine (Currie 1999, 135; McRobbie 1997, 192; Nava 1992, 190) while production has been masculinized.

Consumption is a gendered practice that takes place in the private sphere and has traditionally been perceived as a site of female authority and expertise (Nava 1992, 166). For example, in the affluent post-War era the ideal consumer was the suburban

³⁷ In the early 1990s, *Beverly Hills 90210* launched a line of fashion dolls based on the most popular characters of the show (“Toy mountain” 1992, 206).

housewife.³⁸ She controlled 80% of the family budget (Scott in Nava 1992, 190) and was perceived as leisurely spending her time grocery shopping while her male counterpart assumed the breadwinner role of providing for the family. Note how the housewife, who produced meals and cared for her family, was not defined as a producer. In producing meals for her family, the activity highlighted was the act of going to the grocery store to purchase the products, not the act of transforming these supermarket purchases into delicious healthy meals (Lury, 123). In such a scenario, the housewife was the antithesis to the breadwinner. In other words, the female consumer was dichotomous to the male producer, a binary that has been played out both in cultural representations of males and females in popular culture outlets such as television shows, movies, magazines, but also within academia.³⁹

At the same moment that consumption was feminized in the 1950s and 1960s, a wide range of social commentators and cultural theorists, such as, Betty Friedan (2000) and Vance Packard (1980), argued that contemporary consumer capitalism persuaded people to consume against their wills by creating “false needs”. Such perspectives relegated women to the act of consumption where the female consumer is presented as being easily manipulated by advertising and marketing discourses that urge her to buy goods that she does not need. The image of femininity in the post-War era was of a status-seeking housewife lusting after consumer goods to satisfy the “false needs” constructed by advertising (Hollows 2000, 122). Consumption was conceptualized as an activity where consumers are often too weak to resist the pressures of such forces as advertising and marketing. Given that women have been identified as the consumers, these views become highly gendered. Located in these dual dichotomies of consumption as feminine and production as masculine is a perception of consumption as an impulsive, passive, irrational act (Nava 1992; Hollows 2000; Miller 1995). The male producer was rational and autonomous with the potential to resist the manipulative powers of consumer culture.

³⁸ The feminization of the consumer has its roots in the rise of the department store in the later half of the nineteenth century. For a discussion on this topic see such works as Joanne Hollows, *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture* (2000).

³⁹ See for example the work that was being done during this time period in Britain at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies such as Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (eds.) *Resistance Through Rituals*. London: Routledge, (1976).

Such a line of reasoning is further aggravated by the fact that authentic identities are perceived as identities located in production, while the acts of consumption produce inauthentic identities, a perspective that proves to be incredibly troublesome given that women's work has often been reified as consumption while men's labour is considered productive. Much of this critique builds out of a Marxian emphasis on production as the locus of identity. A central idea of Marx's *Capital* is that at its basic roots capitalism is a complexity of social relations mediated by the economic system. In Marxian terms, our sense of who we are is a product of our relationship to the productive forces of a capitalist society. Marx argued that identity is created "through socially useful labour" (1976, 47). In a class-based society, humans become subjects in relationship to the means of material production. Our consciousness and ideologies come from the class positions that are tied to activities of production. It is productive labour that forges authentic identities. Identities shaped through consumption were seen as inauthentic or a form of "false consciousness", a paradigm that becomes incredibly problematic given that consumption has been feminized, and ultimately relegates feminine identities as inauthentic and false. This poses obvious implications for the tween girl. Condemning consumption as an act of manipulation and gullibility as opposed to a conscious political statement and expression of authentic identity, automatically discredits tweenhood as a frivolous, vacuous identity.

The tween as a female consumer

Consumer capitalism has relied on the housewife as the consumer. She was supposedly gullible, easily manipulated and spent her time shopping for goods to keep her family healthy, happy and at home. In 1963, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* revealed how the female contributed to the American economy. Friedan suggested that "women are the chief customers of American business" (Friedan 2006, 26). In the 1950s and 1960s, the family unit was the site of the expansion of consumer culture and women were the main purchasers for the family unit. Second-wave feminism posed a threat to the stability of the system. If women were going to work, would they still consume? If women were "emancipated" from the domestic sphere, would they still go to the plazas and the grocery stores? The prospect of women not shopping was terrifying for businesses that relied on the female consumer. In response they enticed the female consumer by appropriating "feminist desires and feminist rhetoric" into advertisements (Douglas 2000, 267). Women's liberation morphed into female narcissism as women

were told they could “have it all” and that “they were worth it”. Freedom to choose was packaged as the freedom to reward oneself and pamper oneself no matter what the cost. This of course merged seamlessly with an emphasis on beauty. Instead of buying for the home, the new women was encouraged to buy the vast array of beauty products in order to maintain their dignity, beauty and allure (Douglas 2000, 267-280).

The framing of the tween girl is tied to this legacy of relying on the female consumer. The tween girl offered another tactic in stabilizing the female consumer. If the mediated marketplace could court the tween girl and position girlhood as a period of consumer activity, it reassured the corporate sector that it was possible to maintain access to the female market. The girl market offered the mediated marketplace a potentially new site for consumption. For example, *Seventeen* magazine began to move away from catering to the girl as a future housewife by teaching her to become the family purchaser and instead place much more emphasis on her current consumption. *Seventeen's* ads in the trade publications in the 1980s began to emphasize brand loyalty with personal care products such as bath soap, nail polish, mascara, instead of trying to sell her to more domestic products such as jello and instant cake mix. Meanwhile *Advertising Age* noticed that “young people buy a staggering percentage of personal care products” (Freeman 1985, 28). In 1984, *Marketing Magazine* suggested that teen girls (aged 16-24) account for 12% of the total female population but account for 23% of all cosmetic expenditures and 22% of women's apparel sales. They also account for 55% of soft drink sales and 20% of potato chip consumption (1984). And, in 1986, suggested that teenage girls wear more nail polish and more fragrance than any other group (Marney 1986a, 9).

Girls could no longer be relied on to become mothers who bought their families Colgate or used Betty Crocker to get her baking done. Girls could be encouraged to buy the latest fashions or splashiest grooming products. They could be counted on to spend their money on perfume, nail polish and soft drinks. The tween girl offered something else that the teen girl did not, her body, particularly her transforming body which presented the mediated marketplace many commercial opportunities.

Commodifying puberty

Tweenhood I as a space between childhood and adolescence signalled the transitional and transitory spaces of puberty. This transformation is a period of both a physical and psychological development. Physical changes underline the definition of

girlhood and girls. Girlhood is tied to the body and one cannot pretend that the body is neutral and that girls are constructed solely as a “type of consciousness” (Gatens in Driscoll 2003, 87). It is the markings on the body, such as the first menarche or the development of secondary sexual characteristics that declare the milestones signalling the transition from child to adult. Catherine Driscoll has noted that for girls the changes that signify the shifts to womanhood are bodily, biological changes as opposed to personal experiences (2002, 90). The story of girlhood is told as a story of “becoming” in which the physiological is privileged over other signifiers of maturity such as undertaking more familial and domestic responsibility, working outside the home or acquiring independence.

This was the girl that magazines such as *Seventeen* were selling to its readers and its advertisers. She was a girl in a moment of double transformation. She was on the edge of change, moving out of childhood and becoming a woman as she struggled with the early stages of puberty and menstruation. Yet she was also a teenage girl embarking on her future as a college student and/or a bride. The magazine featured change and transformation both into teenhood and puberty, but also into womanhood and the phase of life of being a college girl on the cusp of a future career or getting married. *Seventeen* offered a narrative about becoming and not being. It was not about being a young woman or being married, but instead about the moment of transformation into the next stage.⁴⁰

The privileging of the body as the critical site of transition came up repeatedly in the interviews. When asked about their tween years and what the interviewees remember from them, many referenced changes in their bodies as a critical marker of age. Activities such as shaving their underarms, buying bras and menstruating were all milestones in defining their experiences in grades 6, 7 and 8.

What were grades 6, 7 and 8 like? Oh God, for me they were awful - everything changed. It meant getting your period, your body changed and you didn't know what to do with it (Janet).

Laurel had similar sentiments.

⁴⁰ Both Currie (1999) and Driscoll (2002) explore how girls' magazines produce discourses of the girl as a moment of transformation and becoming.

Being that age meant getting your period. That was huge, realizing that you had to get your first bra and realizing that playing with boys was now different.

Stephen Kline observes that the market is a critical provider of resources for socialization for children in the late twentieth century (1993). A similar argument can be made for the tween girl. The mediated marketplace socializes girls to deal with the biological changes of puberty. Magazines such as *Seventeen* were there to help girls navigate the moments of becoming. This narrative was not purely altruistic on *Seventeen's* part; it suited the real clients of the magazine (marketers and advertisers) quite well. Both becoming a teen and leaving teenhood were lucrative propositions that could require a whole new range of products and goods to assist with such transformation. Savvy marketers and advertisers worked to highlight the moments of change and encouraged girl consumers to believe that their products could provide them with support during this transition.

And it worked. For many girls puberty was experienced as a commercial engagement with the marketplace (Brumberg 1997, 41). In the interviews it was often not the bodily changes themselves that were remembered, but having to respond to these changes by engaging in such endeavours as wearing a training bra, shaving body hair or buying sanitary products. These bodily changes were not noted empirically in and of themselves by the interviewees, rather it was the commercial responses to the changes that were remembered as the rite of passage. Puberty was signified not by the awareness of body hair or breasts but by the experience of shaving or buying a bra, experiences that took place within the marketplace. For example, Victoria notes that puberty was signalled by finally using the sanitary napkins pads that her mother had bought specifically for her and tucked away for the time when she would need them.

I remember the box of Kotex and the belt already to go in my mother's bathroom cupboard for when I would get my period.

For Laurel it was the realization that she was beginning to perspire and then would have to buy deodorant.

Oh God, in Grade 8 my older cousin told me I smelt funny, so I had get my mom to go and buy me deodorant. That's when I knew things were changing.

For most of the interviewees, getting one's period was experienced as a moment of trauma. No matter how prepared, the actual moment of menarche was a shocking experience. Every woman interviewed had a story of getting her first period. These stories ranged from sneaking their older sisters' tampons so no one would know, to whispering to their mothers that they needed them to go to the drug store to buy them sanitary napkins. Embedded in these stories were notions of the trauma or crisis of being discovered. There was an urgency to not let others know. Many of the interviewees had stories about the horror of leaking in a public place. The embarrassment of others knowing was not a fear of being seen as mature enough to get one's period; looking older and being more mature was a winning sales strategy in other contexts. The shame was in revealing the polluted body. "Menarche is portrayed as a hygienic rather than maturational crisis" (Whisnant and Zegans as quoted in Merskin 1999, 943). It is of no coincidence that menstrual pads are called *sanitary* napkins. The menstruating girl has to hide out and avoid activities that could potentially cause leakage and bring shame. Merskin argues that this stigmatism of menstruation prevents women and girls from fully participating in society (Merskin 1999, 945). It has even euphemistically been referred to as "the curse". But this stigma also sells a lot of products.

By the 1980s, puberty had become a highly commodified experience as consumer culture provided the markings of the transitions towards adulthood. These markings took place at different sites on the body, under the arms, on the chest or in the vagina. The girl body was fractured into multiple sites, with each site providing valuable marketing opportunities (Lury 1997, 134). Shaving armpits, wearing a bra for the first time or getting one's period were all potential marketing opportunities for companies to exploit. Puberty was constructed as a series of bodily changes strung together over a few years of one's youth, as opposed to a continual transformation. The fracturing of the pubescent body is part of a larger phenomenon of turning the body into a project. In the twentieth century the body had become the central project for North American girls and was an important means of self-definition (Brumberg 1997). It was something that needed to be monitored, controlled, shaped and contained. It was both a problem that needed solved - legs and armpits needed shaving; menstruation needed to be contained and hidden, complexions needed to be buffed and shined, hair needed to be invigorated - and a site of identity work. Consumer culture provided the accoutrements of this required vigilance.

During the 1980s, there was a wide array of goods targeted to the tween customer in the personal project of the body to aid in the transitions of puberty. Products such as skin cleansers to eliminate acne, special pink plastic razors designed for novice shavers and small, discrete tampons that easily slip into the back pocket of a favourite pair of jeans, were all easily marketed to girls.

Even products that had little to do with puberty still used the body as a means to change girls' consumer habits. An advertisement for Dole asked, "As your body changes, should your diet change too?" The ad depicted a young girl leaning back on the bottom step of a staircase of a typical middle-class family house talking on the telephone and staring into a hand mirror while her cat sits beside her. She wears two ponytails accented with big bright bows, and she is dressed in pyjamas and fuzzy slippers. The girl in the ad looks to be about 12 and, given the nature of the questions in the ad, was obviously just entering into puberty. The subtext to the ad states: "No doubt about it. You can't build a maturing body with an immature diet. Now that you are becoming a different kind of person, cut down on those candy bars and soft drinks" (Dole 1981, 65). Such an ad highlighted the difference and change of girlhood by emphasizing the mature body. The pony-tailed young girl was not just becoming a larger child; she was on the cusp of change. The ad positioned the girl as moment of transformation that required a change in consumer habits.

In the 1980s, there was a big push to sell young girls tampons instead of the bulky sanitary pads that were falling out of fashion (Merskin 1999, 953). To transition the young girls to tampons, tampon companies such as Tampax and Playtex produced ads reassuring young girls that they did not have to be nervous about using tampons instead of sanitary napkins. One Playtex ad featured a concerned looking girl staring directly into the camera. The captions stated, "I was afraid I was too young to use a tampon". "I was afraid I might hurt myself. That I wouldn't put it in right". The last line of the ad tells girls that with "Playtex Tampons you're not too young afterall" (1988, 104). The subtext to this ad was a concern by girls that they would lose their virginity if they used a tampon (Merskin 1999, 953).

Ads for sanitary products worked to reassure young girls, often by taking on the voice of an older sister. Ads were sometimes written as Q and As from individuals to a company spokesperson such as Olympic gymnast Cathy Rigby (Stayfree 1980, 22), or as a confessional from a teenage girl discussing the products she uses. One ad in this style has a young woman staring at the camera with the tagline, "I felt funny about using

a tampon". The entire bottom half of the ad is a quote where she confesses that at first she thought she was "too young for tampons" but then she discovered Playtex. The ad speaks directly to the young reader, reassuring them that tampons do not leak and are comfortable. They are "all the comfort you want. All the protection you need" (Playtex 1986, 46).

At its basic core, advertising sells the messages of hope and fear; the promise of everything that a product can offer or threat of what can happen without it. What is sold with menstrual products is the promise of discretion; the promise not to reveal the shame of the "polluted" female body and the underlying threat of what can be lost if it is revealed. This is particularly important for girls because leaking is a high concern for girls as their cycles have not typically stabilized and are not regular, so leaking is a common occurrence (Fingerson 2006, 18).

In the 1980s, tampon advertisements sold the messages of freedom. While these ads seem so clichéd today, there was a glut of ads that told young girls that tampons could provide freedoms that maxi pads could not. Tampons would allow you to go swimming, skiing, horseback riding, etc. A perfect example of this type of ad was for Tampax. The image of the ad pictured a before shot of a young girl sulking on the beach looking bored, juxtaposed with an after shot of the same girl in a white bathing suit water-skiing. The text reinforced how menstruation and the fear of leaking kept girls from fully engaging in activities. "I hated saying no when I wanted to say yes" (Tampax 194, 75).⁴¹

In packaging puberty as a commercial experience, girls offer many opportunities for exploitation that boys do not. Puberty is not commodified in the same way for boys as it is for girls, perhaps because puberty for boys does not necessitate such a wide range of goods. Razors, deodorant and maybe acne creams might be all and, obviously, there was no need for sanitary napkins. But a more critical reason is that boys, in fact men, do not get positioned as consumers the way females do. As illustrated earlier, consumption for the male is considered a rational, logical decision and

⁴¹ It is of no coincidence that these types of ads paralleled a growing interest by the feminist movement of girls participating in physical activity with the landmark changes that were brought about by Title IX in the United States. Title IX opened up new opportunities to level the playing field, so to speak, for female sports.

men are rarely addressed as consumers (Gladwell 2000). The act of consuming has been feminized, a perception that is transferred onto the girl.

The “riddle” of the tween girl

Puberty, however, was not a simple sell for all of the cultural industries. The clothing industry struggled with how to approach the tween girl.⁴² The girl market was confusing, what one industry insider called “tricky” (“Young generations” 1980, 52). In 1986, *Earnshaw’s* called the preteen category a “riddle” that many retailers and manufactures have tried to solve, and which retailers had trouble naming. The department:

... has gone through name changes – Twixt Tween, Sub-Teen, Young Teen, Young Juniors – as if semantics could somehow give unity and meaning to a department. Some stores have dropped the category altogether, while others have added it. Manufacturers, too, have come and gone (“Addressing the preteen dilemma” 1986, 70).

Catering to the girl market was challenging, and few manufacturers or retailers were able to accurately appeal to her. *Earnshaw’s* consistently claimed that up until the 1990s the tween market was underserved (“Preteen market” 1990, 67).

Girls were not easy customers. Girls in the 7-14 and the preteen size ranges were a “tough age” according to the owner of Kaleidoscope, a California store that catered to this clientele. “They’re not confident; they usually don’t know what they want. And they tend to clone each other” (Harlan 1987, 40). The tween was a difficult market to crack for retailers and manufacturers. On one hand there was great potential as she was underserved as a market; she had access to vast economic resources. On the other hand, it was a market fraught with pitfalls as tween girls were tough to size properly and were fickle.

For the girls’ market, part of the difficulty was that three categories of girls’ clothing sizes could be worn by the tween consumer. At the smallest end, there was girls 7-14, an arbitrary nomenclature that did not correspond to the age of the girl but

⁴² The retail industry still referred to the tween girl as the preteen mainly because this was the category in sizing. The industry largely avoided the term preteen when talking directly to the girl (one retailer even stated that they must never be called preteens but young juniors), but as an industry they did use it as a way to differentiate the preteen consumer from the children and teen categories.

instead was a clothing size designed to fit girls' bodies older than six but outgrown anywhere from the ages of 11 to 13 or 14, depending on the girl. Once the girl grew out of the 7-14 range, which was considered children's wear, they could graduate to junior (sometimes called teen) apparel, manufactured to appeal to and fit the teenage girl. Wedged in between these two clothing categories was the preteen line, carried by only a few manufacturers and retailers and designed as an alternative for those who had outgrown the 7-14 size range but were not ready for the junior (teen) line.⁴³ The preteen size category was sized for the girl who had "lost their baby fat" (Pollack 1987, 67) and "who [was] becoming, but [was] not quite, a women" ("Preteen market" 1990, 67).

The industry struggled with how to define the girl and pinpoint the moment of a physical change. "It's inappropriate to put a 12-year-old girl in a junior dress that presumes she has fuller hips and a bust she does not have," stated Bob Edwards President of Young Generation, a clothing manufacturer of a preteen line ("Young generations" 1980, 52). Part of the complexity of approaching the tween girl was the difficulty in precisely defining her given that she was in a period of transition or change both socially/emotionally and physically. The "riddle" was that these two developments of physical maturity and social/psychological maturity did not necessarily correspond with each other. One fashion director stated;

a girl can still be comfortable in size 14 which is the top of the 7-14 size range. It depends on her disposition and her psychological development. Or, she can be a preteen - ready by both the mother's and the child's standards to enjoy a slightly more sophisticated look. Sometimes it isn't even necessary for a young girl to go into a 14; she can skip it and move easily into the pre-teen realm" (as quoted in Pollack 1987, 67).

Another industry insider commented that the girl "really hasn't gotten totally comfortable with the changes in her body, which must be taken into account if a style is to be successful. She's not a junior size, but she's not a 7-14 either" ("Addressing the preteen dilemma" 1986, 70).

The construction of the preadolescent girl as a moment of becoming was part of the dilemma of the tween girl for the apparel industry. Not only was it difficult to strike the right balance of designing fashion items that were distinct from children's apparel

⁴³ Adding to the confusion was the fact that some companies actually double ticketed the clothing labels and hangers so that they could sell to petite junior size ("Young generations" 1980, 52).

and able to reflect the sophistication and style of teen clothes without being too mature, but tween girls' sizes and shapes were also transitory. The preadolescent girl was no longer a girl, but she was also not a teen in terms of both her fashion sense and her body shape. Laurie Whyte, Vice President of children's apparel manufacturer Sylvia Whyte, highlighted the ambiguity of the category and the dual definitions of maturity.

When a girl steps out of 14 into pre-teen 10, the cut is narrower for a taller child who has lost her baby fat and is ready for the look of a preteen. There is an age-readiness as well as a size-readiness. If a young girl is slim and tall, she might need the length of a 14, but she might also like and be happier with the styles offered in the preteen sizes" (as quoted in Pollack 1987, 67).

For the apparel industry, the question of how to separate the physical maturity from the psycho-social was not straightforward. The clothing industry worried about the correspondence of these two factors. Part of the reason for their concern was that the actual customer was not necessarily the girl herself, but her mother. Both the daughter and the mother had to be willing to accept not only the size and shape of the clothes, but the style as well. The preteen clothing line channelled a teenage fashion and aesthetic of a "more sophisticated look".

In attempting to appeal to retailers, merchandisers claimed that they understood the girl market and were able to find the winning balance of fashionable clothes in the appropriate sizes and shapes. An advertisement in *Earnshaw's* for a jean company exclaimed:

Good news for the 'difficult-to-fit, difficult-to-please' set: We're introducing a new line of young junior jeans. Jeans specifically designed to fit the fashion conscious 10 to 13-year-old who's too old for youth wear – and not quite ready for juniors. ... We've got the young junior figure, figured out (Rumble Seats 1981, 29).

In case the text was not clear enough, the ad pictured a girl with small hips and breast, in high heels. Her long hair was swept to the side, her hand on her hip and her head cocked. With the exception of the limp Raggedy Ann doll in her other hand signifying her youth, her pose was similar to one of an adult model. The tagline of the ad stated "13 going on 18". In a similar vein, clothing company Health-tex introduced their customer. "Meet 'Our Girl' by Health-tex. Some of you may know her. She's outgrown regular Health-tex, not only in size but in attitude. She wants something more. No more 'kids' clothes for her. She wants fashion and she has her own ideas. She wants Our

Girl clothes designed with a super sense of style for girls' sizes 7-14" (Healthtex 1982, 31). The girl in the ad, again with very small breasts signifying her youthfulness, was pictured on the phone wearing a very trendy striped tank top and miniskirt, with polka dot leg warmers and the 1980's headband à la Oliver Newton John.

In response, savvy retailers not only stocked clothes that signified a separation, they also reinforced this difference in the retail experience. The location of the department was strategically placed away from the children's department to reassure tweens that they were distinct entities. For example, My Child's Destiny, a children's store built in the mid-1980s and designed to cater to the children of the baby boomers, consciously put the Girls 7-14 and Boys 8-14 away from the children's section. "We put the older boys' and girls' departments upstairs," according to Roy Raymond the store's owner. "Very often, older children don't want to buy their clothing where they shopped when they were younger (Kaiser 1985, 108). The label of the departments was important as well. Bob Edwards, President of a preteen apparel manufacturing company, emphasized that he did not use the phrase preteen, instead he used the term young junior or young junior teen:

That phrase is more descriptive of the young lady who wears the clothes. The girl going into preteen is aged 11-13 depending on how quickly she matures. At that age she is looking forward to getting out of the girls' department, and is excited about finally becoming a teenager. But if a sales lady tells her to come to **pre-teens** (author's emphasis), the customer feels she's taking a step backwards. These girls are all anxious to become teenagers ("Young generations" 1980, 52).

This tactic has been used before. Daniel Cook noted how separating the twixt and tween section from the child's gave the young girl something to aspire to, increasing the potential for future sales (Cook 2004, 116-118).

The relationship between the children's apparel industry and the tween girl was tenuous. She was seen as a capricious consumer. *Earnshaw's* reported her as being more "trend-orientated than any other purchaser of apparel" ("Preteen market" 1990, 67). Which, according to Tom Hoffman of Knitwaves, could be good for business. Fashion orientation meant that consumers were willing to pay and merchandise did not have to be marked down, providing the retailer chose the right fashions and accessories ("Addressing the preteen dilemma" 1986, 70). But, being trend-orientated was not always seen as a strength of the market; instead it frightened many retailers. The tastes

of the tween girl were seen as too precarious. *Earnshaw's* reported that the preteen consumer:

... wants an item only if she sees her friend wearing it. She wants it today and will pay a hefty price for it, but if she can't get her hands on it before the next trend comes along, she won't buy it for fifty cents ("Preteen market" 1990, 67).

Earnshaw's reported that a buyer for a children's retailer stated that "too many people have been hurt by projecting preteen [fashion trends] ("Preteen market" 1990, 67). However, alienating the preteen was also seen as dangerous. Even though the girls were reported to only buy the preteen clothes for a period of a year or so while their bodies adjusted to leaving the young girls' market (sizes 7-14) before moving to the junior section (geared for teenagers), ignoring the preteen meant that stores might lose their future customers. Catering to the preteen was seen as a way to ensure a continued relationship with the customer as it meant "plant[ing] the seeds for these customers to continue to shop in their stores, a definite advantage considering that the average 16 to 19-year-old girl spends \$853 on clothing purchases each year" ("Addressing the preteen dilemma" 1986, 74).

Preteen lines grew as manufactures and retailers began to see the lucrative opportunities. By the mid-1980s major brand names recognized the potential of the tween girl market. Liz Claiborne introduced a preteen line called LizKids Preteen, which was an extension of the girls' 7-14 line. "The success of LizKids doesn't have to end with size 4," according to a spokesperson for the company. "Claiborne's customers can wear Liz clothes from about the time [they're] out of diapers, throughout [their] school career into the working world and even during her leisure hours" ("Addressing the preteen dilemma" 1986, 70). "Esprit has been even quicker to jump on the preteen bandwagon. In fact, many stores build their entire preteen departments around Esprit". Saks Fifth Avenue, Lord & Taylor's and Filene's all reported to build their department around Esprit ("Addressing the preteen dilemma" 1986, 70-74).

For media outlets such as *Seventeen* and consumer good companies such as Tampax, Playtex, the clothing industry and even the food company Dole, puberty was a commodifiable experience. Retailers and manufacturers "develop[ed] strategic attempts to capitalize on the age, gender and sexual ambiguity of preteen girls" (Cook and Kasier 2004, 222). The young girl was definitely an approachable customer in her own right. Any concerns that were raised with the potential loss of the lucrative female consumer

as middle-class women moved out of the domestic sphere and into the workplace were addressed by the girl who was there to fill her void.

Selling transformation was a very profitable tactic prior to the 1980s. The old tropes of the transformation of the ugly duckling into the beautiful princess are always aided by the vestiges of consumer culture; clothes, hair products and makeup were the tools of the transformation. In teen movies of the 1980s, the moment of the transformation is highlighted in the famous grooming scenes. Often it revolves around getting ready for a major event, usual a prom (*Pretty in Pink*, 1986), but it could be a date (*Some Kind of Wonderful*, 1987) or a party, or a dance competition (*Dirty Dancing*, 1987). The scenes consist of a series of different shots such as showering, doing one's hair, choosing clothes, applying makeup and donning jewellery, all set to music. The narrative of transformation as a sales pitch was used on the tween girl. In using these narratives, consumer culture pitched itself as being able to assist girls through the transformation of their body. This fable offered many marketing opportunities.

Conclusion: celebrating girlhood

It is clear what the tween girl offers the mediated marketplace, but what does the tween persona offer girls? There must be some perks in order for girls to want to participate in the positioning of herself as a tween. The renaissance of the girl by the mediated marketplace offered girls their own space in which girlhood was celebrated and not disparaged. Television shows catered to a girl audience and singers like Madonna and Lauper; toiletry companies such as Tampax and Playtex, along with the clothing industry all carved out autonomous spaces for the tween girl in which she could just be a girl. Of course, as Seiter rightly reminds us in the context of children's television, something is both gained and lost by this. Girls are both validated and ghettoized. They are given access to their own culture, but this culture is isolated from others.

The renaissance of the girl as a market, customer and audience has also legitimized girlhood on a social stage. Offering girls a new consumer identity as a tween validated their subjectivity. For women, as this thesis previously illustrated, consumer culture has been a site that legitimizes their experiences and expertise. Consumption, as shown in the rest of this dissertation, has been presented as a site of empowerment and offers her a legitimate place within the matrices of the mediated marketplace, acknowledging her being.

CHAPTER 3: MOMMA'S LITTLE SHOPPERS: THE COLONIZATION OF CHILDHOOD

"Kids are growing up faster and developing a consumer awareness earlier" (Marilyn Adler and Kathleen Brouder 1980, S4).

I was in grade four when my mother went to work full-time outside the home. I certainly remember things being different. After school, I had about an hour-and-a-half of freedom before my parents came home. During this time, I would raid the kitchen cupboards for any of the goodies I pressured my mother to buy on our Friday afternoon grocery trips and watch whatever I wanted on television. I was not unique; most of my friends were in similar situations. Now, as a scholar, reflecting back I can see much more than a young girl stuffing her face in front of the television. I see a transforming family dynamic; a young daughter aware of her influence in the family economy and a working mother too pressed for time and forced to take her market-savvy daughter to the grocery store. This personal experience was part of a bigger change in which the tween girl is carved out of the spaces of childhood in response to shifting family dynamics and the positioning of the child as a consumer.

In the twentieth century, the mediated marketplace has become one of the key institutions to define the child. I argue that the child has been defined according to their potential position as a market, a customer and an audience. The autonomy and power of the child has been framed in relation to his/her autonomy and power as a consumer not as a citizen, or as an equal member of the family. As a consumer, the child offers marketers access to their discretionary income of allowances and birthday money; the potential to attract a life-long customer and, to top it off, a way to access family resources. The tween offers the same three markets that the child offered as defined by McNeal (1964, 1998). She is a current market, a future market and an influential market. But her influence actually goes deeper than simply offering new markets. Tying consumption to childhood naturalizes the consumer ethic and essentializes the desire to consume. If children want to buy things, then consumption must be a natural force or

desire (Cook 2004). Carving the tween out of child is part of bigger project in which the child is understood as a sovereign consumer as the tween helped to accept and legitimize childhood as a consumer space.

A history of the children's market

Over the course of the twentieth century the cultural industries of advertising, marketing, the media and merchandising/retailing have come to gather and define the child consumer as a specific market segment. As the century progressed, child consumers came to be understood as a powerful force in the marketplace as they had access to discretionary income to make their own purchases, while maintaining influence on family purchasing decisions. Furthermore, children were targeted as future consumers as companies tried to establish a relationship that could continue into adulthood (McNeal, 1964; McNeal 1998).

It was not until the early twentieth century that the child was conceptualized as a specific market segment. Once this began the child's interest in goods and their position as consumers within the family were defined and reframed according to the aspirations of various actors in the mediated marketplace. It had been through the marketplace that the child was constituted as autonomous, wilful and needy thus elevated to more "inclusive levels of personhood" (Cook 2004, 68). Like the tween it was in the synergistic relations of the mediated marketplace that that child came to be forged as a commercial persona.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the way society has defined and understood the child has undergone dramatic changes. Childhood, as shown in the first chapter, is not a natural state of being but a complex socio-cultural construct that is defined and given meaning in relation to the social, political, cultural and economic needs of a society at any given moment. Various institutions give meaning to childhood: the law, the church, the family, the education system, all have vested interests in how childhood is defined in the context of the historical moment. While according to our current sensibilities it may seem crass and cold to define the child in economic terms, as economic sociologist Vivian Zelizer has demonstrated childhood has been as much a social and cultural construct as an economic construct. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, children were understood as a part of the family economy. In the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, the meaning of the child in the both the family and in the economy

transformed from that of a potential labourer, economically valuable to their parents at some point in their lives, to a child that is “economically worthless” but “emotionally priceless” (Zelizer, 1985).

At the turn of the century, children began to perform new roles in the family as the family unit moved from being dependent on the economic value of child, to the child occupying a more sentimental position. This sentimental position meant that children were cherished in new ways and the child moved from being an asset to being a treasure (Kline 1993). Changes within the child labour laws and a new emphasis on education were largely responsible for the shift (Suransky 1982). As part of the transformation in the meaning of the child within both the family and the economy, new spaces were offered for industry to conceptualize the child as a market, since children were now beneficiaries of the family dollar.

This transformation within the family has also been a critical one in the relationship of the child to the marketplace to consumer rather than a labourer. Families began to spend money on children because of their new, sentimental positions in the family. Various industries played a part in this repositioning of the child. The marketplace, as discussed in Chapter 1, is not a monolithic entity but a complex circuitry of industries with both complementary and competing interests. These industries operated in different ways at different times to gather and define the child as a consumer, with his/her own tastes, values and eventually autonomy.

One of the industries having a vested interest in how the child was defined early on in the twentieth century was the children’s apparel industry. The clothing industry was at the forefront because children’s clothing was one item not purchased for the family as a whole, like food or soap, but specifically bought for the child. The 1930s, according to Daniel Cook, were a pivotal moment in the development of the child consumer. It was this decade when the industry began to approach the child as the consumer of the good, rather than their parents, or more specifically, their mothers as the primary purchasers.

This shift in perspective forced the industry to appeal directly to the purchasing agency of the child, a perspective Cook calls “pediocularity”. Pediocularity privileges the viewpoint of the child “making it the basis for authority and action” (Cook 2004, 67). Cook’s work illustrates how the meanings of childhood are firmly lodged within the frameworks of consumer culture as merchants and manufactures began catering to

children's needs and desires by designing goods and retail spaces specifically for their perspectives.

With the exception of the children's apparel industry, most advertisers catered to the child consumer as part of the family market (Cook 2004). The family was understood as an economic unit, with little marketing to individual family members. Advertisements were mainly geared to the mother since it was her job to buy most of the purchases for the family⁴⁴. Selling to children was often done in alliance with mothers. This advertising focused on convincing mothers that products were beneficial for their children. Advertisements informed her that it was up to her to purchase the right array of products for her family to ensure their future achievements, an approach later termed the "gatekeeper model" since the mother was seen as the gatekeeper of the family purchases (Schor 2004, 17).

While the children's wear industry was re-inscribing the child as an autonomous consumer, it was not until after the war that advertising and media adopted this repositioning. Stephen Kline (1993) and Lynne Spigel (2003) contend that advertisers mainly targeted the child as part of the family economic unit well into the 1950s. To complement this advertising directive, television shows were designed to be viewed by the entire family during the family-viewing hours. Television promised to bring the family together (Spigel 2003, 256) at the same time it began to partition family members into discrete market segments based on the separate gender roles and social functions of the members.

Spigel argues that this tension of unity and division happened at the same moment. The balance between the unity of the family and the separation of its members was embedded in the popular discourse on television and the family in the 1950s (Spigel 2003, 256).⁴⁵

In the early 1950s, as the family began to be approached in more discrete terms, children were still ignored as a direct market. It was thought that they had little money and any money they did have was spent on candy or comic books. In addition, there

⁴⁴ During the 1950s, fathers bought the large items for the home, while women bought almost all of the daily goods (Griswald 1993).

⁴⁵ This tension of addressing the family as both a unit and as individual members mirrors the tension of marketers in the 1950s who were slowly incorporating ideas about market segmentation into business practices, while still attempting to market to a mass audience.

was little need to create media for children since there were few companies, outside of the clothing industry, that produced products specifically for the children's market (Kline 1993, 122). Children were not a market that warranted serious consideration and, for the most part, it was seen as a bit vulgar for business to pursue a typical "business/consumer relation" with children (McNeal 1987, 134). The television networks argued that the child audience would best be accommodated by treating them as part of the mass family audience (Kline 1993, 122).⁴⁶

The 1950s were an ideal environment for the children's entertainment industry to begin to bloom. The growing economy meant that more families had greater resources and discretionary income to spend on their children (Pecora 1998, 17). Families were moving to new suburban homes looking for ways to offer their children more than what parents had access to during their upbringing in the depression era and war time (Schneider 1989, 14). The introduction of the television into the home prompted approaching the child as a consumer market as television segmented family consumption by separating the needs and wants of children from their parents and addressing them on their own terms (Griswald 1993, 196).

The real push for the development of the children's market in the 1950s was by the media. It was the media that began to gather and define the children's market. Walt Disney, for example, realized the opportunity in the children's market and exploited it in 1953 with the launch of the *Disneyland* program, an hour-long melange of animation and action dramas. The show's mission was to create a program which would be viewed by children and parents together by appealing to the "kid in all of us" (Kline 1993, 123).⁴⁷ The popularity of this show encouraged Disney to expand the boundaries even further and create programs exclusively for children. Disney scheduled their programs for the late afternoon, when the mother's soaps were over and she was busy making dinner and

⁴⁶ There was a children's television industry prior to the 1950s. Local stations produced shows for children, but these shows mostly consisted of short segments of children's entertainers acting as hosts who introduced old cartoons or film shorts. The shows were supported at a local level, as opposed to a national level. The national networks were not particularly concerned with creating children's television since most advertisers were not interested in the children's market. Those that were, by and large, were not accessing the children's market via television (Schneider 1989, 13-14).

⁴⁷ The following year, Disney's *Davy Crockett* proved the potential value of merchandising and marketing to children when over a million consumers bought the coonskin hats that were emblematic of the show (Kline 1993).

father had not yet returned home from work. Disney saw this formerly dead time as an opportunity to try to reach the young consumer.

In 1955, Disney launched the highly successful *Mickey Mouse Club*, a children's variety show hosted by a range of young, talented performers aged four to 16. The show was the first network show to air consistently five times a week during the after-school time slot when children were at home and in control of the television set (Schneider 1989, 12). The show proved to be incredibly popular, awakening advertisers and marketers to the potential opportunities in communicating directly with children (Kline 1993, 123-124; Schneider 1989, 12).

Children's television shows such as *Disneyland*, and later Saturday morning cartoons, segmented children from the adult market and allowed marketers to effectively target promotional messages directly at children (McNeal 1987, 134). Cheaply produced children's animation followed and by the 1960s "the Saturday morning and after-school children's ghettos were firmly established TV institutions" (Kline 1993, 124).

What differentiates this form of programming from earlier practices was that it directly addressed the child and positioned the child as a *bona fide* audience, customer and market. The programs and advertisers had "an apparent commercial concern for children's right to enjoy autonomous leisure and pleasure" (Kenway and Bullen 2001, 45).

The emergence of the child as a distinct market persona was tied to children's growing influence in the institution of middle-class families. Children began to acquire a certain amount of autonomy and power within the family dynamic. One reason for this change was a shift in the approach to child rearing and the political organization of the family that was instigated by the revolutionary ideas of Dr. Spock, the American paediatrician. Spock wrote *Baby and Child Care* in 1946 originally entitled *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*. Although written in 1946, Spock's ideas began to take hold in the 1970s and 1980s (Sutherland and Thompson 2001, 17). Dr. Spock's writings encouraged parents to be flexible and more respectful of their children and resulted in a shift in the philosophy of child rearing. Instead of an autocratic power structure, with parents controlling the family and making all of the decisions, the family became more of an equitable social unit as children began to partake in some of the decision-making. In the context of post-War affluence and consumerism, some of these decisions happened to be purchasing decisions. The balance of consumer power within the family unit shifted as children begin to have input in the family purchases. The

mediated marketplace exploited this shift and children became increasingly represented as individualized, sovereign consumers (Cook 2000, 487).

As consumers, the child came to represent three markets: a current market, a future market and an influential market. As a current market, they were buyers with their own discretionary income, making their own purchasing decisions and wielding their own power in the marketplace. As a future market, children were in the process of developing their own practices of consumption that could easily be cultivated by companies to persuade them to be lifelong customers, loyal to specific brands. And finally, children were an influential market in that they had power and influence in the consumption practices of the family (McNeal 1964; McNeal 1998). As Cook illustrates, there are essentially two readings of this trend to view the child as an influential market. On one hand, it could be a function of a sophisticated knowledge of the child as having autonomy; on the other, it could be due to parental desire to include children's desires in family decisions combined with the inability of parents (read mothers) to restrain children's demands for goods (Cook 2000, 503). Both of these readings fail to address the role that industry played in constructing, isolating and promoting children's autonomy. The child was increasingly approached as a customer both within the family and on his/her own, independently from the family unit.

New models of the family opened up spaces for children's autonomy, creating new possibilities for advertisers and marketers to tap into family resources. Addressing the child consumer was not just about a child's own spending power; children were a new entry point into the family. Marketers were quick to realize this growing potential and began to conceptualize the child as not only a present market but an influential force in shaping family purchases. Marketers began to speak to children as the target market in the hopes that the child would advocate for a specific product and provide a potential entry into the family purchasing patterns. The idea was that with enough pressure, children could change family buying habits and introduce new products into the home, whether the products were aimed at children or not, such as breakfast cereal. The targeting of children directly, in isolation from parents, aroused some controversy. Child

advocates worried that this created a situation in which children were groomed to lobby their parents into spending money (Schor 2004, 16).⁴⁸

By the 1970s as children's status as consumers began to build, academics started to take interest in the consumer behaviour of children and began to approach it as a topic that warranted scholarly analysis. Norma Pecora cites the fact that prior to the 1970s, academic work that considered children's advertising was virtually non-existent with the exception of a few mavericks such as James McNeal, who authored a number of works in the 1960s that championed children as a *bona fide* market. But, reflecting on this moment, McNeal stated that his work was mostly ignored and his research on youth bored advertisers during the 1960s and seventies (as quoted in Quart 2003, 50). This is interesting because advertisers were increasingly recognizing children as a market during this same time period. Following this rising awareness, it was during the 1970s and 1980s that research into the consumer behaviour of children began to expand as researchers became attuned to the growing commercialization of the children's market (McNeal 1987, 134; Pecora 1998, 17-18).

The history of the children's market was further buoyed by a transformation in family dynamics and a shifting economy, but things would change again in the 1980s when the positioning of the child as a consumer would become much more political. It was in the political space of the 1980s that the tween persona was cleaved out of the child market and legitimized as her own separate market.

The changing mediascape

Deregulation

Under the pressures of neo-liberal economic policies in the 1980s, the media landscape underwent a radical overhaul and young people were caught up in the mechanics of such changes. One of the more poignant changes in the American mediascape was the repositioning of the child customer/audience. During the mid- and

⁴⁸ Their worries are not unfounded. By the 1990s, "pester power" and the "nag factor" were part of an advertiser's arsenal in selling goods by attempting to give young consumers the tools and ability to persuade, pester or nag their parents into buying things. See the brilliant clip on children and marketing in the Canadian film "The Corporation" for a visual example of this (Achbar and Abbott, 2004). Also see Schor (2004) and Linn (2004) for further debate.

late-seventies, concern over the increasing commercialization of children's culture led to highly contested public debates on the social acceptability of treating the child as a consumer. The battleground for such debates was television. In both Canada and in the United States public battles over the effects of television advertising on children were waged between the triangular adversaries of governmental regulatory bodies (in the U.S. the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Trade Commission and in Canada the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) on one side, child advocates on another and the entertainment industry on the third. Each side had their own agenda in the fight. The governmental regulatory bodies were unwilling to take on the media industry and fight for media regulation, instead they opted to have the industry regulate itself (Grant and Wood 2004, 213; Schor 2004, 177). This was a double bind for governments who wanted to avoid forcing the media to regulate itself, but did not want to be seen as abandoning children's rights. Child advocates, on the other hand, argued that advertising to children was detrimental to a child's mental health. Children, they argued, did not have the cognitive abilities to differentiate advertising from content. These advocates demanded that government regulatory bodies protect children by regulating children's television (Kunkel 2001). Self-regulation by the media, they argued, had been ineffective in the past and they lobbied the government to legislate children's media (Kline 1993, 215). On the third side, the entertainment industry, desperately hoping to avoid governmental regulation, urged for self-regulatory structures that would allow it to circumvent government intervention.

In the early 1970s, the first round of debate started when a cereal manufacturer was accused of spurious advertising. Despite the fact the case was dismissed 10 years later, the incident instigated the debate on the moral validity of advertising to children (Quart 2003, 57). In 1974, the FCC imposed guidelines limiting children's advertising. They acknowledged children's vulnerability to advertising and implemented regulations that prohibited program-length commercials by mandating distinct separations between advertisements and commercials. The FCC also restricted advertising time to nine-and-a-half minutes per hour on weekends, and 12 minutes on weekdays (Schor 2004, 177). Four years later in 1978, the FTC published a report declaring that children's advertising was "inherently unfair and deceptive" because children (defined as being under age seven) were "too young to understand the selling and purpose of, or otherwise comprehend or evaluate, the advertising" (FTC Staff Report 1978 cited in Kline 1993, 213). The FTC proposed to ban advertising to children under the age of eight, although

this proposal was ultimately defeated (Roedder John 1999, 188). Corporations fought back by arguing that governmental agencies did not have the authority to operate as the “National Nannies” (Quart 2003, 57).

By the 1980s, many of these debates were of little relevance and the arguments of child advocates and public interest organizations proved to carry little weight as the FTC and FCC swayed under the leadership of the Reagan administration and off-loaded the responsibility of regulating children’s media onto the free market. In 1981, Congress stripped the FTC of many of its duties to regulate the media and Reagan appointed Mark Fowler to the position of Chair of the FCC. In his new position, Fowler contended that the marketplace, not governmental regulation, could best control children’s television. By 1984, the FCC relaxed many policies that regulated children’s advertising and completely deregulated limits on the amount of commercial minutes permitted during children’s television shows (Kunkel 2001, 385).⁴⁹ The FCC asserted “marketplace forces can better determine appropriate commercial levels than our own rules” (as cited in Kunkel 2001, 385).

Similar debates on the regulation of children’s media and advertising were waged in Canada and, with the exception of Quebec, regulation was off-loaded onto the industry. Quebec, however, imposed tighter laws and legislated a provincial ban on advertising to children under the age of 12. In the rest of Canada, in an attempt to circumvent further governmental regulation, individual television stations such as the CBC experimented with its own policies that limited advertising to children. Fearful of the prospect of government regulation, the industry lobby group, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB), proposed the Broadcast Code of Advertising to Children. The Code was governed by the self-regulatory body Advertising Standards Canada (ASC). While this was not governmental regulation but the industry regulating itself, broadcasters were required to comply with the Code in order to be granted their license by the CRTC. Unfortunately, the ASC Code was (and still is) vague with lots of wiggle room, while the ASC itself had no real regulatory strength (Coulter and Murray 2001).

Clearly, Pandora had opened the infamous box. The deregulation of children’s media in the mid-1980s, by a country like the United States, which both produced and

⁴⁹ The FCC reinstated this in 1990 by limiting it to 10.5 minutes on weekdays and 12 minutes on weekends.

influenced tremendous amounts of the world's media products, led to a dramatic increase in the global commercialization of children's culture. The outcome of Reagan's deregulation of the media was that it legitimized children as competent consumers. By the mid-1980s, children were seen as consumers in their own right with access to a disposable, expandable income in the billions of dollars (Pecora 2004, 24) leading *Marketing Magazine* to proclaim in 1990 that the child was considered the "dream consumer" (Marney 1990, 15). With a regulated media, the child was allotted special status and protected from being treated in the same manner as adult consumers, but with deregulation, children were positioned as competent consumers, considered to be market-savvy instead of needing protection. No longer were children seen as needing protection to maintain their innocence. Delegating the responsibility of media regulation to the marketplace and away from the protective embrace of the government further entrenched the child as a legitimate, *bona fide* consumer. Children were able to engage in the fantasy of democratic choice offered by the rationality of a free market that was supposedly responding to children's needs and wants.

The result was a deepening of the commercialization of children's culture as advertisers gradually increased their ability to talk to children as consumers through television. When the FCC legitimized children's status as consumers in 1983, allowing broadcasters to transform children's programs into advertisements, the child moved from being a young innocent needing protection from the mediated marketplace to being a legitimate participant.

While advertisers, marketers and broadcasters had much to gain from being able to address the child as a customer/audience, the increased intensity of debates surrounding the regulation of children's advertising had struck a chord of fear in the hearts of broadcasters and marketers. They were left with the unenviable task of trying to gain access to the lucrative potential of the "dream consumer" in a way that did not alienate parents, or raise the ire of the government which might result in a return to government regulation. Although there were many responses to these debates, the construction of the older girl consumer would prove to be a potential means of circumventing criticism by child advocates. The crux of the debate over children's advertising was based on the belief that children needed to be protected because they were special and unique consumers, vulnerable to advertising because they were unable to discern commercial messages from mainstream media. The child was unlike the teenager who was considered more mature and capable of discerning the difference.

Constructing the “older child” as a “young teen” or preteen would circumvent debates around the potential loss of childhood innocence. If the tween was just a young teen, then the debates around the potential corruption of childhood by the advertising and media industries could be subdued.

Kids getting older younger

As the pre-adolescent was seen as less naïve than the child, the cultural industries of children’s culture had to justify the difference between the child from the older or pre-adolescent child. Consolidating all children under 12 into one category was unfair since the pre-adolescent was more astute and sophisticated than the young child. An article in *Marketing Magazine* in 1980s suggested “children can change very rapidly between the ages of five and 12. Five-year-olds and 12-year-olds have much less in common than 20-year-olds and 40-year-olds”. “By 12,” the author claimed, “sophistication has set in” (Marney 1981, 16). Instead of 12 being the imminent point in children’s cognitive abilities to understand an advertisement’s purpose, it was closer to age eight or nine, the industry argued (Marney 1981, 16-7). Like their teenage siblings, pre-adolescent consumers were sceptical of commercial messages on television, a journalist writes in *Advertising Age* in 1982, they could not be manipulated in the same ways that children could be, it was argued (Yovovich 1982, M-6).

Instead of overtly marketing to children, if the pre-adolescent consumer could be constructed as older, wiser and more teenage-like, then the advertising industry could mitigate criticism that it was blatantly advertising to children. The beauty of such a scheme was that youth are almost always influenced by the age group above them (Cook 2004; Danesi 2003; Zollo 1995), a phenomenon called “age aspiration” by marketers such as Peter Zollo (1995, 184-185). Therefore, targeting the pre-adolescent was a *de facto* means of advertising to younger children, without overtly doing so.

The problem with such reasoning was that not everyone would necessarily buy into the concept that the pre-adolescent was really an immature teen, not a child. To strengthen such arguments, the youth of the day had to be positioned as different from the youth of the past or else critics could contend, based on their own memories of their childhood, that 12-years-old was an age of innocence and naivety. The way to avoid such assumptions was to prove that children in the 1980s grew up much faster than they had in the past. Unlike the childhood experiences of the various stakeholders who were making decisions in regards to youth marketing, “kids” *Advertising Age* informed its

readers “(were) growing up faster, developing a consumer awareness earlier and accumulating an increasingly impressive share of the dollars with which to purchase goods and services” (Adler and Brouder April 28 1980, s-21). The increasing maturity of children was not just commercial but also physiological and emotional. In an advertisement for themselves, advertising agency Benton and Bowles contended that in North American culture:

... physiological maturity usually precedes emotional maturity by several years, with no fixed entry point into adulthood. The average age of puberty has been dropping over the last 100 years, for example, the US menarche...has dropped to 12.45 years, down five years over the last century (1982, 9).

They added, of course, that only their firm knew how to advertise to this maturing market.

Loss of innocence

Companies like Benton and Bowles used such statistics as evidence to prove that girls were getting older, younger. The reasoning that young girls were getting older was propped up by an increasing fear that children were losing their childhood. Childhood has been constructed as being a period of innocence, and the loss of this innocence equates to a loss of childhood. Adding fuel to this argument social commentators such as Neil Postman (1982), David Elkind (1981) and Marie Winn (1984) all began to lament the loss of childhood. These authors argued that childhood innocence was compromised as children were not only increasingly beginning to look like adults, but act like adults. Such claims were buttressed by moral outrages at the dissolving boundaries between the adult world and the child's. The dissolving boundaries was manifested in the rise of latchkey kids (children who looked after themselves while their parents were at work), the realities of child abuse and, according to Postman, television presenting ideas and discourses that failed to separate the adult from the child (1982, 101). We were told that the mysteries and secrets of adulthood were no longer specifically for adults and children's knowledge of these essentially eroded the nature of childhood. Postman proclaimed the loss of childhood and reported that there were no longer games, food or clothes specifically designed for children and, as a result, children were lacking in a sense of shame around sex. They were disrespectful to their elders and increasingly committed criminal acts. Once the secrets

and mysteries of adulthood were taken away, the two life stages of adulthood and childhood inevitably collapsed into one (Postman 1982, 99). Childhood innocence was declared lost by Postman and his peers, and children were forced to grow up faster than they did previously.

This social rhetoric that highlighted the loss of childhood held a symbiotic relationship with advertising. On one hand, it bolstered the arguments that children were no longer special and, therefore, no longer needed to be protected. This rhetoric justified the position that young consumers did not need special consideration by such governmental forces as the CRTC, FCC or the FTC. At the same time, the-loss-of-childhood argument also fuelled the advertising industry's ability to approach the young as independent consumers, since childhood was no longer a special, protected space. Children, especially those at the older end of childhood, were savvy, sophisticated and already corrupted according to the debates of Postman and his peers. If children were getting older younger, then the older child was no longer a child, but clearly a young adolescent who should be treated as such. The pre-adolescent was no longer a child since children were older these days. This strategy of age slippage or the blurring of chronological age and social maturity allowed marketers to use the targeting of older child or pre-adolescent as a way of skirting the debates on marketing to children.

Consumer socialization

While governments, child welfare advocates and the industries of children's culture were debating the increasing commercialization of childhood, academic research in the fields of child development and developmental psychology merged with consumer studies to understand how children come to consume. James McNeal blazed a trail in studying children as consumers in the late 1960s and by the 1970s other academics joined became interested in the development of the child as a consumer. Instead of focusing on the impact of the commercialization of childhood, these scholars were interested in finding out how children actually became consumers. Part of being able to exploit the child as consumer was knowing how the child became a consumer. In a 1974 article published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, Scott Ward argued for the need to study children and their socialization into the role of consumers. Ward defined consumer socialization as the "processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their function as consumers in the marketplace" (as quoted in Roedder John 1999, 184). Ward's article was timely, coinciding with the

escalating debates on children and television advertising being fought during the mid-1970s and early 1980s. Ward's forceful declaration and subsequent definition gave focus to an emergent field of study on children as consumers and was part of the circuitry that legitimized the child as a competent consumer.

Using Ward's article on consumer socialization in 1974 as a starting point, Deborah Roedder John has traced 25 years of research on consumer socialization. Her rigorous study concludes that not only are children avid consumers, socialized into this role from an early age, but that throughout childhood "children develop the knowledge, skills and values they will use in making and influencing purchases now and in the future" (Roedder John 1999, 201).

The Roedder John study offers many valuable insights into the process of consumer socialization. First, it suggests that children are slowly integrated into the marketplace as consumers from an early age.⁵⁰ A second insight into the Roedder John article is that it reveals the biases of the field. She traces 25 years of research on children's development as consumers (1999, 182) and illustrates how researchers began to legitimize children as consumers throughout the late 1970s and 1980s. In this research, children's development as consumers is conceptualized as a developmental process that proceeds through a series of stages as children mature from birth to adolescence to the final stage of being an adult consumer. As children develop and mature cognitively and socially, their consumer knowledge, skills and values also mature. In such research, consumer socialization is aligned with childhood development. The socialization of a child to the competencies of being a consumer is understood in terms of the cognitive development and social maturation of children from birth to adolescence. Ultimately, this means that not only is consumer socialization positioned as an innate aspect of childhood development, but that the development of children is comprehended according to the logics of the marketplace.

Third, Roedder John's summary of the field of consumer research concludes that children's consumer socialization has been conceptualized as children passing through three stages that correspond with the stages of cognitive and social development children mature through as they become adults. She proposes that consumer

⁵⁰ James McNeal also makes such an argument and contends that that children "master the basic consumer skills they will use all their lives" before they enter school (McNeal and Chyon-Hwa 1993, 34).

socialization “be viewed as a developmental process that proceeds through a series of stages as children mature in to adult consumers” (185). Roedder John contends that children move through three states of consumer socialization, the perceptual stage (ages three to seven), the analytical stage (ages seven to 11) and the reflective stage (11 to 16). These three stages loosely correspond with the categorization of the youth markets as the child market, the pre-adolescent/tween and the teen. These categories also parallel the divisions in psychology of childhood, middle childhood and adolescence. This reifies the ideas of three stages and adds to the dialogue that there is a unique middle stage of development, separate from the child/perceptual stage and the adolescent/reflective stage.

Conceptually, the Roedder John article reveals how this field of research has naturalized consumption. Each of these three insights work to naturalize consumption by tying consumption to the seemingly innate progressions of child development; the child learns these skills early and consumer skills are part of the innate process of development, in which the child passes through three distinct stages. These arguments reified consumption as an inherent component of development. This type of argument was set against national debates occurring simultaneously in regards to the pressure by child advocates to protect innocent, gullible children from the manipulative pressures of the corporate media. The body of research summarized by Roedder John countered the arguments posed by child advocates for the need for governmental protection of children. At the same time, it enhanced the legitimacy of the child as a *bona fide*, competent consumer.

However, the Roedder John article also reveals much about the legitimization of the tween as a specific moment in the life course of consumers. While Roedder John failed to use the term pre-adolescent or tween, she failed to label any of the three categories beyond the naming of the stages - perceptual stage, analytical stage and reflective stage - perhaps in recognition that child, tween (pre-adolescent) and teen labels are tied to their definition as markets. Her analysis does allow for further depth in understanding the tween as a particular moment in the development of the knowledge, skills and values necessary to be a consumer. Much of the research that Roedder John draws upon focuses on the psychological developments of children with very little emphasis on the physiological development and, in doing so, positions the middle stage (what she terms the analytical stage) of childhood as a period of “great cognitive and social change”. Although surprisingly, this cognitive and social change is not connected

to the physiological changes of puberty as Roedder John does not reference bodily changes. This stage, she suggests, “contains some of the more important developments in terms of consumer knowledge and skills” (187). These important developments include a shift to a more “sophisticated understanding of the marketplace, a more complex set of knowledge about concepts such as advertising and brands, and a new perspective that goes beyond their own feelings and motives” (187). Children in the analytical stage:

... exhibit a thoughtfulness in their choices, considering more than just a single perceptually salient attribute and employing a decision-making strategy that seems to make sense given the task environment. As a result, children are more flexible in the approach they bring to making decisions, allowing them to be more adaptive and responsive. These tendencies also emerge in the way children try to influence and negotiate for desired items. The approach is more adaptive, based on their new-found ability to think from the perspective of a parent or friend and adapt their influence strategy accordingly (187).

In 1981, *Marketing Magazine* reported on a study completed in 1975 by a group of psychologists at the University of British Columbia, which suggested that:

... age seven or eight is an important breakpoint in children's reaction to commercials. Before that age, they show confusion about what commercials try to do. Older children, on the other hand, are more sophisticated in their reactions, understanding advertising purposes and are more cautious even sceptical, in their evaluation of many commercials (Marney 1981, 16).

An added bonus to catering to the tween was that she was more attentive to advertising than the teen. Tweens could be counted on to remember the important details of commercials, according to the same article. Nine to 12-year-olds are more attentive of commercials and have a better understanding of the abstract nature of commercials, while four to eight-year-olds often forget the brand or the message of the commercial as they have poor memories and short attention spans” (Marney 1981, 16).

Reading between the lines, the skills that Roedder John outlines would have been of great interest to the advertising/marketing industries. In the analytical stage, the child consumer would be able to make choices based on brands and advertising (a current market, to use McNeal's terminology). But girls in this stage are also able to adapt their arguments in lobbying others to purchase those goods for them (what McNeal termed an influential market) (1964; 1998). It is easy to see why there was

increasing interest in the tween girl and what she could offer the marketplace as a market, a customer and an audience.

The union between children's marketing and developmental psychology is cemented in the field of consumer research. The academic field of consumer research provides valuable information for the retail/merchandising industries as well as the advertising/marketing industries. The research detailed by Roedder John on consumer socialization was written only from the perspective utilizing such knowledge in ways that expand children's roles as consumers. These studies were not about how to give children the skills to consume responsibly, to deal with the heightened intensity in which they were being approached as consumers, or how to negotiation the pressures of engaging in a consumer culture. Instead, the works focus on how to sell more to children. This research works as part of the circuitry that validates children as consuming subjects, as it is disseminated to a wide audience that includes advertisers and marketers. The research outlined by Roedder John is part of the circuitry that frames the tween girl as a "female consuming subject", to use Cook and Kaiser's terms (Cook and Kaiser 204, 211). Developmental psychology added an important voice of authority to the positioning of the child as a competent consumer. As part of a bigger whole, the legitimization of the child as a consumer as validated by developmental psychology, worked tangentially with the deregulation of the mediascape to solidify the child's place in the mediated marketplace. Child psychology and market research that naturalized children's consumption and their consumer habits along with the positioning the tween as an older child, allowed advertisers and marketers to dampen some of resistance to this commodification of childhood.

Feminism and the changing family

While the child was being legitimized as a consumer by the media, government and scholars, the position of the child in the middle-class family was also changing. Much of the change had to do less with deregulation and/or the writings of Dr. Spock and more to do with the dramatic shifts in the role of mothers in middle-class families. The consolidation of the child as a consumer and the beginning of the segmentation of the tween as a viable market owes a huge debt to feminism's push to give women (read

white middle-class women)⁵¹ the opportunity to work outside of the home and the subsequent changes in family dynamics that were the result.

It was during the 1970s and 1980s that Canadian and American women joined the ranks of the white-collar business professional. The expansion of the service sector, coupled with an increase in education levels and a decrease in birth rates, along with a feminist movement that fought for the rights of women to work outside the home, drew millions of women, both single and married, into the workforce (Krahn and Lowe, 1993, 153). In 1971, Canada had the lowest level of employment at 41% for women in the 25 to 54-age bracket out of eight major industrial nations.⁵² Yet by 1990, Canada's female participation in the labour force shot up to second with 76% of women working, second to only Sweden, illustrating the drastic changes of the 1970s and 1980s. Many of the Canadian women who went to work were wives, as the workforce of married women rose from 47% in 1980 to 57% by 1986 (Ram 1990, 92).

There was also a dramatic increase in the number of women with children that worked in the 1980s in both Canada and the United States. In 1976, only 32% of women with children under the age of three worked, this skyrocketed to 56% in 1988. Meanwhile, for women with children under six, 36% worked in 1976 increasing to 56% in 1988, and 45% of women with children under the age of 16 worked in 1976, jumping to 67% by 1988 (Park 1991, 50). In the United States in 1970, 43% of women worked. By 1980 this rose to 51.5% and in 1990 57.5% (U.S. Department of Labor 2007). In a similar trend to Canada, not just single women went to work, but women with children. In 1968, less than a quarter of married mothers with children under five worked (Ellwood and Jencks 2002, 32). Between 1975 and 1990, the labour force rates of mothers with children under the age of 18 that worked rose from 47 to 67% (U.S. Department of Labor 2007).

More women working meant that the structure and dynamics of the nuclear family underwent some significant transformations during the 1970s and 1990s. The most obvious change was in the size and number of families. While the number of families since the 1950s was growing in society, the size was shrinking.⁵³ In the 1980s,

⁵¹ See bell hooks (1989) who rightly argues that poor women have always worked.

⁵² The other seven are the United States, Australia, Japan, France, West Germany, the United Kingdom and Sweden.

⁵³ Using Ontario as an example, by 1986 there were 2.4 million families, an increase of almost 1.3

large families with four or more children became less common and it became more common for a child to have no siblings. Yet, smaller families did not always translate into more freedom for parents. Offspring remained at home for longer periods of time before establishing their own households while they sought a university or college education, postponed financial pressures of living on their own (Mitchell, 1991, 10) and/or got married later in life (Vanier Institute of the Family, 1994, 39).⁵⁴ The number of childless families also increased as some couples chose to remain childless.⁵⁵

Single parent families also increased, as divorce rates climbed, mainly due to changes in divorce laws. In 1968, the Canadian government relaxed the divorce laws and proof of adultery was no longer necessary to acquire a divorce. The impact of this meant that one-quarter of all marriages that took place in the 1960s ended before their twentieth anniversaries in the 1980s; meaning close to one third of all children born in the early 1960s to late 1970s would see their parents divorce (Barnard, Cosgrove and Welsh 1998, 64). In 1986, divorce laws were relaxed even more and Canadians saw another increase in rates (Barnard et. al. 1998, 64). By 1991, the number of divorcees in Canada had more than doubled from approximately half a million divorcees in 1981 to 1.3 million in 1991 and approximately one in seven families were defined as lone-parent families (Financial Post Canadian Markets 1984, 97; Financial Post Canadian Markets 1993, 55). In the United States, prior to 1960, divorces were fairly rare but between 1960 and 1980 the divorce rate almost doubled (Ellwood and Jencks 2002, 7). During the 1980s, the number of families with one parent rose steadily from 12.6 million in 1981 to just over 16 million in 1991 (US Census Bureau 2004). The most dramatic change in the statistics was an increase of the number of families in which the mother never married. It rose from 1.8 million in 1981 to 5 million in 1991 (US Census Bureau 2004).

million from 1951. The families of the 1980s were not the same families of the 1950s; the family became smaller as the number of children per family declined from 2.15 in Ontario in 1976 to 1.88 in 1986 (Mitchell 1991, 10).

⁵⁴ Between 1980 and 1990, the average age of first-time grooms and first-time brides increased by over two years. Grooms were 25.7 years of age in 1980 and 27.9 in 1990, while brides were 23.5 years in 1980 and 26.0 in 1990 (Vanier Institute of the Family 1994, 39).

⁵⁵ The number of childless families began to rise. Between 1976 and 1986, there was a 27.5% increase in the total number of families in Canada without children and a 25.4% increase in Ontario. This increase is reflected in the rise of the proportion of childless families to those with children increasing 2% in Ontario, from 31% of families in 1976 being childless to 33% in 1986 (calculation by the author, Mitchell 1991,10).

This increase could be partly due to shifting attitudes in premarital sex and new opportunities for single mothers to garner positions in the workforce.

Despite these dramatic statistics, not all of these children grew up with single parents. For many of the children who witnessed the dissolution of their parent's marriage, the single parent family was often not a permanent situation. More than half of the children who turned 10 in the 1980s and had witnessed their parents' divorce would see their mothers enter into another co-habiting or martial relationship. One in five of these children experienced a second separation, and one in 10 had the experience of living in a blended family (Marcil-Gratton in Glossop 1994, 24). For an increasing majority of children, family had become a relatively unstable, unpredictable, fluid experience (Glossop 1994, 24).

The changing shape of the family had a number of consequences on the lives of the girls who are later defined as the tween segment. Smaller families could mean fewer friends and playmates in their neighbourhoods. But it also could mean more space in the home and, of more interest to marketers, a larger proportion of the family income available for each child (Barnard et. al. 1998, 64). In a dual income household with only a few children, young people had greater access to the increased family resources. They also had greater access to the resources of their extended family. In the 1980s, people were living longer, which meant that more young people grew up having grandparents. But, with the trend of smaller families, grandparents had fewer number of grandchildren to spend their money on. The demographic realities of a changing population meant that more money was funnelled down to young people.

In the beginning of the 1980s, it was the "trickle-down" benefits of the two-income household with fewer children and more grandparents that bolstered the increase of the youth markets. The other promising element of the tween girl was that she had her own money to spend. While it may have not have been a lot of money, she had no bills to pay or other financial commitments, so the tween was a very lucrative customer. *Advertising Age* highlighted this . In the United States, the average allowance of six to 11-year-olds in 1987 was \$3, which amounts to roughly \$150 a year. "If you multiply this by the number of children in the U.S. it amounts to almost \$4.7 billion" (Lowry 1988, 33). Similar conclusions were drawn in Canada. A survey in Kitchener revealed that the average income that a teenager aged 14 to 15 had per week was \$38 and that the 10-years-old had \$11. This money was mostly discretionary and frivolous, used for clothing, personal care, record, hobbies, toys/games (Marney 1987b, 10). According to

Statistics Canada, in 1986 there were almost 1.8 million 10 to 14-year-olds in Canada (Statistics Canada 1992). If each of these had, on average, \$11 a week they constituted a potential \$1 billion a year plus market (calculation by author).

Having and spending their own money was important to girls. Kim, for example, vividly recalls her first babysitting job as “a big deal because I had my own money to spend.” Susan also indicated such feelings:

It was important to have my own money. I babysat and had a paper route. I didn't get an allowance so having my own money meant that I could go to the movies, go skiing or buy the stuff that I wanted.

Most of the girls interviewed, like Susan and Kim, earned extra money by babysitting or delivering newspapers. Having money signalled a shift for these girls as it meant a certain freedom from parents in being able to make their own decisions as young consumers, often decisions they knew were different from what their parents would make. This was an early indicator of a separation and autonomy from parents. Lorna, for example, recalls:

... going with my first paycheque to Hazleton Lanes in Toronto and going right to the Ralph Lauren store and buying my \$75 blue and white stripped polo button down shirt and going to Club Monaco and buying \$85 jeans. I went with my friends and bought exactly what I wanted. My mom would never have let me spend that kind of money on a shirt and a pair of jeans.

Recognizing the potential of this market in 1988, MuchMusic published a magazine targeted specifically to the pre-adolescent market called *Sass*. The promotional material highlighted the spending power of the tween. In promoting the magazine, MuchMusic described *Sass* as a:

... new magazine for young people. Stats [*sic*] Canada says there's over three million of them out there, hotly pursued by over a million or so pre-teens. Know what? They're the only group in the country whose income is 100% discretionary. It's a huge market (MuchMusic 1987, 7-10).

By 1991 marketers touted that tween girls shopped at least three times a week and saved 30% of their money for large items, which was more than “little kids or teenagers” (McLaughlin 1991, 63). With the lure of “100% discretionary income” and the promise that tweens saved more money than children or teens, coupled with an increase in access to family resources, it is no wonder that marketers, advertisers and retailers

began to shift their gaze to this demographic and consider it separately from the child and the teen.

The children's clothing industry was well aware of the changing dynamics of the middle-class families and, in particular, the increase of working mothers. The magazine reported that these new configurations would save the industry from the slump that it underwent in the 1970s when birth rates were low:

The changing lifestyle of today's mother is helping the children's segment ... She's older, in her 30s, and having her first child. She has less children but she's earning more money. There's a big wave coming and companies in the path should do very well (Sloan 1981, 28).

This theme was reiterated two years later in 1983 when *Earnshaw's* suggested via an article titled "The Delayed Family: Is Later Better". The subtitle of the article informed readers that "statistics clearly show that women are waiting longer to have children - and many think that bodes well for high-end children's wear retailers" (1983, 167). The article also reports that the trend for dual-income families who started their families later and had fewer children translates in to the ability for children's wear retailers to sell "branded, high-quality children's wear" ("Is the delayed family" 1983, 169).

Again in 1985, *Earnshaw's* reported on the changing demographics of the baby boomers who were coming of age, starting families and becoming the children's wear customer of the 1980s (Van Olinda and Furtak 1985, 98). "They are the first generation of parents to fully reflect the radical change in the lifestyle of women that is a product of the women's liberation movement of the 60s." The authors stated that these two social changes in combination "have astute manufacturers and retailers scrambling to reassess their merchandise mixes and marketing plans" (Van Olinda and Furtak 1985, 98). The baby boomer as a parent and a shopper is "different in values, attitudes and desires from the consumer 10 or 15 years ago" (Van Olinda and Furtak 1985, 99). Parents having fewer children and waiting longer have more disposable income, are more "cosmopolitan" and are "more aware" and they are more concerned about fashion (Van Olinda and Furtak 1985, 99).

It is clear that the children's apparel industry was banking on this new female consumer to spend more money on her children. Instead of worrying about the fact that there were fewer children, the industry saw an opportunity to parlay this into selling more expensive children's items. Older mothers with fewer children were more likely to buy

higher-end clothes for their children. But these articles were focused on the future; the idea that a new wave was coming and that the industry had better be prepared. The children of the baby boomers were the girls that became the tweens of the 1990s, not the 1980s. Despite this, these articles are still relevant to this study as they give us a peek into how the apparel industry saw the modern mother.

While the working mother provided the family with greater economic resources, the cost to the family was a loss in domestic labour. Initially working women were promised they could have it all, walking to their professional jobs in a business suit and Reeboks after dropping their children off at daycare. But the myth of the “Supermom” who could balance work and family life began to unravel under the tremendous stress of trying to maintain both worlds. While middle-class women were going to work in droves, the gender equality in the division of labour within the domestic sphere did not keep pace with the rising employment rate. Many employed wives often had to work what Arlie Hochschild calls the “second shift” in the home. After finishing a full day of work, women returned home to cook, clean and look after the children, completing the domestic chores that their mothers and grandmothers did as full-time housewives (Hochschild as quoted in Krahn and Lowe, 1993, 158).

For working women in dual-income families the demands of employment were high. The pressure to work late coupled with long commutes from the suburbs on snarled highways to the various industrial and business centres meant little time for parents to complete household chores. In order to withstand these pressures, often their children were left to pick up the slack, undertaking such tasks as grocery shopping, cleaning the house and making meals. It was the chore of grocery shopping that was of particular importance in the discovery of tweens. Marketers were very interested in the fact that the children of the family, particularly daughters, were given more buying power within the domestic sphere.

Seventeen magazine had always been aware of young teenage women as a potential market for domestic goods. Since its inception in the 1940s, the magazine recognized girls as both present and future shoppers for the family, but the 1980s were different. With the rise of working women, more of the family shopping was left to the daughters. In a study conducted specifically for the magazine in 1979, teenage girls took care of 35% of their families’ food shopping, up from 25% in a 1959 study (Yovovich, 1982, M6). *Seventeen* informed marketers how to catch these young girls by taking out full-page spreads in such publications as *Advertising Age*, informing a wide

range of marketers of young women's new purchasing power and, of course, suggesting that *Seventeen* magazine was the vehicle to reach these girls. With ads that stated such statistics as "nearly half of all teenage girls have their own cookbooks" and "over 95% [of girls] are baking cakes and cookies every month." Teens, the magazine told potential advertisers, "were the perfect market to target" and besides, it reminded them, "with 66% of today's mothers at work, teenage girls have more financial responsibility than ever before" (Yovovich 1982, M1). Family shopping by teens increased as the decade progressed. In 1986, another *Seventeen* study concluded that 60% of 13 to 19-year-old girls do family food shopping "quite a bit". In Canada, teens spent an average of one-and-a-quarter hours a week grocery shopping to prepare an average of 13 meals each week for themselves and their families" (Marney 1986a, 25). Even Shopper's Drug Market targeted teenage girls since, according to Jerome Shore, an account director at the advertising firm for Shoppers Drug Mart, "a greater number of teenage females are handling the family shopping because of the increase in working-mother households" (1987, 24).

Teens were an important market since even when they were not actually buying the family purchases, they were influencing what brands the family was consuming. Writing in the Canadian trade publication *Marketing Magazine*, Jo Marney states: "mothers testify that their teenage daughters significantly influence what brands and products end up in the family shopping cart now that more mothers are working outside the home" (1986a, 25). Companies wanted to ensure that they captured the teen market since indications suggested that "shopping patterns and store preference for such types of goods are established during the teen years" (Marney 1987a, 7). In 1988, *Seventeen* highlighted the power of the consumers to advertisers:

She's seventeen and she's the other woman. Her life changed when her other started working. She has more responsibility. And more influence. She's the other woman in the house. She's one of the 80% of young women who shop for family food, 90% who make brand decisions. The *Seventeen* woman, if you're not reaching her, you're missing the other female head of the household (1988, 9).

As the decade progressed the attention that teenage girls received as consumers of household products began to creep downward toward to younger teenage girls. By the end of the decade, young girls were visible in the nation's grocery stores. In response to the increasing pressures on working parents time, 'tweens not just teens were frequenting supermarkets and convenience stores making the brand decisions

previously made by housewives” (Cuneo 1989, 84). The awareness of increasing buying power of the tween customer was a sentiment echoed two years later by Peter Zollo of Teenage Research Unlimited. According to Zollo:

... one-third of 12 to 15-year-olds do the family’s grocery shopping on a weekly basis. Parents give them a list that says “mayonnaise”, but they have to pick the brand. People used to say this group wasn’t reachable but now they see they just have to know how to catch them (as quoted McLaughlin 1991, 63).

Zollo’s observations are confirmed in the interviews. Most women remember going, or as one interviewee put it, “being dragged” to the grocery stores. But they did not stand idly by the shopping cart, they helped pick food off the shelves, or lobbied to get their own particular brand of cereal or shampoo. As one interviewee remembered: “I went grocery shopping to protect my interests. If I didn’t go, my mom would just buy whatever was cheapest” (Janet).

Discovery of the tween

By the end of the 1980s, Madison Avenue had detected the rise of young girls, not just teens, in the nation’s stores and in true capitalist spirit recognized tweens as a valuable marketing opportunity. By 1989, this “discovery” was making national press. In an article in *US News and World Report*, journalist Alice Z. Cuneo, who first wrote about tweens in 1987, pointed out that the 25 million “tweens, from nine to 15-year-olds, (were) no longer viewed as the \$2 allowance crowd”. Instead, they bought or influenced over \$45 billion worth of merchandise a year (Cuneo 1987, 51). One of the biggest pushes to recognize tweens as a distinct market comes from a growing awareness that tween girls had access to a huge amount of the family resources. According to Cuneo’s earlier article, the first companies to target the group in the 1980s were not just the fashion marketers and entertainment equipment manufactures such as Sony “but food-product marketers (were) also interested in the tween market” (Cuneo 1987, 51). Part of this was tied to what Juliet B. Schor calls a “dramatic upsurge in kids’ influence power” as the “authoritarian mom”, who adamantly refused to buy her children pre-sweetened cereal no matter how hard her children would lobby for it gave way to a more a permissive, ambivalent mom who succumbed to the desires of her children (Schor 2004, 42), out of the guilt or exhaustion from trying to balance work and family. Or, perhaps, it was a consequence of a shift in parenting styles, influenced by the writings of Dr. Spock

in which the child is given more autonomy in the family. Either way, the girl was left to make many of the purchasing decisions her mother once made.

While it took until the 1980s for the packaged goods industry to recognize the agency of the pre-adolescent consumer, this was not new territory for the children's apparel industry which had acknowledged the agency of the pre-adolescent consumer in the late 1950s. By the 1980s, the recognition of the agency of girl consumers was even more profound. A 1980s' ad for Wranglers proclaimed:

Yesterday a child, today a young lady with definite ideas about what she'll wear. A transition Wrangler handles beautifully. Designed to appeal to her growing sense of fashion and styled to fit even finicky tastes. No wonder hard-to-please kids and their moms choose Wrangler (1980, 19).

There were many ads similar to this one which presented the young junior customer as interested in clothes and fashion, finicky and with a high amount of autonomy over what she will buy. However, moms were still part of the equation in that they still controlled the purse strings. Retailers and merchandisers had to appeal to both moms and the girls themselves. Mothers were not completely ready to either relinquish control over their daughters' purchases or what clothes they wore. In the children's apparel industry, catering to the pre-adolescent girl presented many challenges as already discussed.

This discussion focuses on the fact that mothers were not ready to completely let go of control over their daughters. For advertisers, retailers and manufacturers, it was unclear who the actual customer was, the mother who controlled the purse strings or the daughter who lobbied for particular goods? The difficulty in answering such a question is that the pre-adolescent girl had some of the autonomy and sovereignty of her older teenage sister, but she was still a child and under the influence and control of her mother.

However, there was recognition that the tween consumer was exercising her own choices and power. Many merchandise companies played it safe by telling retailers that they appealed to both customers, the parents (mothers) who had economic control and their daughters who were fickle and demanded stylish clothes. *Earnshaw's* exclaimed: "Although the parents don't make the purchase decision for the girl this age, the parents do control the purse strings" ("Young generations" 1980, 52). As Ann Harris co-owner of Penbrooke Alley, a children's clothing store that catered to mainly to the girl 7-14 and preteen sizes in Greensboro, North Carolina, states that since girls are fickle, they listen

to one radio station today and another tomorrow. It is easier to “go after the mother for sales. Mother[s] still control the purse strings for the 7-14 girls” (“The youth population” 1983, 247).

The Lawman Company described its customer as the “The Lawman Girl. She knows what she wants. She knows Lawman is her look. And her parents feel that when it comes to fashion – Nothing is too good for her” (Lawman 1987, 59). The accompanying picture was of a young girl, leaning against a brick wall, a coat casually clasped in her fingers, staring defiantly out at the camera. It is the imagery of a women’s magazine. The girl is wearing jeans and a t-shirt with slight indications of breasts. She was not a child, nor a fully mature teenager, but she is not a young girl either. She is, Lawman states, a girl who “knows what she wants”.

In reading through these advertisements, it is important to remember that these ads have all come from *Earnshaw’s* magazine. The magazine’s audience was the children’s apparel industry, mainly the retailers and manufacturers, most often retailers. In appealing to the retailers, the manufacturer’s ads in *Earnshaw’s* functioned to define and produce the market and, in doing so, were part of the circuitry that crystallized the girls’ market. These ads would have been different from the ones targeted to the girls themselves or their mothers, and have to be read slightly differently. Instead the ads worked to reassure retailers of the value of their customer (both the mother and the daughter). But the tastes and styles of girls were not completely predictable, making the tween market volatile and untrustworthy, so manufacturers worked to encourage retailers that while their clothing appealed to girls, their mothers were still in charge of their purchases and could be counted on to make good sound investments in quality brand names.

The emphasis on fashion was an attempt to appeal to the styles and tastes of girls in recognition the agency of young girls in the marketplace. This new emphasis can be defined using Cook’s term “pediocularity”. Similar to the child in the 1930s, girls’ views on clothing were privileged over the mothers “making it the basis for authority and action”(Cook 2004, 67). While the mother had to be appeased, what mattered first and foremost was that the clothes appealed to the girls’ sense of fashion and style. The design of both clothes and retail spaces catered to the aesthetic desires of the tween girl.

The power that girls had to influence their mothers was noticed by the girls themselves who learned how to wield this power. Girls strived to exercise power over

their clothing choices, the two critical points being where to go shopping and what to buy. Sometimes the power came with careful negotiation and lobbying. Dorie recalls begging her parents to take her to the Cotton Ginny store in Toronto, which was over an hour away. In order to get her parents to agree, Dorie remembers negotiating with them for weeks, promising to complete such tasks as cleaning her room if they took her. Power came in other forms, sometimes just sheer pressure. Kim vividly recalls the time that she “made” her mother drive on a busy Toronto highway to go to Fairview Mall.

She hated driving on the highway. But I made her go to Fairview. Her knuckles were white and I remember her gripping the steering wheel with these white knuckles.

Power also came in the form of manipulation, nagging and sheer persuasion.

In grade six, I desperately wanted a Cabbage Patch Kid doll. We begged my mom for one, she searched high and low, finally putting her name on a waiting list at Zellers (Kim).

Bev recalls trying on a pair of jeans while shopping with her mom for a back-to-school outfit. She recalls being in the change room and promising herself that “there was no way I was leaving that store without those pants” (Bev). One can imagine the type of pressure she must have placed on her mother to ensure that did not happen. Of course, daughters did not always win. Bev, the same interviewee, recalled one such occasion when she did not win.

I remember in grade four or five wanting a pair of rainbow painter pants. I can’t remember how much they were. I think they were like \$30 or something like that and my mom was like ‘no way, way too expensive’, there was no bending and I was pissed.

Girls like Kim and Bev were discerning customers who were increasingly becoming intelligent producers in control (to a degree) of their own representations. By 1992, the power of the tween girl was fully recognized by the advertising industry, a situation acknowledged in an article on tweens in *American Demographics*. The author noted that, “Today’s tweens are different in one important way; they take far more responsibility for themselves” (Waldrop 1992, 4).

The tween girl was gaining consumer sovereignty. She had some control over her clothing purchases and she was interested in fashion. This was drastically different than the development of the children’s apparel market at the time. During the 1980s, young urban professionals were beginning to have children and the children’s clothing

market was flourishing as yuppie moms and dads shopped in fashionable stores, buying clothes that appealed to their own fashion aesthetic. In the trade press this was referred to as “adultifying kids clothes” or the children-as-adults trend” as Friel labelled it (1998, 46). By the late 1980s, designer clothing lines such Ralph Lauren Polo, Liz Claiborne and Esprit, as well as the Gap, all reached out to the children’s market hoping their lines would catch “on as well with kids as it ha[d] with adults” (Friel 1988, 49). Friel suggested that the reason for this trend was that “Baby boom parents often live their unfulfilled childhood fantasies via their kids” (1988, 49).

While kids were being dressed as adults, pre-adolescent girls distanced themselves from their parents’ control (at least as consumers) and they retreated from the power of the advertising industry. Peers were privileged over advertisements in being able to influence girls’ culture. Retailers recognized the power of the peer culture for girl consumers. In an article in *Earnshaw’s*, the owner of Scribbles, a store catering solely to the preteen market, explained the influence that girls had on each other and their purchasing power.

Our best advertisement is the girls themselves. They see new outfits when other girls wear them to school, and then they come in to see what we have. We also do fashion shows in the stores. Those attract both the girls and their mothers. We advertise in the junior high newspaper and in other special things (Clepper 1982, 152).

Joe Austin and Michael Willard suggest that the peer group has become the major institution of socialization for youth during the twentieth century, and potentially has a greater influence than any other institution (1998, 6). The influence of peers was constantly reinforced in the interviews. Many of the subjects interviewed vividly recalled purchasing an important item of clothing or goods copied from a peer or sometimes an older sibling who was deemed “cooler” than themselves. In every case, the interviewee recalled the full name of the individual and was able to describe in detail what that person wore and did to warrant the title of “cool”. In the social hierarchy of girls’ culture, status was based partly on clothes and style.⁵⁶ Gaining this status was a highly contentious endeavour for most girls as there was a certain social logic to it. One of the

⁵⁶ These were not the only perquisites for status. Some interviewees also mentioned educational and athletic accomplishments, or having a unique talent or a specific attitude as other signifiers for being cool but these were never discussed with the same sense of importance as clothes and style.

key aspects of style was novelty. Status, signified by the word cool, could be conferred when someone had something first. Lorna illustrated this point quite clearly:

If there was something I knew was cool, I copied it from my sister or the kids at camp and wore it at school. Then I knew I had it first and I was cool.

Janet reiterates the role of novelty. "The goal was to become a trend-setter yourself. To get something that other people saw and wanted."

The power in the child for the girl

In order for the selling of the tween persona to be successful, the tween girl herself had to buy into it, both literally and conceptually. We can begin to answer why and how girls bought into the persona by addressing what the persona offers them. What is in it for girls to be carved out of the protective space of childhood? With the repositioning of the child as a consumer, the tween girl is legitimized as a *bona fide* consumer with her own spending power and consumption becomes a domain of freedom. However, she still is too young to be separated from her family and is seen as dependent on the family resources. The duality of having both consumer autonomy and consumer reliance gives girls the opportunity to have some control over her own representation by the market, and have power within the family economy. The mediated marketplace articulates a space where girls can both affirm their autonomy and enact power over their parents.

The tween persona also provided a resource of subjectivity for the girls. While girls did not use the term tweens (as the word tween was not used by marketers until the late 1980s and was not solidified in the public conscious until the mid 1990s, post-Spice Girls, when the world begins to use the term), the components of being a tween were lived by many girls during the 1980s. The tween plays on the tensions of childhood and teenhood, of being both and neither.

Cabbage Patch Kid dolls, for example, provided a transitional object that allowed girls to oscillate between childhood and adolescence without having to commit to either life stage. The incongruity of trying to purchase the signifiers of adulthood, such as makeup and nylons, while at the same time buying dolls, was noticed by one of the interviewees. In reference to a picture of herself at 11 years old looking very serious while wearing makeup, she makes this connection.

Andrea: Look at me here, I was wearing olive green nylons and I thought I was so grown-up. And yet in the same year I was playing with Cabbage Patch Kid dolls.

Interviewer: *Did you notice that when you were at the age?*

Andrea: Oh no, it seemed perfectly normal. Both were cool, playing with Cabbage Patch Kid dolls and also wearing makeup.

Coleco must have been aware of this ambiguous space. Their merchandise clothing had sizes in the 2-4 category but also the 7-14 range, meaning that they could easily fit a 13 or 14-year-old girl. Andrea's example shows how the vestiges of the mediated marketplace offered young girls a new language through which they could articulate new demands, concerns and desires. The media and commercial merchandise presented girls with the symbolic resources they could use in the performance of their own subjectivity. As Wærdahl suggests, and as we will see in the next Chapter, "clothes and material possession must be regarded as tools by which social identity is negotiated, tested out and developed" (2005, 204).

Conclusion

Similar to the way the child was colonized in the post-War era, it was the recognition of the economic muscle of the pre-adolescent girl that helped to forge the tween as a viable consumer demographic. Smaller families meant greater access to family resources for girls. She had both influence over family purchases and her own spending power. It was the discovery of this new access to purchasing power that propelled them to be recognized and consolidated as a market, despite the fact that they were a shrinking demographic. The push of second-wave feminist movements for women to enter into the workforce, radically reshaped the family. For women, the 1980s were, as Dow has argued, not a period of backlash to feminism but a moment of adjustment as women worked to reposition themselves within the shifting landscape of gender politics (Dow 1996, 87). Girls had to respond to the shift in family dynamics and reposition themselves within the family. Various realities such as a decrease in birth rates, for example, meant less competition for their parents' dollars and attention. Youth had access to more of their parents' money and had more influences on parents' purchases. In a dual-income household with only a few children, youth had greater access to the increased family resources. Beginning in the 1980s, it was the "trickle-

down” benefits of the two-income household with fewer children that bolstered the increase of the youth markets. Companies capitalized on the shifting youth market by framing the girls’ market as the key to establishing brand loyalties and as a means of skirting the issue of marketing to children. Ultimately, the tween is colonized as current, future and influential markets, to use McNeal’s (1964; 1998) assessment of the children’s market.

Marketing to the older child was not simply about getting them to buy a specific brand, although this was a critical component of company’s advertising strategies. Advertising and manufacturing as cultural industries worked in much more complex, multi-faceted ways to produce the girl as a consuming subject. As companies strived to sell specific goods to the tween market, they also attempted to convince tweens of the need to participate in the market economy by simultaneously promoting the values and ideologies of consuming as a whole. Advertising operated with the other industries of media culture to socialize youth into the role of a consumer. If media industries could deliver the tween to advertisers, who in turn would promote these processes at an early age, then hopefully the tween would learn to structure and organize their lives around consuming, guaranteeing the marketplace future consumers.

CHAPTER 4: SELLING COOL: DOWNAGING THE TEEN

*“Clothing has become more important to kids at an earlier age, and stature is conferred when the right brand name is on display”
(Marney 1983, 8).*

I remember the exact moment when I felt more like a teenager than a child. It was in early December of grade six; I would have been nearly 11-years-old. As I did every year, I spent a Saturday afternoon going through the *Sears Christmas Catalogue* circling everything I wanted for Christmas. I distinctly remember looking over my list and noting that for the first time in my life there was not one toy on my list; all I wanted was clothes, music and fashion accessories. At that moment, I felt that I was no longer a child, but pushing into the lower boundaries of teenagehood; I had teenage desires and made teenage demands - I wanted clothes not toys from Santa Claus.

My experience underlines how the tween girl poaches on the space of the teenager as teen aesthetics and values push downwards into the upper echelons of childhood. The expansion of the teen into the tween did not occur organically; it was forged in the circuitry of mediated marketplace as the various stakeholders responded to cultural and economic shifts in the expanding mediascape, the unreliability of the teenager of the MTV generation and a new business ethic of corporate branding. In the circuitry, media properties, market researchers, advertisers and merchandisers/retailers all attempted to cultivate the tween market according to their own agendas and needs. They produced the tween girl as an impressionable, capricious consumer who reassured businesses of a future consumer. This, of course, was exciting to young girls, such as myself, as it offered the symbolic resources necessary to transition ourselves into the celebratory aspects of teenhood.

The history of the teen market

Historically, the teen market follows a slightly different trajectory than the child market. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the market for the teenage

consumer, particularly the girls' market, percolated away without too much fanfare (Schrum 2004). More youth attended high school than in the previous century. Paula Fass paints a picture of college students embracing a distinct youth market and culture with particular patterns of consumption and tastes that began to take shape during the consumer boom of the 1920s and the jazz age of the 1930s (Fass 1978). Grace Pallidino's history on American teenagers contends that youth was an important category for retailers and manufacturers prior to the mid-twentieth century (Pallidino 1996). However, it was not until after World War II that the teenage consumer was solidified in the social imagination of the North American psyche as a separate and discrete segment of the population (Cohen 2003; Hollander and Germain 1992; Pallidino 1996). It was in the post-War era that the teenager came to be viewed as a new subculture (Danesi 1994, 3) and a distinct commercial persona.

Interest in the possibilities of a youth market began to surface in the 1940s (Brailsford, 2001) as teenagers began to be taken seriously by manufacturers, advertisers, marketers and the media. The real hero of the story of marketing to teenagers is the unlikely character of Eugene Gilbert, a former shoe salesman who at the age of 19 surmised that teens were the key to market expansion. In the 1940s, he hired a group of teenage surveyors to interview fellow teens looking for answers about their tastes and spending habits. By 1947, Gilbert had moved to New York City and established Youth Marketing Co., a prosperous research organization with such prestigious clients as Quaker Oats, Maybelline, Studebaker and United Airlines (Osgerby 2002, 19). Gilbert became the unofficial guide for the newly discovered youth culture and his market research was instrumental in shaping and defining what was meant by youth. He was featured in *Harpers*, *Newsweek* and *Advertising Age* as the guru of marketing to youth. He was quoted as stating to *Advertising Age* in an interview in 1951 that the "salient discovery is that within the past decade teens have become a separate and distinct group in society" (Gilbert in Palladino 1996, 109; Gilbert in Osgerby 2002, 19). Even though Wall Street was listening, few companies acted upon his insight, leading Gilbert to complain that everyone was talking about advertising to youth, but "only a few (did) anything about it" (Gilbert in Palladino 1996, 113), sentiments that ring similar to James McNeal's observation of the children's market in the previous Chapter.

One of the companies that was listening was the venerable girl magazine, *Seventeen*. *Seventeen* magazine was launched in 1944 as a magazine geared to

college and high school girls. It was the first of its kind (Schrum 2004, 169) and the magazine was based on an idea originally developed by its first editor, Helen Valentine, who envisioned an entire publication designed to cater specifically to teenage girls (Osgerby 2002, 18). Before *Seventeen* there were no magazines solely for girls, instead girls had to be satisfied with a few pages dedicated to her in her mother's magazines. The magazine was very profitable and, by 1945, other magazines such as *Miss America* and *Junior Bazaar* followed suit (Cook 2002, 131). These girl magazines showed teens how to be teenagers (Ashby 1985, 513; Schrum 2004, 170). They reinforced the centrality of beauty and popularity for girls with the reassurance that girls should still be dutiful daughters (Palladino 1996, 138). The lifestyle of the teenage girl was of hedonistic, carefree fun, but these girls were not to be confused with their little sisters; they were encouraged to look sophisticated and debonair.

By the 1940s, high school girls were aligning themselves with the style of dress of older college-age women and attempting to distinguish themselves from their younger sisters (Cook, 2002, 128). As part of the circuitry, the retail and fashion industries began to cater to the teen market, a move encouraged by media outlets such as *Seventeen*. Being at the forefront of the girls' market, *Seventeen* had a vested interest in defining and promoting the teen market. The magazine worked with retailers to encourage them to consider the teenage girl as a valuable market. They helped clothing promoters create fashions that were geared to teenage girls and looked good on the teen body, and they conducted market surveys that highlighted teen influences in family spending (Palladino 1996, 101-105), a strategy that continued right up until the early 1990s. The "discovery" of the teenage consumer and the subsequent growth of the teen cultural industries that followed did not happen in a complete vacuum. What Gilbert, *Seventeen* and others began to realize was that young adults were using the items of consumer culture as a means to differentiate themselves from children and adults.

Girl's magazines such as *Seventeen*, and its followers *Miss America* and *Junior Bazaar*, interpellated girls as young consumers. Advertisers were interested in the teenage girl consumer as purchaser of such products as clothes and beauty products, but also as a current and future homemaker. Similar narratives of consumption targeted to the suburban mother were also directed to the teen girl. *Seventeen* published three food columns a month and companies such as Pillsbury, Pam and Jell-O bought advertising space (Palladino 1996, 107). The magazine told young women that they were important components of the domestic sphere. Emphasis was on the role that

young women played in domestic harmony, which included participating in the household economy (Palladino 1996, 108). Having young women influence the purchase of domestic items to use in the home during their teenage years would hopefully translate to these girls making the same decisions when they became housewives and shopped for their own families. The teen girl was conceptualized as a future market as much as she was a current market. It was in *Seventeen's* interest to try to contribute to the positioning of the teen consumer as powerful consumer, both at the moment and in the future, a legacy that continued up until the early 1990s. *Seventeen* was influencing the girls themselves, telling them how to be a teen girl while working with retailers and the fashion industry to serve the girl market. In undertaking both of these roles, the magazine essentially brokered the relationship between the girl consumer and the cultural industries that served her, contributing greatly to the crystallization of the teen persona.

By the late 1950s, youth culture was slowly becoming entrenched as a legitimate force in the consumer landscape. As Dick Hebdige argues, "the teenager was invented in the period of affluence of the 1950s and its emphasis on consumption, leisure and style meshed with the milieu of the era" (1988, 22). The teen was understood as a completely separate category of identity through having a separate mode of consumption. Lee has suggested that affluent society made the teenage identity possible by opening up fertile teenage markets such as "teenage fashions, recorded music, cars and motorcycles, new forms of meeting places and centres of consumption such as clubs, cinemas and milk bars, all provided a rich source of potentially subversive cultural resources" (as quoted in Kenway and Bullen 2001, 44). Manufacturers and marketers were starting to play an "active role in shaping and disseminating the tastes, styles and attitudes of teenage America" (Osgerby 2002, 16). With the advent of rock 'n roll and the coming of age of the early baby boomers, the teen market was too much of a force to ignore. Teens became a market force and had a variety of social identities from which to choose (Palladino 1996, 137). By the late 1950s, teens were the most exciting new consumer market and virtually everyone was catering to them.

During the 1960s, the youth market increased its power and influence over the marketplace as the idea of a teen youth market developed a life of its own, a notion documented by Ian Brailsford (2001). Brailsford traces how the American media reported on the burgeoning youth market as a business concept. In the 1960s, the press was buzzing over the lucrative possibilities of a youth market. In 1961, *Newsweek*

described American teenagers as “fun worshippers” and claimed that teenagers spent over \$10 billion a year on social activities. In 1962, *Printers’ Ink* forecast that the youth market would be worth \$14 billion by 1965 and that teenagers were “willing to buy more each year, and their spending money is increasing”. In December 1962, the *Saturday Review* claimed that in three years half of America’s population would be under 25, while *Time* reported that the “teenage tide” of 22 million youngsters were the nation’s “coolest customers” with \$12 billion to spend (Brailsford 2001)⁵⁷. Advertisers listened to such claims and, by 1964, there was over \$50 million spent in the United States on advertising directed to youth (Quart 2003, 50). These flattering descriptions of the teen market in the popular press functioned as part of the circuitry that legitimized the teen as a viable consumer market while also communicating what it meant to be a teen to a generation of young people.

The excitement of the teenage demographic had taken hold. Advertisers began to slant their marketing campaigns towards teenagers based on the realization that they had a great degree of spending power and were beginning to drive the aesthetics, tastes and purchasing habits of the marketplace. Youthful models replaced the elegant middle-aged models of the 1950s and to be over 30 was considered to be “too old,” as the new ideal in advertising was to be youthful, almost boyishly slim and active (Sivulka 1998, 298).

The 1960s have been identified as a turning point in the saliency of the youth market according to Richard Tedlow (1990). Tedlow posits that Pepsi-Cola’s “Pepsi Generation” advertising campaign of the mid-60s was a critical moment as it segmented the market defining youth as a specific demographic niche. Tedlow’s argument highlights how corporations have inserted themselves into the definitions of youth. Not all scholars have accepted that Pepsi created the generation and question whether the youth market existed before Pepsi discovered it. Stanley Hollander and Richard Germain argue that age-based market segmentation has existed since the early twentieth century and that the “Pepsi Generation” was alive and well before Pepsi “publicized the generation’s birth announcement” (Hollander and Germain 1992, 100). But this argument should not downplay Pepsi’s incredible achievement in promoting and capitalizing on the youth market. Pepsi’s supposed “discovery” of the youth market was

⁵⁷ Also see Bill Osgerby (2002) who references a number of similar articles.

emblematic of an era in which youth gained purchasing power to become a powerful demographic in the public conscious and an accepted part of business culture. This was important as it showed how marketers and advertisers could work tangentially in gathering, defining and catering to specific market segments.

Part of the commercial persona of the teen was hedonistic pleasure. The iconography of the youth market sold the idioms of “youth as fun” and promoted a new consumer value system that prioritized commodity consumption and immediate gratification (Osgerby 2002, 17). Teens were allocated the responsibility of encouraging and celebrating the post-War prosperity that was promised to North Americans. Conveying this responsibility to teens was the job of the advertising industry. Advertising worked tangentially with the media industry to cultivate the tastes of teenagers as a distinct market segment. In doing so, industry tripped upon the successful formula of marketing to peoples’ behaviours and not simply based on their demographics. This new tactic pioneered lifestyle marketing that would be highly fruitful in the following decades (Osgerby 2002, 16). The lesser known sub-plot of the rise of the youth market in the post-War era is that it led to the transformation of the marketing and advertising industry, which as Osgerby argues, managed to shed its tedious conventions, that it lacked in innovation and revived itself by adopting new strategies geared to the youth market (2002, 22).

The development of the teen market in the 1950s and ‘60s can also be considered for the privileging of psychographic assessments over basic demographic analysis by marketers, an argument established by Bill Osgerby. Osgerby makes the insightful link between the interpellation of the teen market as pleasure-seeking and fun, and the development of the marketing industry. Mobilizing the teen consumer as a new discrete market segment with its own hedonistic lifestyle and youthful aesthetic pushed the marketing industry to think beyond the cold empirical research of demographics and hold onto a new formula that privileged lifestyle, attitudes and values (Osgerby 2002, 16-17).

The positioning of the teen as carefree, pleasure seeker covered up something darker and more profound as hedonism gave way to rebellion. Since part of the rhetoric of hedonism was a rejection of the social and cultural expectations placed on youth by those in power, it did not take long for the aesthetics of pleasure to erode into those of rebellion. Teen culture transposed into the counter-culture movements of the 1960s. The cynical, long-haired hippie usurped the sun-kissed California surfer. Youth culture

began to embody a resistance to the conformity of the 1950s and early 1960s as youth was valorized as the celebration of social change (Frank 1997, 13). Marketers responded by co-opting the rebellious anthems of the youth counter-culture, integrating them into their advertising campaigns. The teen that rebelled was the commercial persona of the teen. Marketers and advertisers were not interested in the fact that many teenagers were not part of the counter-culture and young people that did not participate in the movement were virtually ignored (Frank 1997, 108). Youth were apprehended as the force of the counter-culture.

The dual framings of the teen as hedonistic and carefree, alongside rebellious and nonconformist, were in the best interests of both the businesses that were desperate to find new avenues for consumption, and the marketing/advertising industries that were looking to legitimize themselves as worthy enterprises. The construction of youth marketing in the 1950s and early 1960s encapsulated North American post-War prosperity as the promotion of carefree, hedonist spending of the teenager signalled a new direction of consumerism that prioritized instant gratification over long-term goals (Frank 1997, 2). Justifying the need for people to buy more things was an easy sell in such milieu. The celebration of consumption continued as hedonism was undercut by rebellion. Inbred in the values of counter culture was the notion that conventional items and ways of doing things were outdated and part of the establishment. The scepticism and distrust of youth to authoritarian business practices meant that these conventions needed to be replaced by something that was younger, hipper and more revolutionary. Ultimately, this sped up the endless cycles of transgression and rebellion in which goods and products became outdated. Instead of producing a revolutionary change, this model actually fuelled consumer culture as obsolescence was an easy sell for business firms (Frank 1997, 31).

The dictates of the youthful, carefree, hedonistic consumer encouraged the creative revolution of advertising that flourished in the 1960s, as advertising had to reflect the changing times. The revolutionary attitudes of the young found their way into advertising. Advertising that was creative and fresh (code words for youthful) was in demand as conventional advertisements had to find new ways to communicate with the young, anti-authoritarian audience. This audience did not have a lot of time or patience to deal with the glut of information used in the dull ads of the previous decades (Leiss, Kline, Jhally and Botterill 2005; Sivulka 299, 1998). In harnessing the tone of the counter-culture movements, advertising became more imaginative and advertisers

moved from being viewed as the sleazy hucksters of the post-War era to creative geniuses (Frank 1997, 55, Osgerby 2002, 17). It was appealing to the shifting lifestyles, values and attitudes of the youth market that facilitated the achievements of so many companies and helped to solidify marketing as a legitimate component of a business plan.

During the late 1970s, the insatiable love for the teenager died down as the baby boomers grew older, went to college and headed out to the workforce. Following this cohort, advertisers and marketers shifted their attention to the lucrative 18-34 age bracket. By the late 1970s, many marketing companies had abandoned younger consumers (Advertising Age 1982, M2) and youth were often ignored as a market (Ritchie, 1995, 19).

The commodification of the teen market in the post-War era changed the way youth was understood. It was with intense target marketing that the teen consumer became more than a simple demographic based on age. Youth was packaged and sold as a lifestyle, not just a psycho-biological stage of growth and development, but a state of mind. Stuart Ewen (1976) has suggested that the roots of this lie in the early twentieth century when youth was just beginning to become both a powerful ideological tool in business and a saleable commodity. As the teen was catered to more and more, and as the twentieth century progressed, teen tastes and aesthetics began to drive such culture industries as fashion, music and television (Danesi 2003; Frank 1997; Osgerby 2002). Marcel Danesi calls this the teenaging of culture (2003), built upon the myth that young is good and old is bad, consumers are told that they can hold onto their youth by adopting a young attitude and, of course, by purchasing the requisite items that go with this state of mind. Youth get packaged and sold as a viable market, audience and consumer, but also as an aesthetic, lifestyle and mindset.

The historical growth and development of both the teen market and teen identity was about more than simply catering to a growing demographic. In the mid-twentieth century the teenage persona offered business culture the opportunity to expand the ideological values of consumption, hedonism and obsolescence. The media marketplace was able to sell the values of a youth culture. The teen was “discovered”, produced, defined and legitimized in the connections of the mediated marketplace. Market researchers like Eugene Gilbert, *Seventeen* magazine, Pepsi, clothing manufacturers and retailers, and the popular press such as *Newsweek* and *Time* all

contributed to the circuitry of the mediated marketplace that crystallized the teenager. The delineation of the tween owes its legacy, in part, to the teen market.

The expanding mediascape

The emergence of the tween persona is tied to the changing mediascape in the late 1970s and early 1980s. New technologies and government policies meant a drastic opening up of new media spaces. The advent of cable television and an expansion of the cable dial created new pressure on marketers to think about audiences in terms of smaller more narrowly niched cohorts, instead of wide, broad groups. Targeting youth audiences became a sure-fire means of niching audiences and the growth of cable television stations to appeal to separate categories of youth exploded. It was in this commercial environment that spaces open up for the tween girl.

The era of Reagan's deregulation of television was also an era of dramatic expansion of media in the United States and in Canada as the countries embarked on a rapid diversification of channels, ultimately challenging the commercial hegemony of both countries' major network stations. In the United States, HBO became the first national cable service in 1975, followed in 1976 by Ted Turner's WTBS (later just TBS) and the Christian Broadcast Network's CBN Cable (later the Family Channel). In 1979, Warner launched Nickelodeon and The Movie Channel and in 1980 offered Turner's Cable News Network (CNN) to round out its stable of television channels. Other programs rushed in as well, including ESPN, so that by 1980 there were 28 national programming services on the cable dial (Baughman 1992, 172-174).

In Canada, it was not until the mid-1980s that a similar type of growth and expansion was realized. In 1984, licenses for the first specialty services, MuchMusic and The Sports Network (TSN), were approved by the CRTC. Later that year the Commission also granted two more licenses to Telelatino and Chinavision, channels that catered to specific ethnic markets. In 1986, the CRTC issued a call for applications for specialty programming services. The Commission defined specialty service as "narrowcast television programming designed to reflect the particular interests and needs of different age, language, cultural, geographic or other groups in Canada" (CRTC 6840005P13 vol 13). The result was the licensing of 10 new specialty channels, nine on basic cable and one pay-TV service. These channels included YTV, the Family Channel, CBC All-News channel and Musique Plus, the French counterpart to

MuchMusic. The CRTC also approved the move of MuchMusic and The Sports Network (TSN) from pay-TV to basic cable.

In 1978, media tycoon, Ted Turner, foresaw the potential of cable television in this new market space that fractured audiences. Instead of promoting his stations based on the size of the audience they could deliver, he highlighted the quality of the audience. In a speech addressed to the American Association of Advertising Agencies, Turner stressed this point by asking, "Isn't a financial news show the best place for Merrill Lynch or Mercedes-Benz" (as quoted in Turow 1997, 38). He continued to pronounce that by the mid-1980s the big three major networks would be eclipsed with the rise of cable television, and he was right. By 1984, cable television, with its multiplicity of channels, skyrocketed to almost 50% in American homes (Pecora 2004, 19; Turow 1997, 38) and cable advertising revenue increased from \$58 million in 1980 to \$546 million in 1984 (Pecora 2004, 19). In Canada, the use of cable was more profound as Canadians were one of the world's foremost cable users with 68% of all households subscribing to cable in 1980, rising to 78% by 1990 (Hall 2001, 25). Turner's predictions were a wake-up call for the advertising industry that needed to capitalize on the increasing possibilities of approaching the audience as specialized niche markets. Social divisions ran deep in North American culture and there were plenty of possibilities, if one could skilfully exploit these divisions.

The expansion of the television dial was a means to exploit social divisions. More television stations meant more media competing for viewer's attention in the 1980s. In this highly competitive media environment, cable companies had to work hard to attract more discriminating, selective viewers in order to compete in the crowded arena; they also had to prove their audiences were worth the cost of niche advertising. Media began to research and target audiences in ways that would entice advertisers to their formats. As advertisers and marketers looked for splits or differences in the social fabric that could be exploited, media firms, in an attempt to become more attractive to advertisers, bought into these divisions and developed formats that reinforced these differences. The formats that the cable companies developed were designed to appeal to the distinct segments of the audience that advertisers perceived as key markets.

The media has been organized and produced based on the premise of its ability to appeal to certain demographics deemed lucrative by advertisers. In this symbiotic relationship with the media, advertising is a dynamic force in the development of the media. Advertisers are active lobbyists in encouraging the media to meet their needs

and orientations (Leiss et. al. 1986, 152). Advertising is not just an extension of the media, but a critical force in its development and impact on society (Leiss, et. al. 1986, 152). Since the real customer of the media is the advertiser not the audience members, the media is structured and produced to provide advertisers with valuable audiences (Meehan 1990, Smythe 1977). The entertainment industry works to develop formats that entice the demographic and lifestyle labels advertisers “equate with gold” (Turow 1997, 186). It is in the best interests of a media company to create media products that are consumed by the audiences that advertisers are willing to pay to reach.

The impact of the fractured mediascape has not gone unnoticed by cultural commentators. Many, including Leiss, Kline Jhally and Botterill (2005), Slater (1997) and Hesmondhalgh (2002), have suggested that the 1980s were a critical turning point in advertising and the media. It was the reorganization of the media and its relationship to advertising which led David Hesmondhalgh to suggest that this is one of the more remarkable transformations of the cultural industries. He contends that since 1980 “the way that the cultural industries conceive of their audiences is changing. There is greater emphasis on audience research, marketing and on addressing ‘niche’ audiences” (Hesmondhalgh 2002, 2-3).

Advertisers and the media began to utilize new tactics in “knowing” their target markets. Demographics no longer provided all the information the industries needed to “know” their consumers. Demographics were deemed too rudimentary and simplistic. Not only did they not offer enough information on the “niche” markets they were unable to explain why consumers chose one particular brand over another (Michman et. al., 2003, 11). Companies began to place their faith in the more complex logics of psychographic research. The slow and steady integration of psychographic research by the marketing and advertising industries was illustrated in 1981 when *Marketing Magazine* informed its readers that knowing the consumer, based on simply demographic data, was outdated (Marney 1981, 25, 28). Instead, the publication claimed, companies needed to research the complex realities of the consumer such as the values, needs and lifestyles; this became *du rigueur* in the industry. The popular trade magazine suggested that the values of feminism and division of household duties changed buying habits more than traditional demographic segmentations of age, income and education. The author of the article, Jo Marney, argued that traditional marketing based on demographics was being replaced by lifestyle segmentation as a better prediction of a consumer’s behaviour. Consumers at the time were seen as having more

options in terms of their lifestyle choices than their parents (Marney 1981, 25, 28). A similar message was repeated in 1987 in an article that cited Michael Williams, a speaker at the Canadian Advertising Research Foundation, who presented a seminar titled "Targeting the Changing Consumer". According to Williams, marketplace trends were not reliant purely upon age or class categories, rather they were caused by "demographics, consumer resources (time, dollars, economics) technology and attitudes" (as quoted in Marney 1987b, 10).

During the 1980s, target marketing based on psychographic data was a significant component of most marketing strategies and advertisers searched to find new ways to understand their consumers. As they did, market research became a critical component of the industry. Research companies offered data that went beyond the traditional demographic breakdowns and began to include more qualitative types of analysis designed to segment the customer/audience based on lifestyles and values. One of the more notable attempts to unearth consumer habits was the VALS program sponsored by SRI (Stanford Research Institute), which combined information about values and lifestyle with demographic variables such as age, sex and income. Using these data they then categorized consumers into four different VALS categories - need-driven, outer-directed, inner-directed and combined outer-and-inner directed (Leiss et. al. 1997, 305; Turow 1997, 47). The Claritas Corporation introduced PRIZM (Potential Rating Index for Zip Markets), a similar type of research tool. The Monitor, VALS and PRIZM all provided new ways to think about markets, consumers and audiences based on lifestyles and attitudes (Turow 1997, 44-5).

These forms of market research attempted to "discover" and "know" a consumer market and worked to sell the value of this market to potential advertisers. Of course, in doing so, each firm worked to sell themselves by attempting to position themselves as either the company that has "discovered" this market or the company that best understood this market in an attempt to garner new clients to their firm.

Expanding the boundaries of the youth market

As the mediascape expanded and the marketplace began to hedge its bets on niched segments and build on the incredible triumph of the yuppie as a niche market, the teen market was revitalized as valuable. In the 1980s, youth would prove to be one of the segments that advertisers "equated with gold". With the expansion of the mediascape, and buoyed by the legitimization of the child as a consumer, the

entertainment industry began to consider children and teens lucrative enough markets to have entire stations to cater specifically to them. The first station to cater solely to the child consumer was Nickelodeon, launched on April 1st, 1979 by Warner Communications (Banet-Weiser 2007). It was, according to Cy Schneider, one of the station's first Chairmen, "an idea that came along at exactly the right time" (Schneider 1989, 193). Nickelodeon's mandate was to create something that was different from the stock cartoons on commercial networks and reruns of Sesame Street on public television. It developed a whole line-up of entertaining, child-centred, character-driven, television shows.

While Nickelodeon was catering to the children's market, its corporate parent reached out to the teen market. In August 1981, Warner Communications and American Express (Warner Amex) debuted Music Television (MTV) headed by a vibrant, young 28-year-old named Robert Putman. MTV proved to be a very profitable format. In 1981, MTV broadcast into 2.5 million American households. According to its own statistics, by 1983, there were 14 million MTV households that watched MTV an average of 63 minutes every weekday and 91 minutes a day on weekends (1983, M-19). Witnessing the prosperity of MTV and the genre of music television in general, CHUM Limited launched a Canadian version of the station in 1984 called MuchMusic. MuchMusic was Canada's first 24-hour music specialty station. Originally, it was offered as pay-TV but in 1987 it moved to basic cable where its potential viewership was much greater.

Despite MuchMusic's achievement in adapting the American station MTV to the Canadian market, it was almost a decade before a station similar to Nickelodeon would be made available in Canada. Buoyed by the achievements of Nickelodeon in the United States, YTV debuted September 1st, 1988. Owned by Rogers and CUC Limited it was the first specialty channel for Canadian "children and youth". The daily content of the station was aimed at 40% for preschoolers, 40% for teens aged 12-17 and 20% for families (Bream 1988, 14). YTV's mandate was to "provide full-time access to Canada's young people of youth-oriented fare" (CRTC 1987, vol 13). Kevin Shea, president of YTV argued in a CRTC public hearing that "with 35 channels available in most urban markets within the broadcasting system it is time that one of them (was) dedicated to children. That's the ingredient that's missing" (as quoted in CRTC 1987, vol. 13).

The station presented itself as tailored to meet a specific definition of the young consumer who considered the ways in which young people envisioned themselves. The Y in YTV originally stood for youth, according to the YTV president, but quickly YTV

found out that kids preferred to be called kids, not youth. They kept the Y since it is supposedly one of the more memorable letters in the alphabet, and according to Shea, "once you hear YTV you never forget it" (Bream 1988, p. 14).

Each of these four stations -- Nickelodeon, MTV, MuchMusic and YTV -- offered advertisers direct access to the child and teen markets on a full-time basis. Youth were no longer isolated to Saturday morning slots or the after-school ghetto. In the fractured televisual landscape with little regulation, youth were a serious market and a pure audience that made its own purchasing decisions. Broadcasting to youth was not a social service and the content of youth media was not educational; instead, youth were treated as sophisticated consumers with their own resources.

MTV and MuchMusic revitalized the teen market. The teen market had mostly been ignored in the 1970s, as marketers shifted their attention to the older college student, teen media slid off the radar. However, by the 1980s, teen movies and MTV resurrected youth as a valuable audience and treated them as powerful consumers. The teen consumer was revitalized when marketers realized that despite the fact that the population size of youth was in decline, their actual spending power was growing. In response, the media began to gather youth in new ways that incorporated the teen without alienating the 17 to 34-year-old baby boomer. Warner Brothers and American Express (Warner Amex) introduced their new station to advertisers by announcing it as the "biggest advertising merger in history".

Despite casting such a wide net over young audiences, with 22 years between the oldest and youngest audience members, MTV appealed to teen aesthetics and tastes. Originally broadcasting short music videos in a format lifted from radio, MTV content was essentially images "of urgency, quickness, surrealism and, above all else, post-modern coolness" (Danesi 1998, 85). MTV reminded advertisers in the 1980s of the incredibly lucrative potential of the teen market and offered them a whole new array of marketing possibilities, as the channel was able to address the teen audience in a new format. A format that, in MTV's own words, "had the 'low-waste' audience selectivity of radio and magazines, and the broader reach of television" (1981, 35). The goal of MTV was to target its programming to the under 34-year-old crowd which was supposedly ignored by radio and who were not watching television with any great consistency. MTV broadcast into 2.5 million American households in 1981 and by 1983 over 17 million households on more than 2000 cable affiliates (Szatmary 1991, 252). It

became a widely popular genre and, it could be argued, was the culmination of the commercialization of the teen consumer in the twentieth century.

MuchMusic also worked hard to gain its audience and reach out to potential young audience members. The station sponsored teen dances, held MuchMusic video days at schools and the VJs (video jockeys) of MuchMusic hosted Miss Teen Canada Pageants. MuchMusic gave publicity material to be handed out to delegates at a Principal's Conference (CRTC file 6840 003 P02). Like MTV, MuchMusic had a definition of youth that included the young end of the spectrum.

The success of both MTV and MuchMusic was due to their understanding of their audiences which can be credited, in part to, the way they niched out these markets. While both stations capitalized on the ability to produce a niched audience that appealed to advertisers, they kept this niche as large as possible in order to maintain the largest audience possible. Instead of completely alienating itself from the profitable boomer consumer, MTV inflated the youth market to take in both the teenager and the young boomer. The station branded itself as appealing to young viewers, defining their age bracket as 12 to 34 (1983, M-19). To the marketing and advertising industry, MTV called its audience the "Cable Brats". "Who are the Cable Brats?", an MTV advertisement in *Advertising Age* asked. "They are", the ad answered, "the most wanted age range in America, men and women 18 to 34." MTV delivered this ideal audience "plus the increasingly important 12 to 17 segment. The Cable Brats in the 12 to 34 age range make up that incorrigible new generation that is taking over America." The description of the 12 to 34 as outlined by MTV highlighted two segments. There was the 18 to 34-year-old segment, personified as the ambitious, wealthy, childless super consumer who eventually came to be defined as the yuppie, and the 12 to 17-year-old teenager with the propensity to spend lots of money at the local mall.

MTV played it safe in defining the category of youth. While it catered specifically to the "youth market," its definition of the youth market pushed the boundaries at both ends of youth. It pushed downwards into the upper echelons of childhood incorporating the 12-year-old, while it also stretched upwards all the way to the 34-year-old, roping in the young "thirtysomething" professional. This was an astute move. As MTV was claiming that it delivered to advertisers a specific narrow audience and catered solely to the youth market, it defined the youth market in the widest terms possible, and in doing so, extended its potential to have a bigger audience without alienating its core audience of youth.

There was another reason why pushing downwards into childhood was a profitable strategy beyond just the obvious logics of expanding its market. During the 1980s, the teen was no longer a completely reliable television audience; there were many new distractions for the teen in the 1980s to compete with television. The teen headed out to the video arcade or over to a friend's to play Pac-Man on the Commodore 64, while the young pre-adolescent was left at home looking for ways to spend his or her time. The pre-adolescent was seen as a more reliable media consumer. In 1982, an article in *Advertising Age* reported that:

... advertisers are finding that the mass media have become less and less effective in reaching teens and college students. Preteens on the other hand, may spend a great deal of time watching television (Yovovich 1982, M-5).

The same issue of *Advertising Age*, reported that children under 11 watched five or more hours of TV a day (Beckman 1982, M26). The tween reassured marketers, advertisers and the media of a teen-like audience despite the unreliability of the teen audience.

In the early 1980s astute production houses began to recognize the potential value of a teen market who could be counted on to be at home watching television and who did not have the freedom of their older siblings to go to video arcades. One of the first television shows to cater to the tween and treat the young teen as a viable audience and a potentially valuable demographic was the Canadian *Degrassi* series. The series started in 1979 with *The Kids of Degrassi Street* (1979-86) then *Degrassi Junior High* (1987-89), then later as *Degrassi High* (1989-91). *Degrassi* was launched by Playing With Time Productions in conjunction with the CBC in Canada. In the United States, *Degrassi Junior High* and *Degrassi High* were broadcast on Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). These shows were one of Canada's most profitable exports of the 1980s, broadcasting in over 40 countries with over 10 million viewers weekly in Great Britain and the U.S. alone. The secret, according to Geoff Pevere and Greig Dymond:

... the producers' unwavering commitment to bullshit-free teen creed. The cast members were originally non-professionals drawn from the neighbourhood and the scripts were always checked for accuracy by the kids themselves (2002, 118).

The show was invested in telling stories about youth-oriented problems and issues, and their consequences. The show was committed to such stories and used the

main characters from the show in controversial storylines already invested in by viewers. The show did not deflect criticism and play it safe by bringing in special guest stars (Byers 20005, 33). The show dealt with such contentious issues as inter-racial dating, abortion, teen pregnancy and parental divorce. An episode that dealt with teen pregnancy was followed up with *Degrassi Talks on Sex* where Amanda Steptoe who played Spike (the character on the show who became pregnant and actually kept her baby) cautioned Canadian youth on the risks associated with teenage sex and the responsibilities of pregnancy (Nicks 2002, 149).

The *Degrassi* series took a feminist tone and confronted many feminist issues. In the original series, *The Kids of Degrassi and Degrassi Junior High*, many of the characters call themselves feminist and challenge their experiences as sexist (Byers 2005, 194). Stories on sex, abortion, body image, dating and equality are all told within a feminist framework. The girls of *Degrassi* were strong, passionate girls who were becoming aware of the gender imbalances and realities of adolescent life in the 1980s. In a through reading of the feminist messages of the *Degrassi* series, Michele Byers notes that the original series:

... anticipated the emergence of third-wave feminist as a visible, if never unified, social collective, constructing characters who are actively critical of entrenched structures of oppression and actively fight for gender emancipation (2005, 207).

While *Degrassi* was, and still is, often positioned as teen television, it did cater to the pre-adolescent market. For example, Michele Byers' 2005 anthology *Growing Up Degrassi* suggests that previous to the airing of the *Degrassi Junior High* and *Degrassi High* series there was no television made specifically for teens. The authors in Byers anthology reference teen in the broadest sense, without segmenting the young teen or pre-adolescent out as a separate category. What the *Degrassi* series, particularly *Degrassi Junior High*, does illustrate is the embracement of the pre-adolescent into to the category of teen and talking to them as teens, not as children. *Degrassi Junior High* treated the pre-adolescent characters as young adults. The characters on the show were not presented as children, despite the fact that they were in Grades 7 and 8; instead the show depicted them as "kids" having to deal with "teenage problems" such as sex and drugs. The huge international popularity of the show highlighted the potential of the pre-adolescent market and revealed that there was an appetite for programming which spoke directly to pre-adolescents as teens, not as children.

The strength of the Degrassi series helped to foster interest in the tween audience by illustrating that it was possible to cater to the tween without alienating the teenage audience. The lucrative possibilities of catering to the older spectrum of childhood was apparent to Nickelodeon as the station's first breakthrough hit was the Canadian television show *You Can't Do That on Television*.⁵⁸ The show aired five times a week in 1984 and later morphed into Nickelodeon's first original program, *Double Dare*. The show consisted of comedy sketches about typical preteen experiences including arguing with parents, being in a detention or fighting with a sibling. The main premise of the show was poking fun at adult authority figures such as teachers, parents and, of course, the predictable school principal (Sandler 2004, 48). Even the show's title suggested a modest rebellion against the restrictions of adult culture since the characters on the show are doing just what they are not supposed to do on television, although we never really figure out what cannot be done.

The popularity of this series, which dealt with the experiences of pre-adolescents, led to the development in the late 1980s and early 1990s of more shows with pre-adolescent and young teen characters in order to pull in a pre-adolescent audience. Nickelodeon developed *Are You Afraid of the Dark* in which a group of pre-adolescents told scary stories around a campfire and *Hey Dude* which chronicled the adventures of a group of young teens and their bumbling boss working at the Bar None Dude Ranch (Sandler 2004, 49). One of Nickelodeon's most popular shows in the early 1990s was *Clarissa Explains it All*, which featured Clarissa Darling navigating the trials and tribulations of being a young teenager. In the first episode of its 65-episode run, Clarissa plots revenge against her younger brother Sam for showing everyone at school her training bra. While these shows featured teenage characters, they were mainly geared to the younger end to the teenage audience and were attempts to yoke in the pre-adolescent. The teen issues addressed and experienced by Clarissa and the teen gang at the Dude Ranch were about the lighter side of being a teenager. Stories that addressed the darker, more serious aspects of teen life, were left to other venues. The teenagers depicted on these types of Nickelodeon shows were young, attractive school

⁵⁸ One of the signature moments of the show was "sliming" where a bucket of green slime was dumped on a character. The signature green slime from the show was incorporated into Nickelodeon's logo (Sandler 2004, 49).

kids who had to deal with such dilemmas as trying to get a date to the school dance or outwitting bumbling authority figures.

By the 1990s, Nickelodeon had acknowledged their pre-adolescent audience and worked to get to “know” them. In the early 1990s, relying heavily on research to “know” their audience, Nickelodeon discovered that pre-adolescents did not want to grow up. They did not necessarily want to be teenagers. When asked why in focus groups, pre-adolescents indicated all the “horrible things about teen age life: drugs, AIDS, sex problems. They were worried about nuclear war, the environment, homeless people, their parents, and, somewhere on that list, they were worried about getting good grades” (Marshal Cohen VP research, as quoted in Wieski 1992, S2). Recognizing this, Nickelodeon included in its programming shows that appealed to the pre-adolescent by highlighting the light, fun side of being a teenager, thereby catering to the desires of the pre-adolescent without overtly alienating the teenage audience. This tactic also optimistically reassured tween girls of the positive aspects of teen life as something to aspire to rather than fear.

Nickelodeon was not the only television station utilizing such a tactic. One of the more notable examples of such an approach was the popular television series *Saved by the Bell* that ran on NBC from 1989-1993 and which later morphed into *Saved by the Bell: The College Years* (1993-4). The half-hour sitcom followed the crazy antics of six Bayside High School students and their soft-hearted, dim-witted principal Mr. Belding. The show aired on Saturday mornings and was NBC’s move to offer more live-action fare to cater to an older, more sophisticated Saturday morning audience than attracted by children’s cartoons. The show was so successful, it was followed by a predecessor in 1993 called *Saved by the Bell: The New Class* which ran until 2000. This version had the same premise as the original; it just used a younger cast to replace the original six who had grown too old for a pre-adolescent show. These shows sold tween girls the teen aesthetics of fun, peer culture, light-hearted rebellion against authority, and fashion without the darker teen issues found in the *Degrassi* series which had the potential to alienate advertisers.

Downaging the teen

The magazine industry employed tactics similar to those of the television industry. The pre-adolescent customer/audience was acknowledged and was roped in alongside the teen market, as the teen aesthetic was down-aged into the pre-adolescent

demographic. Since the 1950s, the magazine industry has been instrumental in framing the adolescent female audience and customer. Throughout the decades of the post-War era and well into the 1980s, *Seventeen*, and to a lesser extent *Tiger Beat*, *Teen Magazine* and *Young Miss*, invested a great deal of energy into defining the adolescent female consumer of their magazine to the advertising industry. The girl magazine industry had a vested interest in how the female youth market was segmented. Using the same tactic of age expansion that MTV used, the magazine industry also expanded the traditional age boundaries beyond the narrow scope of teen as 13 to 17 or 18. If the “teen” audience of the magazine could inflate to the upper and lower ends of the spectrum, the magazine could promote a larger audience to advertisers. Part of the strength of *Seventeen* was that it was able to expand the boundaries of youth by having it stretch out to include the college girl, while still encapsulating the young pre-adolescent/teen girl at the other end.

Seventeen reportedly reached more female teenage readers than any other girl’s magazine (Advertising Age 1980, S-22) and in 1982 had a circulation of over 1.5 million (McCabe English 1982, M-27). By the end of the 1980s, the magazine had a readership of over 1.7 million (Reilly 1988, 4) and claimed that it targeted high school and college girls. The quintessential reader of the magazine was 17-years-old, a teenage girl on the brink of becoming an adult, as indicated by the magazine’s tagline, “it’s where the girl ends and the woman begins”. But *Seventeen* pushed the boundaries of the juncture between the ending of girlhood and beginning of womanhood. The magazine inflated the upper and lower ends of the age spectrum of teenhood as it found ways to appeal to the younger girl consumer without alienating the older consumer. Articles on dorm life, going to university and, occasionally, planning for marriage were designed to appeal to the older reader. While she might be out of the realm of the teenager as her age no longer carried the suffix teen, she still belonged to the category of being on the cusp of womanhood. The college girl was not the married wife or single professional, she was finishing girlhood but not quite a woman. At the other end of the spectrum, the magazine contained content designed to appeal to and entice the young teens just ending girlhood. The magazine’s attempts to straddle the widening girl market were evident in both the content of the magazine and in the advertisements.

One of the strategies the magazine used to engage the younger and older ends of the teen spectrum was to integrate real readers into the content. These readers ranged in age from 13-years-old to their early 20s. Letters to the editor, make-overs and

reporting on exceptional readers were all ways the magazine worked to include real girls whose age spanned roughly 10 years. For example, an article titled “The Beauty Connection” featured questions from the *Seventeen* mailbag answered by the magazine’s beauty experts. For the title page of the article, the magazine presented the questions of two readers, 22-year-old Marcy Kaplan who inquired about oily foreheads and 13-year-old Emily Lloyd asking about hair mousse. The questions and subsequent answers were accompanied by pictures of the two girls. The rest of the article contained the questions, answers and pictures of a range of girls between the ages of 13 to 18 (1986, 225-228). What is telling about this article is that the magazine chose to highlight the questions from the oldest and youngest ends of the teenage audience spectrum on the first page, mostly likely an attempt to be inclusive in its content. Another example was the “*Seventeen* Honor Roll” an article that reported on 15 students of “extraordinary talent and promise” ranging in age from 13 to 22-years-old (1987, 210-213).

The juxtaposition of the young girl and the older teen was evident in the advertisements of the magazine. It was not uncommon for a tampon advertisement that featured a young girl just on the edge of puberty inquiring about whether it is acceptable for virgins to wear tampons, placed beside an advertisement for DeBeers diamonds of a weepy young woman who is moved by her boyfriend asking him to marry her. There were the ubiquitous ads for products such as the perfume *Charlie* using 20-something models, which also appeared in women’s magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* or *Glamour*. Some advertisements even played on these tensions. *Jontue*, another perfume, showed a female figure lying on a horse in a field of misty flowers with the caption, “sensual but not too far from innocence” (Feb 1981). By the end of the 1980s, advertisements for young girls expanded beyond just tampons. For example, 5-7-9, a company that created junior-sized clothing, advertised frequently in the magazine (1987, 257) as did the junior section for JC Penney. The magazine had clearly embraced its young consumers into the fold as advertisers in the pre-adolescent market advertised in its pages.

The young reader was embraced in the pages of the magazine. Make-overs, for example, were performed on young girls as well as older ones. The May issue of 1985 featured a 14-year-old girl, with braces, the emblem of awkward youth (1985, 104). Two years later, a makeover of 13-year-old Erika Cross of Wayne, Pennsylvania, smartly titled “Getting Rid of Growing Pains,” a play on the growing pains of short hair and the growing pains of puberty, featured young Erika in the before picture awkwardly smiling

with a mouth full of braces (1987, 54). These girls were not exceptional in the sense that they were old for their age. They were presented as girls at the early edges of adolescence dealing with the “growing pains” of moving into adolescence.

The younger teen was also featured in many of the articles. In 1981, the magazine reported on their cover girl Cusi Cram, accompanying the article with pictures of 13-year-old Cusi as a model, signing her modelling contract, getting her makeup done and posing for a photo shoot. These professional images were juxtaposed with images that emphasized that she was only in the eighth grade. According to the magazine, despite her high-profile job Cusi was also a “regular eighth grader”, hanging out with friends, spending time with her mom and eating sundaes with a male “friend” at a restaurant. The magazine highlighted the tensions of her age and her profession. *Seventeen* depicted her both as an adult model in the working world and a young girl who goofs around with friends and plays with her kitten in her bedroom.

Perhaps the most obvious approach that the magazine took towards appealing to the young girl was in the regular feature “Sex and Your Body”. The monthly feature introduced in 1982 covered issues concerning girls on the topic of their sexuality (read heterosexuality) and their bodies.⁵⁹ The issues covered did not just apply to the older teen, but also to the younger end of adolescence. Puberty was a frequent topic of discussion. One of the early articles in this feature was on menstruation. The fact that the magazine covered puberty and menstruation indicated that its readers were not just the 17-year-old girl or the college-age women, but also the young girl at the early stages of being a teen. The article highlighted that girls were menstruating earlier than they did at the turn of the century when they did not menstruate until their late teens. In the article, *Seventeen* claimed that “girls menstruate most often at age 12 or 13 these days, but also at the age of nine or as late as 16” and according to the author, “any age between nine and 16 is normal and healthy” (Rodgers 1982, 108). Although the magazine was commenting on menstruation, it also suggested an expansion of the boundaries of adolescence (at least physically).

Covering issues pertinent to girls, including younger teens in articles and making reference to junior high (as opposed to simply high school, thus leaving out the young

⁵⁹ It is interesting to note that this section was introduced one year after Brooke Shields declared her 15-year-old self, to be sexually aware in the Calvin Klein ads. “Nothing,” Shields declared, “comes between me and my Calvins”.

girl) were ways in which the magazine was able to draw in the young girl, without alienating the critical older consumer. This proved to be a lucrative formula as *Seventeen* had much to brag about in regards to circulation. *Seventeen* claimed that it reached more female teenage readers than any other women's magazine (1980, S-22). During the early 1980s, it sold approximately 1.5 million copies a month, bolstered by 6.6 million more readers who did not buy the magazine but obtained the magazine by it being passed along (McCabe English 1982, M-27). Anecdotal evidence indicates that it was often younger siblings who were the beneficiaries of the pass-along. In the interviews with women who were young girls in the 1980s, many of the interviewees suggested that the magazines they read were those of their older sisters or their friend's older sister. A letter to the editor in a similar type of magazine called *Teen* highlighted how magazines were passed on to siblings. Kathie Sommers of Grand Rapids, Michigan writes:

As a parent, I love your magazine! We have two older girls, 20 and 21-years-old who read your magazine right up through high school graduation. Now our 14-year-old has become hooked on it – she even went to the attic to get back issues the other girls had saved (*Teen* 1982, 46).

Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh also observed this phenomenon in the 1990s. In conducting fieldwork with young girls they witnessed many nine and 10-year-old girls reading their older sisters copies of *Seventeen* (2005, 5). While *Seventeen* worked to draw in the girl, it is clear that girls were reading the magazine during the 1980s. The magazine did declare in the trade publications that its female teenage readership started at about age "12 or so" (*Advertising Age* 1980, S-22). On a personal note, I can distinctly recall that as an 11 and 12-year-old, I faithfully bought *Seventeen* magazine every month, using money from a paper route and purchasing the magazine at the corner store before my jazz lessons. I knew the day the magazine was released each month and would always walk over to the "smoke shop" and buy a copy the week it was on the shelf.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ I have been unable to find statistics on the circulation numbers of *Seventeen* magazine in Canada. The Canadian Print Measurement Bureau (PMB) that keeps tabs on the circulation numbers of magazines in Canada only tracks Canadian magazines. Anecdotal evidence from interviews with girls who were tweens in the 1980s indicates that many of them read *Seventeen* magazine. Letters from Canadian girls sometimes appeared in the magazine and Canadian stores appeared in the store directory of the magazine. Furthermore, the fact the Canadian trade

In the mediascape of the 1980s, with its heavy emphasis on a niche audience driven by changes in the television industry and the fracturing of the TV audience from networks shows to dozens of cable channels, the pre-adolescent audience found space by being included in the teen audience. There was very little content created specifically for her, but she was embraced into the teen. Since there was little media created specifically for the pre-adolescent girl, tweens were left to consume media that was created for the older teen girl, and left to use it on their own terms. There was an awareness of this, to a certain extent, as the young pre-adolescent was treated as a bonus to the teen market. In an article on radio formats, a network insider suggested that “there are networks whose programming attracts the young at the end of the teenaged group even though it is not their intended target (Advertising Age 1980, S-15). However, few companies actually catered specifically to the tween. Instead of working to produce content solely for the tween audience, companies such as MTV and Nickelodeon and their Canadian counterparts, MuchMusic and YTV, tried to reel in the pre-adolescent alongside the teen or child audience without alienating those core audiences.

One exception was the Canadian company MuchMusic. In 1988 in an attempt to cater solely to the preadolescent girl, MuchMusic launched a girl magazine called *Sass*. The magazine was designed to appeal to the young pre-adolescent consumer. Its tagline claimed it was the “new voice of the young.” The mock-up of the cover of the magazine depicted a young girl with braces smiling out at the camera. She was not the mature bold-faced model of women’s magazines, nor was she the assured college-aged girl of *Seventeen*, she was much younger, and as her braces signified, at that awkward age of puberty. The magazine declared its audience were the “3 million young people” and “1 million preteens” who were, according to its advertisement in *Marketing Magazine*, “the only group with a 100% disposable income” (1987 7-10). It appears that *Sass* may have folded at its inception. Although the reasons why the magazine was unsuccessful are unknown as there is little record of the magazine outside of advertisements in the trade journals, it does indicate that MuchMusic had an awareness of the young female consumer even though the station failed to capitalize on the young girl by producing television content specifically for her.

publication, *Marketing Magazine*, frequently reported on *Seventeen* indicated that it did have a presence on Canadian newsstands and was read by Canadian girls.

Selling the value of the youth market

Downaging the teen aesthetic onto pre-adolescent audience as a means of expanding the youth market may have been popular with the tween audience but media companies such as MTV and MuchMusic had to get advertisers to be interested in such framings. In other words, they had to work to translate this to their “real” customers, the advertisers. MTV can attribute much of its early success in the 1980s to its ability to communicate the value of its audience to advertisers. In advertisements in trade publications, MTV used clear simple language to produce an image of its audience members to potential media buyers. The 1982 Cable Brat ad stands out in particular but it is emblematic of the types of advertising campaigns that MTV produced during the 1980s. Besides being the “incorrigible generation that’s taking over America”, 12 to 34-year-olds, MTV boldly declared, were:

... those aggressive, super-achieving young adults with high disposable income (and a love for cameras, electronic products, expensive clothes). They’re those brainy, gutsy kids who make it big in the corporate world, who start companies, who get rich quick and buy, buy, buy (cars, travel, fine toiletries, imported watches, fine wines and imported beer). And they’re also those precocious teenagers with money to burn and a rage to consume (soft drinks, records, tapes, fast food, movies, video games). The Cable Brats buy all the high-volume, high-ticket, high-tech, high-profit products of modern America (1982 M-15).

In creating such ads, MTV was able to convince advertisers of the value of the MTV audience. In doing this, MTV gathered and produced the young consumer according to its own particular agenda. It is for this reason that the older end of the “young” consumer was constructed with similar attributes as a yuppie in the MTV descriptions (despite the fact that that term yuppie was not used until the mid-1980s). According to MTV, the 18 to 34-year-old MTV viewers were career-driven, motivated completely by the need to “buy, buy, buy”. And when they did buy, it was not frugal purchases, but luxury items. One can almost imagine potential advertisers salivating over the opportunity of reaching such status-conscious, shopping fanatics.

MTV defined its viewers, the 12 to 34-year-old American, purely in terms of their relation to consumption and their propensity to consume. MTV boldly informed advertisers that its audience was “the most-wanted age range in America” (1982 M-15). How they substantiated this claim is unclear and, in fact, irrelevant. What is important is that in making such a claim, MTV made the audience valuable. The strength of MTV

was that it was able to produce a format that would deliver a specific audience to advertisers and was masterful in translating the value of the audience to advertisers, while simultaneously working to gather the young consumer in ways that fit its own corporate agenda.

MTV, Nickelodeon and *Seventeen* in the United States and YTV and MuchMusic in Canada were all pioneers in offering highly specialized formats, designed to cater to the needs of advertisers who wanted access to specific targeted audiences. However, gathering an audience was no guarantee of success; these magazines and television stations had to work to sell their audience as valuable to advertisers. They had to demonstrate to advertisers that their media property was an efficient use of an advertiser's resources. They had to illustrate that their entire audience was valuable and that the audience did not contain a large number of people who would not use a particular product. These media worked to form what Turow calls "a pure audience" that includes the consumers that are deemed significant, while excluding those that are not (Turow 1997).

One of the tactics that media firms utilized to gather a pure audience that fit within the media properties' particular agenda was to support and sponsor studies by outside research firms that collected data on the audience and/or customer. In sponsoring a survey or study, the company was able to influence the types of questions that asked and the topics covered. Their input would, of course, be tailored to the specific agenda of the media company. *Seventeen* magazine used this tactic very well. For example, *Seventeen* sponsored studies by Yankelovich, Skelley and White. The conclusion of one such study reported that teens have great influence over their parents' purchasing decisions (Blackman 1983, M39). Another study titled "Brand Loyalty Formation" illustrated teenagers made decisions about what brand to buy when they are under the age of 17 and that they often continued to use this product into their adult years (as quoted in Blackman 1983, M39). These claims about the youth market worked to illustrate to advertisers the value of the youth market and; therefore, the value of the *Seventeen* audience.

Sponsoring such studies proved to be good for business as the findings were used in *Seventeen's* advertising campaigns in the trade publications. In such advertisements, the data reported about the audience were statistics related to the consumption habits of the audience members. *Seventeen* used such statistics as the amount that school girls spent on getting dressed for class (over \$6.5 billion) and how

much of this was spent on sportswear (\$2.6 billion) or shoes (\$660 million) (1980, 53). Other ads stated how much girls spent on groceries (37% of the total family food budget) (1982, M1). Each of these ads were designed to appeal to specific industries such as the apparel industry or the grocery/food industry, as well as position the girl as a viable consumer with a great deal of purchasing power.

In looking at the trade publications, it becomes clear how this formula worked for *Seventeen* magazine. *Seventeen* sponsored numerous studies including Yankelovich, Skelley and White study on Brand Loyalty (1980) and the Teenage Purchase Influence Study (January 1983). The magazine then used the results of the studies in advertisements for itself in the trade publications. And, if *Seventeen* was lucky, the findings would be picked up by journalists and referred to in the editorial content of the trade publications. Articles in *Advertising Age* and *Marketing Magazine* on teen purchasing constantly referenced the Yankelovich, Skelley and White studies for *Seventeen*. The *Seventeen* Yankelovich, Skelley and White Brand Loyalty Study of 1982, for example, was published in at least five articles in *Advertising Age* and its Canadian counterpart *Marketing Magazine*. This is no surprise given that *Seventeen* advertised heavily in the trade publications. It is reasonable to surmise that journalists for such magazines were given the studies conducted by the trade publication's advertisers (in this case *Seventeen* magazine as an advertiser in *Marketing Magazine* or *Advertising Age*) and were encouraged to report on the findings; a situation that blurs the boundaries between editorial content and advertising.

This circulation of the data was extremely beneficial to a magazine like *Seventeen*. When the findings of the studies were referenced in the trade publications, the articles cite that the research was conducted for *Seventeen* magazine. This was free promotion, reminding advertisers of the link between the media property and the youth market. Getting free press in trade publications read by potential advertisers would boost the media property's attractiveness to advertisers interested in garnering the attention of the youth market. However, the brilliancy of this situation was that a media property such as *Seventeen* or MTV was able to implicate itself in the defining of an audience. By conducting the research that allowed advertisers to get to "know" an audience, the way of "knowing" was tailored to meet the corporate agendas of the media properties. *Seventeen*, along with other media companies which also conducted research, had an interest in defining the girl consumer according to its own particular agendas.

The success of the Yankelovich, Skelley and White surveys did not go unnoticed by other media properties. In 1987, Nickelodeon followed *Seventeen's* example and commissioned the newly formed Yankelovich Youth Monitor⁶¹ to conduct a study on the media habits and consumer decisions of six to 15-year-olds. This study was the first nation-wide comprehensive study of such an age group and would come to be critical in defining the pre-adolescent audience in the 1990s.⁶² Seven years later in 1995, YTV followed suit and published its first annual "Tween Report".

Media companies went beyond just selling their audience demographic; they used more sophisticated tactics as they recognized that to advertisers an audience is worthless if the audience fails to pay attention to the advertisements. Media firms had to convince advertisers that not only did their audience have the potential to spend, but their audience would be enticed by the advertisements. Media firms attempted to convince advertisers their media vehicle could transform audience members into customers who would likely purchase the products advertised within the specific format (Preston and White 2004, 115). Part of this strategy was to assert that the target audience was so intimately connected with the media property that the audience would pay attention to everything, including the ads (Turow 1997, 55-56). *Seventeen* even highlighted this in their advertising slogans in the early 1980s. The magazine claimed that their audience would connect with the advertisements because of their relationship with the magazine. "Because she believes in us," *Seventeen* claimed, "she'll believe in you" (1982, 29). The slogan forged a link between the magazine and the spending habits of the audience/customer.

In making such a claim, *Seventeen* did more than promise advertisers that their audience will purchase their products, it also intimately connected the properties of the media to the characteristics of the audience/customer. The connection between the audience/customer and the media property was solidified as the media invited the audience into a sense of belonging by constructing "primary media communities". These communities were formed, as Turow argues, when audiences of a media felt that the

⁶¹ The Yankelovich Youth Monitor was a rebranded version of the Yankelovich, Skelley and White surveys.

⁶² There has been little scholarship on the role of such studies in the 1990s, probably because it is extremely difficult to get access to these studies.

medium “resonates with their personal beliefs, and helps them chart their position in the larger world” (1997, 4).

The amalgamation of a media property with customer/audience identity allowed opportunities for marketers to forge brand loyalties with the media. In doing this, the identities of the media properties became intertwined with the characteristics of the persona of the audience. In highlighting company brands as the vehicle to reach markets, the brand of the media collapses into the identity of the audience/customer. The result is that audience members themselves are “shaped into commodities imprinted with the brand of the media property” (Preston and White 2004, 116), which is really what is at the heart of the slogan “because she believes in us she’ll believe in you”. Another example is MTV whose branded identity was so intricately intertwined with the framing of its audience that the young consumers of MTV were routinely referred to as the “MTV generation”, implying that they had short attention spans and demanded constant visual stimulation. The media property was so intertwined with its audience that it actually became the label for them. It was no coincidence that MTV’s audience was stereotyped as having short attention spans. MTV and other media outlets leveraged this as a way to promote themselves to potential advertisers.

Having short attention spans was translated into being fickle or “discerning”. As Theodore Gage wrote in *Advertising Age*, young people “won’t just consume whatever is put in front of them, instead they are fickle,” he argued (1983, M11). Part of this fickleness could be attributed to the fact that young consumers changed drastically as they develop. The tastes and desires of the youth market were constantly undergoing changes, advertisers were repeatedly told in the trade publications which presented the young consumer as capricious and indecisive but also highly lucrative, therefore worth trying to figure out.

Even the trade publication *Advertising Age* used the rhetoric of youth having short attention spans and being fickle as a means to sell its annual section on youth marketing. The magazine touted the benefits of reading its annual section by referring to youth as “a topsy-turvy market” that was constantly changing (*Advertising Age* 1980, 91). Of course, not to worry, *Advertising Age* contended that it was there to provide the much-needed insight into the youth market that would allow a company to maintain a “grip on it”. While *Advertising Age* sold itself as a critical tool to understanding the changing youth market, market research companies used the same line of reasoning. The inconsistency of the youth market reinforced the need to use market research to

stay on top of the changing market. Teen Age Research Unlimited (TRU) claimed that their syndicated study on the “vital - but volatile - youth market” was “*the book on Teenagers [sic]*” (1983 M38). It was the volatile nature of the youth market that necessitated market research to keep abreast of the changing youth, validating the researcher’s expertise as valuable.

Positioning the youth market as finicky and volatile allowed media outlets to sell themselves as an efficient and sure-fire means to gain access to them as an audience. Media companies pushed the fickleness of the youth market and tied it to brand loyalty. They argued that the young consumer was picky and discerning because they were on the cusp of finding the right products to meet their needs. Young people, particularly young girls, had not yet discovered their favourite brands. Robert Bunge, publisher for *Seventeen*, even went so far as to proclaim that “advertising in teen magazines is like putting a small net over a pipe - you reach the girl when she is deciding on brands” (Spadoni 1985, 50). The capricious nature of the young female consumer, according to *Seventeen* magazine, was because the *Seventeen* reader was an experimenter. “Our girl experiments and that’s true. She’s fickle, and if you sell to her now, there’s a good chance that you’ll keep her for a long time” (McCabe English 1982, M-27).

Selling the teen demographic as a future customer was not a tactic that was completely new to the 1980s. This had been a lucrative formula decades earlier. In the 1950s, the teenager had been thought about as a both a present and a future market. For example, *Seventeen* had always celebrated the young female consumer as brandable and positioned itself as a means to target the future housewives of North America. Nothing had changed during the 1980s when the magazine reminded potential advertisers of this fact and told them that young girls can be “branded for life” (1982, M-1). *Seventeen* even commissioned and published studies produced by Yankelovich, Skelley and White that analyzed the buying habits of women. One study examined 10 products and found that a significant proportion of women were using the same brands they first chose as teenagers, supposedly proving the potential power of advertising to young women (Fierman 1980, S24). Throughout the 1980s, *Seventeen* used these types of statistics as tools to promote itself by informing retailers, merchandisers and advertisers the youth market was about the future consumer.

The trade magazines also promoted similar types of ideologies. In 1982, *Advertising Age* published a special segment on youth marketing appropriately titled, “Get ‘em while they’re young”. Getting youth before they established particular buying

habits was touted as a much more efficient means of establishing brand loyalty. “The ability to create brand loyalty at 17 is a lot easier than it is to change it at 25,” according to Grady Hauser of Teen-Age Research Unlimited (Spadoni 1985, 50). Market researchers suggested to advertisers that if they could create the right campaigns and give youth what they want, then they may have a “brand-loyal friend for life,” rather than trying to target goods to 18-34-year-olds who already had well-entrenched brand loyalties (Hauser 1987, 44). The potential of the market was also flagged in the Canadian trade publication *Marketing Magazine*. Brand loyalties, according to a 1984 report published by CHUM and reported on in *Marketing Magazine*, were formed in the teen years (Chum Report as cited in *Marketing Magazine* 1984, 5).

Forging loyalty

The flaw in such tactics was that the teenager was often an unpredictable consumer. They could not be relied on to perform the way that advertisers hoped. Even though they were hailed as a “powerhouse of a market” by *Advertising Age*, they were a “tantalizing, often topsy-turvy market that changes just when you think you’ve got a grip on it” (1980, 1). Karen Focade, President of Consumer Science Inc., a specialist in youth marketing, echoed such statements four years later. “Teens,” she argued, “are probably the epitome of conspicuous consumption and brand consciousness”. But teens, she warned, are not entirely loyal as “they’ll switch if their peer groups say another product will do something better” (Freeman 1985, 28-30).

Herein lay the problem; the teen market was just too lucrative to give up for advertisers but hooking them in and keeping them was an unreliable, and by extension, expensive proposition that demanded a wealth of creative energies. The solution to influencing teen behaviour was to establish patterns in young people before they became teens. As already mentioned, targeting teens as a way to promote brands was not new in the 1980s, but what was new was that positioning youth as fickle and unformed was down-aged from the teenager onto the pre-adolescent. The beginnings of this downaging were actually rooted in the growing concern for young people’s health by preventing their use of tobacco, drugs and alcohol. The establishment of the tween got a push from lifestyle behaviour campaigns designed to target youth before they began such detrimental activities as consuming alcohol, doing drugs or smoking. Anti-smoking campaigns are of particular interest because the smoking issue received a great amount of attention and funding in the 1980s by government. Anti-smoking campaigns were

reported on quite frequently in the advertising trade magazines probably because of both the tremendous amount of funding they received and the power of tobacco companies who were big advertisers.

In the mid-1970s, health promoters grew increasingly concerned about the growing numbers of young female smokers, despite the fact that the number of smokers overall was decreasing. According to Health and Welfare Canada, there was a “sharp increase in smoking by teenage girls” (1973, 108). At the same time, there was a growing awareness that the average age of youth’s initiation to smoking decreased. In the 1980s, most smokers had their first cigarette at about the age of 12. This is four years earlier than most of their parents (Health and Welfare Canada 1981, 20). In the United States, the Surgeon General came to similar conclusions as Health and Welfare Canada in regards to the decreasing age of the initiation to smoking (Surgeon General 1979, 17-7).

One response to the growing awareness of the risks of smoking and the increasing concern around the age of initiation of smoking was to develop aggressive anti-smoking campaigns that targeted youth *before* they had their first cigarette. These campaigns were based on the rhetoric of influencing youth before they were confronted with the decision to accept their first cigarette. The idea was that it is easier to discourage a habit before it is formed than it is to change a habit once it has been established (Health and Welfare Canada 1981, 12). Both Health and Welfare Canada and the Surgeon General in the United States began to design programs specifically targeting the “pre-smoking” demographic. In Canada, Health and Welfare developed the Break Free campaign, a youth-themed, national program that was a collaborative effort of provincial and federal governments, and professional and voluntary health organizations. Its key mandate was to reduce smoking and to “get young people through to adulthood free from the smoking habit” (Health and Welfare Canada 1986, 2). Since abstention of smoking by youth was its goal, the Break Free campaign was aimed at the 10 to 19-year-old demographic (Marketing Magazine 1985, 1). In undertaking such a mandate, the younger end of this demographic was critical and the primary target of the campaign was this lower end, aged 10 to 13 (Marketing Magazine 1988, 29).

In order to accomplish its goals, Break Free consisted mainly of a series of television commercials geared to youth that ran during the early 1980s. Break Free also developed the PAL (Peer Assisted Learning) Smoking Prevention Program that was comprised of resource materials for teachers to use in their classrooms to encourage

youth to resist the pressures to smoke. PAL was specifically geared for grade six, seven and eight students. It was modelled on several similar programs that were field-tested in schools in Canada and the United States.⁶³

What is critical about these anti-smoking programs was that they defined the pre-adolescent as a serious demographic separate from childhood. The target market of the programs were 10 to 13-year-olds, or grades six to eight. In taking this market seriously, the pre-adolescent was conceptualized as a future teenager who was just on the cusp of forming consumer habits that would stick with them potentially for a lifetime. Targeting this age group was critical to ensure that as teenagers they would have the knowledge and skills to avoid becoming smokers. Instead of being considered part of the child demographic, the pre-adolescent was separated from childhood and aligned with the teenager; in doing so the pre-adolescent was seen as more sophisticated and mature than the children's market. For health and welfare advocates, the pre-adolescent was the key to "getting 'em young," before they established negative consumer habits such as smoking.

The rhetoric of "getting 'em while they're young" did not go unnoticed by marketers. Marketers were quick to realize that "getting 'em young" was not just a strategy that could be employed by the health promotion sector, but an effective marketing strategy that could hone brand loyalty lasting throughout a consumer's lifetime. It was also a means of addressing the fussiness of the teen consumer. Karen Focade states that companies such as hers were attempting to deal with the problem of switching by "trying to get the pre-teen group before they enter[ed] their teen years" (Freeman 1985, 28, 30). "Getting 'em young" was no longer about "getting" the young adult or teen, it was about "getting 'em" younger. The pre-adolescent or tween had not solidified their choices yet and provided a window for marketers to educate them about their products before they had made their branded decisions. Hopefully, this would establish a relationship with them that would carry through the teen years and into adulthood. The tween was at the age, according to Bill McEwen vice president of McCann-Erickson, when they are going from "having choices made for them in home to being on their own". If a company could capture them right at this moment, there was

⁶³ A similar type of pilot study in Houston, Texas developed a program designed to train junior high-school girls to resist the pressures to smoke (Surgeon General 1979, 17-26).

the potential to establish a branded relationship with the tween as a customer for their entire life.

Some astute media properties had already acknowledged the tween consumer and had already used this type of rhetoric in their advertisements. *Teenbeat* magazine, for example, extolled the value in advertising in its magazine. “*Teenbeat* reaches a million young teen girls each month,” it informed potential advertisers, “girls who are forming buying habits *NOW* [author’s emphasis] at the tender ages of 12, 13, 14 and 15. Catch them while they’re young – before it’s too late,” the magazine warned potential advertisers (Teenbeat 1980, 14). In Canada, advertisements in *Marketing Magazine for Resourcebook*, a school publication geared to students in Grades 6 to 9, informed advertisers that its readers were:

... young and knowledgeable consumers whose buying patterns and brand preferences are being established now. They have money, are curious and are on the threshold of years of consumption of products and services. Their habits have not yet been firmly set. They’re conscious of the body and what goes into it and on it ... aware of comparison shopping, ecology, energy conservation, money management, government and much, much more (1980, 14).

The idea of the tween being on the cusp gained momentum during the 1980s and the girl was sold as a brandable entity. She was fresh, unformed and waiting to experience new products and goods with which she would forge relationships and continue to use later in her life. *Seventeen’s* editor, Midge Richardson, was quoted as stating that the “young girl [was] developing a life style [*sic*] and she [was] eager to try something new and different” (Spadoni 1988, 50).

Selling the potential of brand loyalty was a particularly astute business move in the 1980s. By the 1980s, the marketplace was swamped with products that were similar in function. The key to economic success for these companies was to encourage people to buy into the company name as opposed to focusing on the function of the product. The 1980s were the decade of the brand, when companies such as Nike began to realize that it was their company logo, and not the product itself, that people were buying. Branding was the new mantra of the industry as many companies began to capitalize on the power of the brand names of their products to entice customers as opposed to relying simply on the quality of the product (Klein, 2000). Customers had relationships with brands, not experiences with material goods. This change in emphasis from manufacturing goods to marketing brands drastically altered the

landscape of advertising and business. In this new corporate space, the “discovery” of a young impressionable demographic with a great deal of spending power was fuelled by the needs of business to construct and hone relationships between customers and brands that could potentially last life times.⁶⁴

The teen audience/customer had many benefits for the mediated marketplace, but was unreliable and had the potential to be distracted by other leisure pursuits. The tween, on the other hand, offered a more reliable access to the teen consumer and was a means of selling teen values and brand loyalty. The tween persona reassured the worried mediated marketplace that a young consumer market whose brand loyalties could be honed, something that was not possible with the teen.

Teenaging culture

The tactic of expanding the boundaries of the teen has been flagged by Marcel Danesi who coins it the “forever-young syndrome”. Danesi’s work charts how the boundaries between adolescence and adulthood have been blurred with what he terms the “teen-aging of modern culture,” where teen tastes drive the marketplace under the “romantic myth that young is good and old is bad” (2003, viii). In modern western culture, Danesi claims, the teen aesthetic has become the driver of media culture, as movies, television, fashion and music cater to teen tastes. In response to western culture’s obsession with youth, adults are urged to buy into the youth aesthetic and lifestyle to avoid being left behind. The result is that the teenager expands beyond the teen years. Consumers beyond and below the teenage years are heavily influenced by the teen identity and teen tastes, which have become the industry gold standard as corporate society harnesses the essence of youth. Youth has even extended people in their late 20s and early 30s, reining in what Jacques Peretti refers to as “adulescents” - adults that blur the distinction between themselves and those in their teenage years by consuming the images, styles and ultimately the ideologies of those half their age. The cultural industries of media culture, which cater to the teenage market, know that in doing so they will be able to attract many older consumers (Danesi 2003). Instead of

⁶⁴ This would not be the first time that the advertising industry would be influenced by a changing youth market and vice versa. See Osgerby 2002 and Sivulka 1998, for more on this.

turning off an older audience, teenage fashions and media could actually appeal to an adult audience.

The elastic nature of youth has also been noticed by Cook and Kaiser, in what they call the “trickle-up processes” of the fashion industry in describing how Mary Jane shoes and ankle socks gained popularity as women’s wear, which has been described as paedophilic by some and fun by others (2004, 220). Regardless of whether it is viewed in a positive or negative light, the reality is that women are encouraged to maintain their youthfulness as girlhood slips beyond its traditional boundaries.

The beauty in harnessing youth as the standard is that embedded in youth is a cycle of currency and obsolescence as teen tastes change virtually overnight resulting in a quick turnover of products (Danesi 2003; Frank 1997). Since adolescence is aligned with frivolous spending and having discretionary income, while adulthood is tied to more serious choices and concern for the long term, it is of benefit for marketers/advertisers to promote youth over adulthood. If the boundaries of the teen years seep beyond the traditional 13-19 age brackets, then there are more opportunities to sell goods and youth becomes an ever-elastic category. Stretching the boundaries of youth has proven to be an intelligent marketing strategy for many companies. Since the 1950s, corporate capitalism has skilfully aligned the teen identity with the values of consumerism. The expansion of the tween persona takes place within the intense expansion of the youth market.

While Danesi mainly focuses on how the “teen-aging” of culture works to capture older consumers beyond the upper end of adolescence, the crystallization of the tween was also a product of the expansion of youth. As teen aesthetics and culture were being pushed upwards beyond the teen years, they were also pushing down at the other end of the spectrum. The positioning of the tween persona as someone on the cusp of teenhood was more than just girls hoping to look older; it was also about the expansion of teenage culture downward onto the younger echelons of youth. Instead of producing media content specifically about pre-adolescents with preteen characters, television shows like *Saved by the Bell* or *Clarissa Explains it All*, had teen characters, albeit young teens, in teenage situations, while magazines included the issues and concerns of younger readers. This tactic allowed media properties to hedge their bets and cater to pre-adolescents in a way that did not directly alienate the teenage audience, potentially expanding their audience. However, it also opened up opportunities for marketers to try to capture the teen audience before they became a teen and forge brand relationship

that could potentially carry through their teen years. There was also a more ideological issue at play here. The downaging of the teen aesthetic and lifestyle was really much more about the downaging of the values of the teen consumer - fun, hedonism, fashion and obsolescence - which built into the subjectivity of teenager as consumer. It was only a narrow aspect of teen culture that was pushed downward. It was teen's social agency and autonomy as consumers, not their political autonomy or their position as social agents, that were mined by the mediated marketplace and allocated to the tween.

The downaging of the teen aesthetic into the tween persona was a means of educating tweens how to be teens, a form of socialization to ensure the marketplace of the right kind of teen consumer. Savvy marketers and advertisers sold more than commercial goods. Along with the media and the retailers/merchandisers of the apparel industry, they provided young girls with the tools needed to negotiate their accession into and through adolescence. The downaging of the teen aesthetic meant that young girls were taught how to perform the role of teenagers before they reached that age. For example, girls' fashion magazines and television shows played a role in educating young girls on how to desire, purchase and use consumer items such as makeup, music and fashion that have been more frequently the commodities of the teen.

As the young consumer moves through social-age identity, leaving behind childhood and orientating herself towards adolescence, the vestiges of consumer culture offer opportunities to perform the transitory shifts of alienation and belonging (Wærdahl, 2005, 204). Sociologist Randi Wærdahl uses Robert Merton's (1957) concept of anticipatory socialization to explore this process. Merton's work on the American soldiers returning to civilian life explored the process of transitioning identities. The soldier, in preparation for the shift, anticipates the change by beginning to adopt some of the values, symbols and lifestyles of the aspired group. In applying Merton's notion of anticipatory socialization to a model of life stages, Wærdahl suggests that Merton's soldier is analogous to the child who "both find themselves facing a change in status that they cannot control" (Wærdahl 2005, 203). The child, like the soldier, has to work out how they will navigate the transition between two social identities - their current status as a soldier/child and their future status as a civilian/teen.

Wærdahl's uses Merton's anticipatory socialization as an analytical tool in framing how five individual 12-year-olds strategically negotiate the transition of moving from elementary school to junior high. For these 12-year-olds it was the vestiges of consumer culture, particularly clothing, that provided the terrain in which social identities

are “negotiated, tested and developed” (Wærdahl 2005, but see also Hebdige 1979, McRobbie 2000, Thornton 1996). Anticipatory socialization requires an extensive knowledge of the desired group and alienation from the present reference group (Wærdahl, 2005, 204). The mediated marketplace offers both. First, it offers the tween girl the knowledge of the teenager. The television shows, magazines and advertisements geared to tweens provide an extensive amount of information on teenage life. Of course, the type of information that the marketplace offers is a representation of the teen that fits the agenda of the commercial media machine. It presents an image of teenhood as a carefree space in which branded clothes and fashion are critical tools in self definition and subjectivity.

I used to read a lot of teen magazines; you know, *Seventeen*, *Teen*, stuff like that. They gave you all sorts of tips, how to wear your makeup, what to wear and hints for dealing with boys [laughs]. But I didn’t even talk to boys then (Victoria).

Victoria’s statement illustrates how these hints provided girls with insight into a teen aesthetic of makeup and clothes, and interestingly, how these are tied to the heterosexual fantasies of romance. Second, clothes themselves provide a symbolic resource that tweens can use in signifying the transition to the next stage and separating oneself from the previous group. Retailers and merchandisers provided the resources for girls to look older and separate themselves from their younger counterparts.

In Grade 8, I felt I was growing up. I was a teen, I wore teen clothes and bought teen things, like deodorant.” (Susan)

In a focus group two interviewees referenced getting their ears pierced as a sign of maturity.

Janet: Getting my ears pierced at 12 was a big deal. I felt very womanly. (Janet)

Laurel: Yeah, it was a big deal. I got it done as a birthday present from my grandma and aunt.

Being able to use clothing in a way that separated oneself from childhood illustrated an awareness of the teen, which was interpreted by the interviewees as being “cool”. “I knew I was cool when I wore clothes that I copied from my older sister.” (Lorna). The fashion industry was well aware of this dynamic, calling these girls “visually sophisticated youngsters” (“Resourceful fashion” 1987, 68).

For the tween girl, the alienation from childhood did not have to be absolute and final. These girls could still regress back into the safety zones of childhood innocence. The Cabbage Patch Kid doll discussed in the previous Chapter provided this outlet for some girls. Another interviewee emphasized that she did not really want to wear the mature clothes that the popular girls wore in her school; they “seemed too old” (Amanda). Young girls slowly transitioned to teen culture. This allowed them to play at being a teen without fully committing to the pressures of adolescence.

Conclusion

The teenager became a market force in the 1950s and 1960s with the lucrative potential of the enormous the baby boom generation. The teenager offered the mediated marketplace more than just a large demographic bubble. The teen presented new opportunities to understand markets as complex niches based on lifestyles and values not just cold demographics during the 1980s. This fostered a whole new wave of advertising and marketing approaches. The power of the teen market continued right up until the early 1990s. By the middle of the 1990s, the teenager was no longer the “golden child” of the media marketplace. This honour was foisted upon the tween.

One of the most concrete factors in the crystallization of the tween was the expansion of the cable dial and the subsequent trend to niche audiences. At the same time, the teen was no longer a reliable audience or customer. They were not home consuming media and they could not be relied on to develop brand loyalties. As a result, the mediated marketplace pushed the teen aesthetic downwards by embracing the younger girl into the teen fold in ways that would not alienate the teen with the development of media content designed to include the tween girl. Yet, the mediated marketplace was not ready to give up on the teen, the tween was talked to on teen terms.

The tween offered companies more than just a means to expand their audience, she presented opportunities for consumer socialization and brand loyalty. The tween audience was an easy sell for media companies who sold her potential for brand loyalty, a potential that could not be guaranteed for the teen and was critical in the 1980s as brands became salient. Downaging the teen aesthetics of fun, fashion and consumption onto the tween girl offered girls a means to play with these tropes of teenhood without having to commit to the darker pressures of adolescence.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION: THE MORE THINGS CHANGE ...

The realities for the tween girl today are much different than when I was a tween. When my friends and I were tween-aged we had to be satisfied with media that that was geared mostly for our older teen sisters. There were a few spaces targeted solely to us. We were a troublesome market to figure out. No one really knew how to cater to the delicate balance of girlhood in which the maturity of our bodies did not necessarily match the maturity of our minds. Today things are much different. For the tween of today, there is an entire media machine created specifically for her consumption. The latest cohort of tween stars, Miley Cyrus, JoJo and Avril Lavigne dominate the pop charts. There is a long list of television shows geared to the tween: *That's So Raven* (2003-2007), *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody* (2005-2008), *Zoey 101* (2005-2008) and *Drake and Josh* (2004-2007) and a whole list of followers waiting in the wings. The Bratz Dolls overwhelm toy stores. And even the king of the children's market, Disney, has found new ways to directly address the tween girl with the *Cheetah Girls* franchise, the incredibly popular *High School Musical* trio of films and its subsequent copycat *Camp Rock*. All of which have spun out into books, albums, concerts, merchandise - lots and lots of merchandise - and even the occasional ice-skating show. Tweens have their own stores, their own clothing lines and their own magazines.

This thesis contributes to the history of the girl by tracing the historical lineage of the tween in the 1980s and early 1990s and connecting this lineage to the historical development of the girls' market throughout the twentieth century. My case study has argued that the tween persona crystallizes in the synergistic circuitries of the mediated marketplace as she bounces between the various nodes of the circuit; market researchers work tangentially with the advertisers, marketers, media (Preston and White 2004, Turow 1997, Leiss, Kline and Jhally 1997), as well as with the retail industry (Cook 2004), to uncover and "know" a target segment (Preston and White 2004). The marketers focus their research gaze on the girl and mine her for information in an attempt to get to "know" her as a consumer. They package this knowledge and sell it to

advertisers, retailers and manufacturers who produce goods and retail spaces for her, and who in turn inform marketers of their customers. Meanwhile, the media creates avenues to communicate with the tween audience and sells this audience back to advertisers and marketers. The psychological and developmental characteristics of the tween are redefined according to the logics of the mediated marketplace.

This argument extends Daniel Cook's thesis on the importance that the research and stereotypes of a specific consumer played in the management and development of fashion retailing in the 1920s (Cook 2004). Girls draw the retailers attention as they realize she is three markets in one – an influencer of her parents, a shopper herself, and a future consumer for the fashion industry. With this in mind, those who designed and merchandized clothes began to conceive of ways to cater to her wants and desires. Tracing the continual crystallization of the tween persona within the market provides us with a case study of the synergistic forces forming in today's mediated marketplace. As a commercial persona, the tween supplied the mediated marketplace with three basic functions: first she sold the lucrative potential of a market to industry stakeholders such as advertisers, second she articulated a market to these stakeholders and wider society, and third she provided resources of subjectivity for the girls themselves, who have to be offered something to participate in such framings.

These conditions were ripe for the crystallization of a tween persona during the 1980s. It was in this environment that the tween took shape as the forces of the mediated marketplace responded to these major social shifts and served their own interests. They carved the tween out of girlhood, which reassured the marketplace of female consumers despite the gains made by women in the 1980s. They set out to colonize childhood for the tween, creating new avenues to access the economic resources of the family, and allowing the further commercialization of childhood. And they worked to colonize the teen-created space for teen media to expand its audience downwards opening up more opportunities to forge brand loyalties and tying subjectivity to consumption. The tween girl was (and still is) a powerful consumer. As a current market, she had a great amount of discretionary income at her disposal; as a future market she was potentially on the cusp of solidifying long-term relationships to brands; and, as an influential market she held tremendous sway in the family.

We have seen how under the neo-liberal push for deregulation of the media, there was a deepening of the commercialization of children's culture and the child became entrenched as a competent consumer as the government off-loaded its

responsibilities to regulate children's media onto the marketplace. This created new opportunities to sell to a girls' market; girls who would buy a whole array of licensed merchandise and who could deflect attention from the commercialization of young children by being an older child. Deregulation and cable television created new demands for niche marketing radically altering the way marketing, advertising and the media related to audiences/consumers. Meanwhile, corporations began to seek brand loyalties with consumers. At the same time as women began to move into the workplace, the girl acquired new responsibilities in the shifting family dynamic and also new access to family resources. Popular culture began to reference a girl subjectivity instigating a renaissance of the girl and feminism began to pay attention to the girl and reclaim girls' cultures as sites of empowerment. In doing this historical work, I have drawn particular attention to the dynamic relation between media and marketing sectors – popular culture, advertising, market research and magazines - which crafted an image of a transitional girlhood that is sold to both the mediated marketplace and to girls themselves. It is in the 1980s, buffeted by Reagan deregulation and second-wave feminism, that the tween persona takes solid form as she is traded between the various nodes of the mediated marketplace.

This crystallization of the tween, therefore, is not a clean, clear process in which a linear sequence can be traced. Rather it is a complex, interacting synergy between sectors that reveals a loose historical trajectory in which competing nodes of the mediated marketplace begin to address the girl as a unique moment of transformation. Eventually, these nodes begin to converge in the 1980s and, in the right economic and political environment, begin to crystallize as the tween persona. For the tween, this environment was the changing media culture under a neo-liberal politic of deregulation, a shifting framework for feminism and middle-class women during the 1980s and early 1990s. Each of these nodes in the circuitry added to the constellation of the tween persona as the various industries described and constructed her in ways that met their own agendas and needs. The circuitry, as we have seen, is interconnected with other ideological frames that also work to define the tween girl. Psychological and developmental definitions of girlhood are harnessed by various stakeholders in the mediated marketplace and are re-inscribed by the logics of the marketplace. The tween girl formed at the site where conceptualizations of middle childhood and/or pre-adolescence intersected with commercial relations to renaturalize this moment in the life course. Arguably, the tween is the twenty-first century equivalent of the teen in the

1950s. She is fully entrenched in the public consciousness and she has been naturalized as a true moment in the life course. Proof of this is the fact that *Parents* magazine and *Today's Parent* both have columns dedicated to parenting the tween. Since the 1980s, the tween has become a solid identity; she is no longer in a liminal state. She is not an almost teen (i.e. a “pre/sub” teen) she is a tween. The distinction of being “an almost” is passed on to her younger sister aged four, five or six who now is frequently referred as a “pre-tween” in trade publications. The tween, like the teen in the 1950s, has been reified as a natural stage in the life course. This is not surprising since in a capitalist economy, markets are presented as natural social divisions that intelligent marketers have discovered. But what is more interesting is that unlike “the child” or “the teen” they have been reified as transitional subjectivities – made unique by their perpetual state of constant re-fashioning of self – the perfect post-modern consumer identity.

Transitional Subjects

Markets are not the only structuring force in the matrix of contemporary socialization. Education has played a significant role in defining, framing and legitimizing the maturation of the child into the consumer-citizen (Kline 1993, 2006). Age segmentation, based on cognitive capacity, is a social ideology and practice deeply ingrained in the educational system. Pedagogues have conceptualized early adolescence or pre-adolescence as a specific period of developmental transition between childhood and adolescence when youth on the cusp of puberty require special knowledge and learning experiences. During the 1960s, educationalists rethought pre-adolescence as a separate stage of life, both in Canada (Burnham 1969, 3) and the United States (Alexander and McEwin 1989, 1), by dividing the period between grammar and high school with the junior high school (grades 6 to 9) or middle school (grades 5 to 7 and/or 8). Both schools were based on the notion that pre-adolescence was a unique life stage, requiring a specific set of conditions to aid students in making the transition from elementary to high school.

Junior high and middle schools were designed to meet the “special needs of the pre-adolescent” (Burnham 1969, 3) during, what one educator deemed, the “between ages” (York Region Board of Education 1969, 2). Of course, there were also practical and economic reasons around the emergence of these schools as they helped to alleviate the crowded conditions of high schools in the 1960s (Alexander and McEwin

1989, 3). Although junior high schools originated in Columbus, Ohio in 1910, they did not become popular until the 1960s when many North American school boards adopted them. By the 1960s, in the United States, approximately four out of every five high school graduates had gone through the three-tier system (elementary-junior-senior school) (Alexander and McEwin 1989, 1). There was great debate among educators as to whether junior high schools or middle schools provided better opportunities for students.

These schools roughly coincided with the beginnings of puberty and provided a marked event segregating this as a specific stage in the life course. While the rise of the junior and middle school occurred in the 1960s, the legacy of separating this moment of the life course into a separate school system continued throughout the rest of the century and was part of the legitimization of pre-adolescence as a separate, distinct phase of human development.

Until the 1980s, the maturation of girls aged eight to 12 was the purview of educational institutions and the field of developmental psychology, which did recognize some unique elements to middle childhood. These institutions marked the psychological and social transitions of youth between the child and the adolescence as a distinct moment in the lifecycle of personhood with an emphasis on cognitive development. Developmental psychology encompasses the study of the psychological development of humans as they age in an attempt to explain the nature of human personhood. Much of the field is dedicated to the psychological development of children and adolescents, with a smaller amount of work focused on the development of adults through the rest of their life course (Green 2003, 7). Like all other forms of knowledge, developmental psychology constructs objects of study as much as it studies them.

The tween in the field of developmental psychology mainly falls under the umbrella term of “middle childhood”. Middle childhood is most often perceived as a period of striking change and transformation as the child moves from infancy and early childhood to adolescence. The middle child, routinely categorized as ages six or seven⁶⁵ through to 11 to 13, is marked at the early end by the entry into formal schooling and the later end by the onset of puberty (McHale, Dariotis and Kauh 2003, 241).⁶⁶ The stage is

⁶⁵ The entry into middle childhood is sometimes marked as early as the age of five (Cooper et. al. 2005).

⁶⁶ Cincotta pinpoints middle childhood as ages five to 12 (2002, 69).

characterized by; the mastery of logical reasoning (Piaget 1971), the crisis of striving to belong (Erikson 1963), the introduction to compulsory education, the shifting of attention away from parents to peer groups (Alder and Adler 1998), the beginning of a coherent identity (Cooper et. al 2005, 5) and, the mark of the child's first significant entrance into institutions beyond the family, particularly school (Collins, 2005). The young body of the middle child undergoes physical changes: the loss of baby teeth, a slow down in growth and a greater capacity for balance, strength and endurance while the end of middle childhood is marked by the onset of puberty, including menarche, the development of breasts and the growth of pubic hair (Cincotta 2002, 60-72).

Middle childhood, like other stages of development, is presented as standing outside of society and history. It is reified as a naturally occurring phase in the life course. The weakness of such a perspective is that it fails to consider how specific contexts of youth such as schooling, child labour laws and the consumer market, play a role in constructing categories of youth and giving meaning to the experiences of young people. The blame for the naturalization of this moment in the life course can partly be laid on underlying assumptions in the field of developmental psychology which is underpinned by a basic assumption that young people's development, characteristics, behaviours and needs are naturally occurring and biologically generated (Lesko 2001, 7). In such narratives, development is positioned as progress towards a final stage of adulthood (Lesko 2001).⁶⁷

In 1984, the National Research Council's Committee on Child Development Research and Public Policy, an American research committee, published a book-length report titled *Development During Middle Childhood: The Years from Six to Twelve* (Collins, 1984). The report was based on the findings of a panel of scientists who were given the laudable goal of "integrat[ing] and apprais[ing] the state of knowledge on middle childhood" (Collins 2005, xi). Based on the assumption that there was little research on this developmental stage of life, the panel, led by chair W. Andrew Collins,

⁶⁷ Lesko contends that narratives of human development tell a story of progress similar to the theory of evolution. Children are in the primitive or early stages of development, adolescents in the middle and adults in the most advanced stage of human evolution. The link between the theory of evolution and the psychological development of humans is both reminiscent of and justifies the need for, colonial power relations. Those at the top end of the evolutionary scale (i.e. the more civilized societies and adults) are allocated power and authority over those on the lower level of the scale (i.e. the "uncivilized" and the young) who are positioned as weak and naive.

was to assess the status of knowledge on what was thought to be “the least studied period of the first two decades of life” (Collins 2005, xi). Although, in actual fact, the panel was surprised to find that six to 12-year-olds were the most frequent study participants in research on childhood (despite being overlooked as the focus of research)⁶⁸, mainly because they are congregated in schools which provided easy access for researchers. While the assumptions of the researchers were proven wrong, the basis of their assumptions offers fascinating insight. Collins suggests the panel’s impressions on the deficit of information on this period stemmed from:

... a lack of both popular and scientific interest in the distinctive characteristics of an age group that seemed to be ‘in between’ the more widely studied periods of early childhood and adolescence (Collins 2005, xi-x).

Collins’ observation was that it was the in-betweenness of this period that led to it being overlooked. Middle childhood, like the middle child in a family, was unable to compete with the innocent charm of the baby in the family and the worrisome dangers of the developing maturity of the older sibling. The middle child, overshadowed by the exceptionality of the other two stages, was only appreciated in terms of being in between. In fact, Freud (1955) defined these “in between” years as developmentally stagnant. He termed it the “latency period” and thought that children merely spent these years refining the skills that they had obtained in their younger years.

The legacy of the 1984 study by the National Research Committee, according to its principal author, was that it found convincing evidence that middle childhood “universally mark[s] a distinctive period between major developmental transition points” (Collins 2005, xi-x). Note how Collins slips in the word “universally”, revealing a perspective that naturalizes middle childhood. In reflecting on the outcome of the 1984 study, Collins states that while the report was received favourably, it failed to make a discernible difference in the field for at least a decade, when the MacArthur Foundation established the *Research Network on Successful Pathways Throughout Middle Childhood* 10 years later. In 1994, the MacArthur Foundation invited 14 scholars to form an interdisciplinary research network to advance the understanding and knowledge of

⁶⁸ To avoid confusion in Collins’ claims, it should be noted that Collins does not contend that middle childhood was the most studied period, only that children of this stage were more frequently study participants than young children.

middle childhood (Granger 2006, xvii). In their view, the transition between elementary school and high school is intensified by physical, emotional and social changes that occur with puberty (Akos 2002, 1).

Although the connections are not completely clear between the work of National Research Committee in 1984 (and its 1994 successor) and the rise of the tween persona during the same period, the parallels between the two do mark a broader trend in which the stage between childhood and adolescence begins to warrant attention as a critical point in development. The historical lineage of the study of middle childhood follows a similar trajectory to that of the tween. Prior to the 1980s, references to a preadolescent or tween girl in the trade press were infrequent. But slowly, during the 1980s, interest in the girl by the various industries of media culture began to accumulate. As it did, knowledge of the girl as a separate market/consumer/audience began to crystallize until the mid-1990s when the tween girl became a full-blown persona. Its definitions and modes of address both mingled with and contested those of the educators.

Regardless, the tween phenomenon has pushed beyond the boundaries of the preadolescent girl and is the driver of many popular culture trends. Tween culture is everywhere. The colour pink dominates the fashion sections of clothing and home décor stores. Sparkles and feathers adorn everything from women's shoes to table lamps. And, for women channelling one's inner girl by wearing these clothes or decorating with this style, is a sign of exuberance and female empowerment.

The tween's very visibility creates problems as most debates wage about KYOG (kids getting older younger) focus on young girls. For example, the advocacy group Campaign for a Commercial-free Childhood (CCFC), recently fought against the sexualizing of childhood which emphasizes mostly on girls and the American Psychology Association's latest report is entitled, "Report on the Taskforce on the Sexualization of Girls" (APA 2007). Boys are rarely part of these debates and their coming of age and sexualization in the market is far less problematic, even if it is glaringly obvious in such sites as the over-muscled avatar of their video game heroes or raunchy lyrics of rap music geared to a boy audience. The concern is loaded onto girls who are becoming too sexualized too soon as evidenced such shocking examples of thong bikinis targeted at seven-year-old girls that have "wink wink" emblazoned on the crotch or the Bratz dolls dressed in dominatrix outfits. Nor are other aspects of age compression present in the debates. There is little outcry for the million of young girls forced to take care of their younger siblings at an early age, or forced to work in paid labour to support their

families. These girls are getting older younger too, but there is little concern of their premature aging – and their loss of the innocence of childhood.

The Feminist Connection

Most other scholarly works on the tween focus specifically on the 1990s (see Mitchell and Reid Walsh, 2005 for example) overlooking the 1980s as a critical decade in the crystallization of the tween persona. They also fail to connect the tween market to a larger historical narrative. Prior to the 1980s, the girl was present in the marketplace as a consumer, but she was not fully acknowledged as a customer, a market or an audience within the matrices of the mediated marketplace. In the 1920s and 1930s, the fashion industry began to take notice of the preteen consumer as a particular segment and began to acknowledge her as a customer by creating retail experiences and merchandise for her particular needs (Cook 2004). However, this awareness of the preteen girl did not move much beyond the space of the fashion industry. In the period of the 1940s to the 1980s, there was little interest the preteen girl with the exception of the music industry that noticed her as a fan (McRobbie and Garber 1977) and the toy industry that presented her with the Barbie doll as a transitional object. She was eclipsed by the teen girl who was understood as a specific market cohort (Nash 2006; Schrum 2004) and was coalescing as a commercial persona. At the same time, the children's cultural industries of toys, marketing and merchandising were framing the child as a market persona. The preteen girl was overshadowed by these two personae. There was little acknowledgment of her and she was treated as an add-on to the child and teen markets. It was during the 1980s when various forces collided in the synergistic spaces of deregulation of children's advertising, niche marketing, changing family structures and new moments of feminism that the mediated marketplace began to acknowledge the tween girl. Girls' studies began to address these issues of age compression by responding to the market initiated KGOY debates. What are the emancipatory opportunities afforded by fashion and music? What does it mean to experience premature sexualization? In whose interests is it to downage teen ideals and body image onto tweens? And, most importantly, what does getting older younger offer girls themselves? By the mid 1990s, post-Spice Girls, the girl was known to marketers, she became part of the popular cultural resources for girls and she orientated girls to

consumption. She also alerted feminists to the fact that their own critical discourses were now intertwined with the emerging tween commercial persona.

I have observed that this tween girl persona was carved out of the transitory space between the child and the teen through a historical merging of two commercial personae – the downaging of the teen and the upaging of the child. She is built on the transitory experiences and changes of being in between the child and the teen, but she comes to be defined on her own terms. The marketplace has exploited this transitional position in a way that feminism never did, coming to know her as both a consumer and as a transitional subject. This transitionality of the tween is heightened by the fact that while the tween becomes isolated as a moment in the lifecycle that stands unto itself, the meaning of the tween is framed by biological realities of the body and puberty. It is the physiological realities of this moment in the lifecycle that help define the tween as being on the cusp - as a period of transformation. Her body is undergoing dramatic change. She begins to develop breasts, she experiences menarche, her body sprouts hair in new and strange places, and there are drastic shifts in her body's chemistry as new hormones cause emotional turbulence.

It cannot be denied that tweenhood is a period of growth and change, connected to the biological realities of the body and puberty as the girl begins the physical transformation into womanhood. Yet, as this thesis illustrates, the tween identity is much more than a middle stage of biological growth and development wedged between the child and the teen. The tween has become a specific stage of gendered childhood with her own unique products, stores, clothes, toys, fascinations, tastes, culture and consumer power, all based on transitionality. In crystallizing the tween girl, the mediated marketplace exploits both the biological moments of transformation, such as menarche and puberty, but also the social moments of distancing herself from her parents' control, turning to her peer culture and gaining more autonomy and influence within the family.

While the tween is both a commercial and biological/social construct, I suggest it is the commercial that gives the bio-social meaning. The biological and physical realities of the early stages of puberty, and the social shifts in the relationships of girls to her families and peers, have been reinscribed according to the logics of the mediated marketplace.⁶⁹ The commercial impulses of the sectors of the mediated marketplace

⁶⁹ See Brumberg's work the *Body Project* (1997) for an example of a successful critique of how the biological is organized and shaped by the socio-economic.

work alongside other institutions such as education and the sciences to give this biological reality meaning. The commercial has renaturalized the biological as it looks for ways to exploit the tween girl as a valuable marketing opportunity. As we have seen, the various institutions of consumer culture have capitalized on this period of transition and vulnerability, turning it into a highly lucrative demographic. And girls experienced this moment of transition in the marketplace, as media such as *Seventeen* and consumer goods like Tampax validated and confirmed her to be at a unique point in her life. No longer simply anticipating the experiences and powers that come from adulthood in a process of anticipatory socialization, the tween persona legitimized the transitory spaces of tweenhood as a site of independence and power.

This union between child psychology and the cultural industries of children's culture has not gone unnoticed. Daniel Cook has argued that developmental psychology and children's marketing have been intrinsically linked historically. Cook documents the connections between developmental psychology and the rise of the toddler. He suggests the works of Freud, Hall, Piaget and Erikson conceptualized childhood as a progressive development through a patterned sequence of stages. The intensifying gaze of psychology into these periods of childhood validated the emergence of stages of childhood as merchandising categories. The popular magazine, *Parents*, disseminated parenting advice based on this model of childcare to middle-class mothers. By the 1930s, the newly educated mother was open to buying children's clothes for a newly minted category of childhood, the toddler. The unique specifications of the toddler's stage of development required a separate merchandising category of clothes to accommodate the physical act of "toddling" (unassisted and unsteady walking) and the assertion of personhood that accompanies such independence. Boosted by the visibility of cultural icons like Shirley Temple, the commercial persona of the toddler became an accepted biological, social and physical stage in the life course (Cook 2004, 85-95) and a central resource for girls to use in their own cognitive, emotional and social development.

It is a coincidence that this transition in media culture occurs at the same time as feminist researchers in the field of developmental psychology began to mobilize on the topic of middle childhood. While feminist theorists had not been preoccupied with the girl beyond the critiques of Barbie, there was growing attention paid in the 1980s to the

girls' profound psychological shift into adolescence and womanhood (Gilligan 1977). The concern was largely based on girls sense of themselves (or lack of it) and an idea that in middle childhood girls begin to lose who they are. Debates about the impact of the beauty myth, body image issues such as anorexia/bulimia or the oversexualization of girls were all underpinned by a perceived notion that girls lose their self esteem. Part of this dialogue was a concern that media and popular culture were corrupting young girls, pressuring them to feel inadequate in relation to the images presented by the media and socializing them into sexist stereotypes. But what feminism overlooked was that certain venues of popular culture were beginning to adopt and incorporate feminist issues. Musicians such as Madonna and Lauper, followed by the Riot Grrls and the Spice Girls, for example, picked up on feminist narratives of equality and began to channel these into their music. Girls themselves who had to struggle for their own identities in the mediated market culture were able to use such symbolic resources in their transitional identity work.

Popular culture has influenced and shaped the way feminism deals with the girl as well as the way the girl deals with feminism. Second-wave feminists struggled not to be reduced to "just a girl" (Baumgardner and Richards 2004, 59), but third-wave feminists have been confronted with the challenges of what to do with the paradoxical issues raised by the tween girl. Critical debates on the girl played an important role in the formation of third-wave feminist agenda of plurality - pushing an agenda of women's issues beyond middle-class Western women. It was in part through the new ideas of pleasure offered to women (and girls) by a consumer culture that pushed this new agenda of plurality. Imelda Whelehan highlights how in the early 1990s young women felt alienated by feminism and "felt policed by what they perceived as the rigid codes of feminist behaviour" (Whelehan, 2007). Both the girl and consumer culture provide respite from "the rigid codes" by giving girls pleasure and fun – and new scope for identity construction.

The tween girl demanded a fuller inclusion into mass marketing and consumer empowerment, forcing feminism to move well beyond a narrative of the girl as a moment of alienated socialization on the way to becoming an adult woman. New scholarship from Girls' Studies incorporates girls' voices into analyses and addresses how girls actually engage with cultural texts. As Currie highlights, it is important not to just study the texts as "isolated cultural objects" but to think of the ways that the texts are taken up by young girls (1999, 11). Building out of early feminist work of McRobbie (1977, 1991)

and Gilligan and Brown (1992), Girls' Studies address how girls live with culture instead of how culture socializes girls. Girlhood is what Bettis and Adams call a construct that is made and remade through "the material realities and discursive practices of society" (2005, 9), but it is remade partly by girls themselves as they negotiate their realities and discourses.

This thesis adds to the field of Girls' Studies in that it contributes to the legacy established by McRobbie of challenging the absence of girls in studies on youth and pushing an agenda of incorporating girls' voices into scholarship. However, this thesis goes beyond and addresses how a category of girlhood was produced by the mediated marketplace and how girls engaged with this production, connecting the social to the cultural, as Currie would say (1999). The connections between the synergistic circuitry of the mediated marketplace and developmental psychology of the girls are not direct, partly because the tween is not exactly a middle child. The period of middle childhood is a large, unwieldy category. The differences between five or six-year-olds and 12-year-olds can be quite dramatic and difficult to cleanly translate into the logics of the marketplace where the tween category is inscribed. The tween girl persona is mainly at the older end of the period of middle childhood, pushing the boundaries of puberty. It is not defined as being just school aged, although recently there has been some suggestion that the tween of the new millennium is spiralling downward to six or seven-year-olds (Linn 2004, Schor 2004) and younger girls have even been referred to as pre-tweens (La Ferla, 2006).

While the tween builds out of the rhetoric of middle childhood, she is also linked to being a preteen or in a state of pre-adolescence. The concept of pre-adolescence is a relatively new one, to which I have argued feminist psychologists like Carol Gilligan and popular cultural scholars like Angela McRobbie have contributed to significantly. Youth used to be considered as four stages: infancy, toddlerhood, childhood and adolescence. The American Psychological Association dictionary defines pre-adolescence as the period of childhood preceding adolescence, comprising approximately the two years preceding the onset of puberty (2006). The phase of late childhood and early adolescence has merged into a new phase as the cultural configurations of youth shift. Pre-adolescence is the stage of becoming an adolescent, which is ironic since the original definitions of adolescence were about becoming an adult. Perhaps it can be argued that as adolescence becomes defined by marketers rather than educators it also becomes understood more as a state of mind, or a lifestyle

(see Danesi 2003) than a concrete stage considered on its own terms, the state of becoming transfers downward to the younger end, the pre-adolescent or older end of middle childhood.

The development of the tween persona illustrates a multifarious history in which the mediated marketplace is a complex and historically evolving synergistic force where the research of and the communication to consumers are important ways of knowing and negotiating with them. It also shows how marketing constructs involve ways of researching and knowing along with ways of addressing and articulating the consumer. In the process of both knowing and speaking to/about girls, the mediated marketplace connects with the lived experiences of girls by mining them for information and responding to their responses. This oscillating feedback loop is what McRobbie and Garber (1977) might call a “negotiative process”. Girls participated in the production of the persona as they were mined, studied and analyzed by contingents of the fields of marketing, psychology, and consumer research. But, they also had to buy into the imagery of the tween in order for it to be successful. The tween persona offered girls new narratives of girlhood as celebrated instead of being ignored, or worse disparaged. The mediated marketplace presented girls with a more inclusive level of personhood. Previously ignored, the tween gave girls status and a place of being. It was the market that provided girls new spaces for legitimacy, where they moved from being invisible to visible.

And it was the marketplace, for the most part, and not feminism that offered girls personhood and autonomy. Feminism may have responded to it, but feminism did not instigate it. The marketplace gave girls power first. The pithy cries of “Girl Power” come from the Spice Girls, not feminism. Of course, the market offers a very narrow definition of girl power that has been heavily criticized for being nothing more than crass exploitation of the girl consumer and too limited to offer girls opportunities for collective change (Hentges 2005; Lamb 2007; Nash 2006, Riordan 2001). However, this criticism is too narrow and falls back into the old problematic of feminism’s discounting of the girl and into old narratives where consumption is assumed to be a manipulative action - an act of acquiescence and not a conscious, political statement. Critiques of girl power often end up vilifying the tween girl as a vacuous consumer, blindly consuming whatever is constructed for her.

Coda and Conclusion

Today, Girls' Studies is at a crossroads. There is a challenge to rethink previous assumptions and move beyond this duality of the victim versus empowered debate (Harris 2004). This duality is "very mid-1990s" and reflects the challenge that the Spice Girls contradictory refrain of "Girl Power" presented. Moving beyond the duality, we need to address how and why this refrain resonated with girls. And while the mediated marketplace only provides a narrow image of girlhood that meets its own agenda, girls are choosing to buy into the image. We have to ask what girl power offers the girl? And what was missing in girlhood that girl power completes? Ultimately, the question is to explore how young girls engage with media constructions designed for them? This thesis attempts to begin this dialogue, linking the girls' engagement with the term tween at the time of the crystallization of the tween identity. The next step of this research is to explore how young girls engage with the mediated marketplace in the current era, questioning how girls engage with the tween persona, asking what the term tween holds for them?

Currently there is new wave of popular texts that address girls' positioning by the mediated marketplace: *Packaging Girlhood, Rescuing Our Daughters from Marketer's Schemes* (2006) by Lyn Mikel Brown and Sharon Lamb; *So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Girls*, (2008) by Diane Levin and Jean Klibourne; *Lolita Effect* (2008) by M. Gigi Durham; and *Queen Bees and Wannabes* (2003) by Rosalind Wiseman. The fact that there are so many of these books illustrates that there is a demand to "explain girls". The underlying narratives of these books are on salvation. It is apparent in the subtitles that these books focus on how to save our girls; a narrative which, in some ways, returns us to the old tropes of girls as victims of corporate media machines. However, the texts do offer new perspectives on explaining girls. Instead of positioning girls as completely passive victims, these texts offer the narratives of hope, of being saved, that with the right media literacy skills girls can reject or resist the power of the corporate media machine. These texts are part of a specific genre of work in which the intended audience is more likely parents and teachers, than academics. At the same time, all are born out of a very third-wave feminist ideology that girls have agency, and given the right tools, this agency can be harnessed to counter balance the narrow, limiting discourses of the twenty-first century media machine.

What I have shown is that these texts are also part of a historical legacy in which girls have been the locus for a growing debate about the body, the home, sexuality and the state (Griffin 2004), and now the media and feminism. The girl, as a moment in the transition from child to adulthood, represents the future of the feminine while societal contestations of girlhood are part of larger debates around the roles of women. The girl is the lightning rod for social change. She is expected to change with the times and remain constant. She carries the burden of illustrating social change and also reassuring society that despite this social change things will remain the same. Her image has always been contradictory and contested.

Ultimately, this thesis puts the tween girl in the neo-liberal context of the 1980s, with a dramatic encroachment of consumer culture into the lives of families and individuals sold the winnings of feminism. She proved that feminism had succeeded and that girls did have power. They were no longer invisible; they had a presence in the mediated marketplace. But, despite these gains, the girl was expected to stay the same. She had access to family resources but also reassured society that the reliable mother remained in control; she was expected to still be a consumer and to participate in the domestic economy. She had to prove that feminism made gains, while making sure that these gains did not really upset the delicate balance of consumer culture where women are the “dupable” ones. She was to remain sexually innocent, despite acknowledging her changing body. She was supposed to remain in her own ghettoized space, despite being given access to the masculinized spaces of television and music. She had to show how consumer power was emancipatory, while justifying that consumption was still feminized.

Today girls are under even more pressure to carry this double burden. They are given power as consumers, but then are vilified as brats (or Bratz). They are supposed to be sexually innocent and yet the narratives of girl power are full of messages of being in charge of one’s own sexuality. Recent media scandals such as 15-year-old Miley Cyrus’s supposedly inappropriate photo shoot with Annie Leibowitz in which Cyrus appears naked except for a crumpled bed sheet covering her breasts and smudged makeup, and the media controversy surrounding tween star Jamie Lynn Spears’ pregnancy, illustrate the pressures on tween girls to “stay” innocent.

APPENDIX 1: TEXTUAL SITES OF ANALYSIS

Trade Journals

Advertising Age (1980-1996)
Marketing Magazine (1980s-1996)
American Demographic (1980-1996)
Earnshaw's (1980-1996)
Visual Merchandising and Store Design (1980-1996)
Journal of Advertising (1980-1996)
Market Research (1980-1996)

Media

Magazines

Seventeen (every other month 1980-1996)
Teen Beat (select copies)
TigerBeat (select copies)
Sassy Magazine (select copies)

Select copies – were only what I had access to. These magazines were not available in a library collections. Instead I had to rely on donations. In total I had about 30 of these magazines.

Movies

Valley Girl (1983)
Sixteen Candles (1984)
The Breakfast Club (1985)
Pretty in Pink (1986)
Heathers (1988)
Dirty Dancing (1987)
Some Kind of Wonderful (1987)
Home Alone (1990)
Clueless (1995)

CRTC Records

Much Music

YTV

Family Channel

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Interviewees

Almost all of the interviewees were white, middle class, heterosexual women as there were very few people of colour in Newmarket in the 1980s. This reflects the construction of the tween persona at the time. The girl that the mediated marketplace was most interested in was the middle class, white, Christian, heterosexual, suburban girl.

Interview Schedule

The conducted interviews took approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. I met the interviewees at their own houses to foster a more relaxed, informal dialogue.

Interview Questions

I went to both the focus groups in individual interviews with the same sets of questions to ensure that I covered all of the topics for my study. The interviews were not repetitive because the focus groups involved much more conversation and dialogue between the interviewees. In the individual interviews I spent much time going over specific details and addressing any memorabilia that the interviewees brought to the interview. Because of the conversational approach to both the focus groups and the individual interviews the list of questions below provided a guide to the interview.

Opening Question

- What was life like in grades 6, 7 and 8 for you?
- What did you look like?
- What did you wear?
- What did your hair look like?
- What did your bedroom look like?

Media

What did you do in your spare time?
What was a typical weekday/weekend like for you?
What movies do you remember being important?
What celebrities? What was it about them that made them important?
What TV shows did you like? What did you like about them?
Did you read magazines? Why? What did you read? What aspects of the magazines intrigued you at the time?

Consumer Goods

Describe the type of things that you bought?
Describe the types of goods that you wanted but did not get?
Describe your routine of getting ready for school.
What was your routine for getting ready to go somewhere special , like a dance or party?
Who bought your personal items? Where did you buy them? How did you learn about specific products?
Do you remember using a specific good that made you feel more mature?

Defining Age

When did you begin to define yourself as a teenager?
When did you stop defining yourself as a child?
What did it mean to be a teenager to you?
What did being a child mean?
When did you start to hit puberty? What happened? Did things change?

Peer Relations

Were you similar to your friends?
Did you fit in with your peers? Why / why not?
Were friendships with other girls important to you?
Did you go shopping with your friends? Describe what you did.

Shopping and Fashion

What was your relationship with your family like?
Did you ever rebel against your parents?
Did they play a role in how you dressed or in your personal grooming?
Who paid for your purchases? How did you get your money?
Did you go shopping with your parents? With other family members?

Questions for Individual Interviews

I asked the interviewees bring to artifacts and memorabilia to the interviews. In looking at this memorabilia I asked such questions as:

Who took this picture?

Why was it important enough to warrant a picture?

Explain how you look here?

What you were wearing?

Why did you keep this?

What did it mean to you at the time?

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